

**CO-CONSTRUCTION OF HOSPITALITY  
CULTURE:  
BEHAVIOUR, ENCOUNTERS AND SOCIAL  
CONSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH HOTELS**

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# **Abstract**

## **Co-Construction of hospitality culture: behaviour, encounters and social construction in English hotels.**

This research explores the dynamic process of co-construction of hospitality culture in two hotels in the southern part of England. For the purposes of this research, the co-construction of hospitality culture is understood as hotel practices brought to everyday life in public space as a result of the interactions between diverse members in the hotel society. The relationship between behaviour and hospitality culture is a research area currently underexplored.

Informed by anthropology's focus on culture, this thesis addresses the need for a much deeper understanding of hospitality culture in hotels; specifically the cultural influences that come into being within what are essentially ephemeral encounters between people. Drawing on social constructionism as the philosophical position the qualitative methods employed for the fieldwork are participant observation together with open-ended and semi-structured conversational interviews. The fieldwork undertaken at the Hilton Hotel in Brighton and the Hydro Hotel in Eastbourne explores the socio-cultural environment of these hotels to gain a better understanding of how hospitality culture is co-constructed and performed through the interactions between people that work in or stay at these hotels.

The contribution of this research to the hospitality theory is demonstrated through the case studies, which reveal two distinct forms of hospitality culture, one characterised as second home/extended family, and the second as corporate leisure. These cultures are co-constructed and performed through the social interactions of employees and guests and the many activities that combine to create the 'everyday life' of both hotels. These co-constructed performances foster and make visible the hospitality culture in these settings.

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## Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis and this work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree or submitted in application for any degree. This thesis is the result of my own investigations, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to external organisations.

Signed

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Date

*July 2017*

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **1.0 CONTEXT**

### **1.1. Introduction and rationale**

This doctoral work explores the method through which hospitality culture is co-constructed, and how the processes of interactions between participants contribute to this ‘co-construction of culture’ through hospitality. While the research study concentrates on elements that constitute the social concept of hospitality, it is also concerned with how, or whether, interactions and social contacts reveal particularities of hospitality culture. Although critical and empirically grounded research on social hospitality remains limited, there is a growing interest emerging in the public areas, as well as in the cultural relationships, through which various kinds of people meet in moments of hospitality. Such behaviours are observable in a number of social and cultural places, such as cafés, restaurants, shopping malls, transport waiting rooms, receptions, airports, theatres, and art galleries, to name but a few. The above-mentioned localities are just some of the meeting spaces where encounters, even ephemeral ones, occur. We are all familiar with these curious spaces, which are both everywhere and nowhere. Social activities in public places have grown significantly in number, and have now become a dynamic part of our social lives. This trend is particularly noticeable from a worldwide perspective, namely that people and places across the globe are inextricably linked in complex and fluid ways. Such connections are emerging both around and amidst individuals, as well as groups, currently engaged in global travel. It commonly takes the form of ‘interacting’, between and through people who carry their own life experiences. In the current context of the theoretical field of hospitality, the hospitality perspective is not confined to the hospitality business simply in terms of a management subject. Rather, it is concerned with the potential, as discussed by scholars, as well as with the need to raise the status of hospitality, in order to generate new ways of thinking about the term, and to offer a wider appreciation of the hospitality researchers’ ‘world views’ (Lashley et al 2007a). Regardless of the latent possibilities, ‘interacting’ like this often leads to relationships. This is simultaneously, accomplished by individuals along with the perceptions and interpretations of social ‘others’ (Dikeç et al 2009; Lugosi 2009).

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The current interest in defining hospitality as an academic subject, as outlined in Lashley & Morrison (2000), began in 1997 in Nottingham (related to the workshop that took place at Nottingham University Conference at that time), and engaged many of the leading UK-based researchers and writers in the field of hospitality. This text has been invaluable in inspiring the dissemination, discussions, and future directions of work within this thesis, particularly in the way it explores, through a diverse range of sources, the sociocultural scopes of hospitality. For this purpose, several other research activities have also been useful in providing insights into hospitality. Following Molz & Gibson (2007a), much scholarly attention has been paid to the question of how the social relations that emerge in and throughout human contacts along comfort zones, those places and situations where one feels safe, relaxed and stress-free, should be negotiated and articulated.

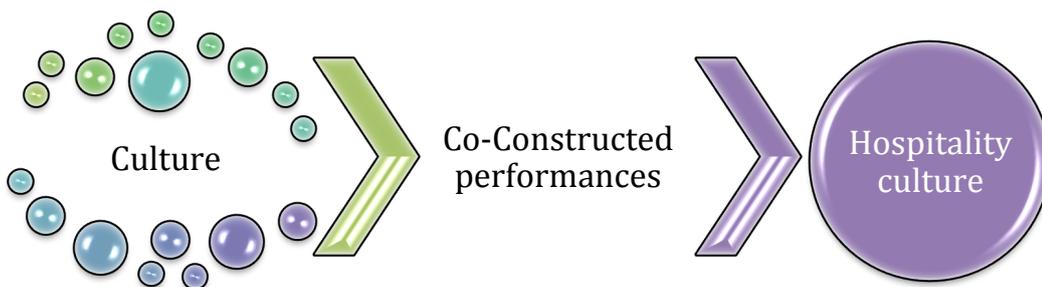
Within the hospitality and culture studies that form the broader context of this thesis, the perspectives on social hospitality are seen as vital dimensions with values that are central to a social life. In making the sociality of hospitality (Lashley & Morrison 2000) through behaviours in hospitality places (Lugosi 2003), the 'host-ness' and 'guest-ness' occur (Bell 2007a; Lugosi 2014b) also in public spaces where people gather with a sense of shared interests. This research study seeks to establish a number of important basics by gaining insights from the public spaces where ephemeral encounters appear. The focus of this thesis, therefore, lies in an investigation of 'social hospitality as culture', based on an analysis of participants' interactions as co-constructed performances, in which employees and guests combine to constitute the hospitality 'public space' of a hotel. This is where hospitality culture is expected to emerge and is, therefore, socially located. The research study concentrates on an unexamined dimension of social hospitality, and will challenge the boundaries of the subject by exploring and analysing the human dimension within this context.

This thesis also focuses on the approach referred to as the 'conceptual approach', and deals with social interactions as daily activities between the participants who work in and visit hotel establishments. This approach represents the hospitality society in selected places, and makes a theoretical contribution to current hospitality studies. The language used in various encounters and behaviours that are revealed, articulated and communicated within these contexts will open new lines of sociological inquiry concerning the pivotal character of hospitality (Lugosi 2003).

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The co-constructed performances of hospitality culture, and the desire to maintain and perpetuate it, are significant in bringing out its meaning within hotels. The important factor is the individual – the guest and visitor that feels a sense of attraction to the place, and who might wish to encounter others on the same occasion or with the same purpose. The value of understanding the meaning of hospitality culture is to assist businesses and hotel practices when responding to customers' needs. There are also likely to be expectations on the part of the guest as well as on the host. As far as Goffman (1959) is concerned in his theory of presentation, all self-presentation is accomplished through the employment of a variety of techniques (Lashley & Morrison 2000), which have 'sympathy' with the way an actor successfully accomplishes a role on stage. Participants have expectations in any encounters (Goffman 1961), and might consequently view a 'show of hospitality' as a social display. This concept, which includes the start of viewing hospitality as a culture through co-constructed performances, informs present research studies, and this new way of thinking will be argued for, and further investigated, within this paper. Thus, Figure 1 supports and clarifies the understanding of the concept of hospitality culture as related to this current context.

**Figure 1 - The key concepts and their interrelationship**



The research now turns to introduction of the aims and research questions in this investigation, providing a useful definition of culture in this context.

## 1.2. Research Aims and Research Questions

The overall aims of the research are to explore and analyse the socio-cultural environment in hotels in order to highlight what this reveals about: firstly, the concept of culture; secondly, how culture is co-constructed by individuals as they experience hotel practices and engage in social activities; and thirdly, its performance, by which is meant “the spatial-material-performative practices at the beginning of the encounter” (Lugosi 2014b: 80). As previously stated, by drawing on empirical evidence gained through the researcher’s fieldwork in two seaside hotels in south-east England, this chapter presents the contextual background that forms the rationale behind this research study. In these cases, the present investigation can provide empirically grounded meaning to, and social understanding of, the hospitality culture within public areas in hotels than much of the debate in hospitality studies literature has yet allowed.

### Aim:

*The aim of the research is to explore and analyse the co-constructions and performances of hospitality culture in English hotels.*

### Research questions:

Based on the current academic debate that views hospitality as a social phenomenon (Lynch et al 2011), there is still limited knowledge and understanding of how this culture through hospitality comes into being. The research study’s structure and its two pre-eminent questions are derived from the literature review, and are presented below:

- *How is hospitality culture co-constructed?*
- *How do interactions between individuals and groups contribute to the co-constructed performances of hospitality culture in hotels?*

The emphasis on cultural practices is vitally important. It would, therefore, be useful at this juncture to provide one definition of the term culture (Hall et al 2013), as it also informs the current research study. While the definition below does not limit its boundaries, culture rather involves building, thinking and acts of dwelling, as in *spatial process* (Low 2017).

Culture, it is argued, is not so much a set of *things* – novels and paintings or TV programmes and comics – as a process, a set of *practices*. Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings – the ‘giving and taking of meaning’ – between the members of a society or group (Hall et al 2013: xviii).

The framework in this study then is conceptualised through the nature of human conversations and interactions. The way these aspects are negotiated will be discussed in relation to current understandings of the concept of hospitality.

### **1.3. On current concepts of hospitality**

There is no clear definition of hospitality. However, to do justice to the subject, several dictionary definitions of hospitality place emphasis on the practices (Oxford Dictionary 2017), in which hospitality is ‘the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors or strangers with generosity, kindness and goodwill’. These words reflect our basic understanding of hospitality. What is more, if one thinks of hospitality in the context of international relations, it can be defined as the offer or giving of welcome, protection or amusement to strangers, visitors and guests. However, when extended to tourists, the subject might be described as being ‘mutual or reciprocal’ and thus, as suggested (Andrews 2005) helps to deepen understanding relative to contemporary manifestations of hospitality and mobile and transient in a global mobility through tourism. It also serves to become involved, even if only superficially in the worlds and lives of others. The relatively narrow ‘definition’ of the welfare or human exchange of hospitality, as understood to be the providing of accommodation, food, drink and shelter, has been challenged on a number of grounds (Lugosi 2014a, 2009; Lynch et al 2011; Bell 2011; Shyrock 2004; Meethan 1996).

Ruud Welten’s (2015) reflections on Zygmunt Bauman, and his influence on hospitality, “as one of the pronounced thinkers of our time” (2015: 8), refers to Bauman’s statement that hospitality has not remained an abstract concept to him in spite of his personal experiences of hospitality. Leaving his country Poland during the crisis of 1968, he later became influenced by the work of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995). This changed his way of thinking regarding hospitality, which directly led to the focus of his work shifting from social moral issues to ethics (Bauman 1998). Moreover, the

‘ambivalence of hospitality’ is elaborated upon and discussed, as are the mixed feelings and contradictory ideas, thus challenging the difficulty of defining hospitality and the bonding between the developing concepts.

A good definition of ‘hospitality’ should consist of words, such as ‘quality’, ‘ethics’ and ‘morality’ that are universally understood. Despite the fact that such universality is clearly not possible, hospitality can still be defined as being ‘friendly and welcoming behaviour towards guests’. Furthermore, the ‘sharing of food’, for instance, can be held to signify togetherness. The growing attention of cooking and eating may be a way of knowing and sharing with others related to tourism (Andrews 2011), and thus useful for analysis because the experience of food and drink has become important activities in hotels. Lashley (2000) suggests that in the private domain, the sharing of food and drink between hosts and guests is based on mutual obligations and on reciprocity, implying that their role will be ‘transformed’ on another occasion. This exposes the fact that the host will become a guest and vice versa. Indeed, to invite someone into your home is to take responsibility for ensuring her/his happiness for as long the person is ‘beneath your roof’.

Furthermore, hospitality converts strangers into friends, and the basic function of hospitality, according to Selwyn (2000, 1996) is to establish a relationship or to foster an already established relationship. This is achievable in the course of exchanges of goods and services, between those who give hospitality (hosts) and those who receive it (guests), a condition that hosts and guests already share. This condition involves the hosts and guests existing in the same moral universe or, in the case of new relationships, the construction of a moral universe to which both host and guest agree to belong. Selwyn further argues, “there is an exchange of honour and the guest signals his acceptance of the moral authority of the host” (Selwyn 2000)<sup>1</sup>. Hospitality has long been a focus of anthropological enquiry, with ethnographic accounts framing hospitality (Selwyn 2000), as a way of negotiating kinship, friendship and hostility. From a sociocultural view of hospitality, the conditions are slightly different. This is particularly valid in the domain of physical environments associated with public spaces. Such areas have generated a sub-set

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Selwyn in Lashley & Morrison, *In search of hospitality* (eds.) 2000, offers a social anthropological view of hospitality and considers the purpose and social function of hospitality, and how people use the social symbols and characteristics limited to societies where it is meaningful and shared. This is also where Selwyn refers to *acts* of hospitality, which serve as one means of articulating social structures.

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of scientific domains and disciplines, and have informed a wider area of variance and practices most affected by human activities.

Selwyn's (2000) analysis of the structure and function of hospitality is especially relevant here, and will therefore, be reflected upon further. As stated above, Selwyn (2000) notes that acts of hospitality either consolidate structures of relations by symbolically affirming them, or are structurally transformative. In this way, Selwyn (2000) refers to the 'givers and the receivers' of hospitality not being the same after their encounter or event as they were before. It has affected them in interpersonal ways, and has consequences of value and meaning to those involved. "Hospitality converts", he continues, "': strangers into familiars, enemies into friends, friends into better friends, outsiders into insiders, non-kin into kin. Thus, these principles find expression in ethnographic descriptions of a wide variety of social systems" (2000: 19-20). Indeed, the social effect is significant. The nature of hospitality engagements will often create symbolic ties between people if they establish bonds among those who are involved in the sharing of hospitality (Lashley 2000).

Hospitality is essentially a transaction between host and guest. It represents a human exchange, and has always been characterised by fundamental elements and features – concerning the pleasure and welfare of the guests, and reciprocity in terms of both benefit and obligation (Lynch et al 2011). The serving and sharing of food and beverage is essential, not only because food and drink are central elements in this context, but also because they are a means of communication and sharing. Therefore, these daily elements serve to actively encourage human exchange, the giving and receiving of hospitality. Studies that have developed concepts of hospitality form the broader context of this thesis. As such, this work investigates hospitality as it concerns culture in the sense of hotel practice and every day hotel life. It also focuses on how the co-constructions and performances, through daily encounters and interactions within and between the hotel societies, are carried out and how this contributes to the hospitality culture.

Due to the fact that several of the activities discussed earlier include the 'hospitality society', being a host means having an element of power over one's guest. For this reason, the host-guest relationship is one of power and control, and is more in line with commercial hospitality, where one must pay for service and pleasure. This is true when it comes to hotels and is also in line with the current research study's setting. However, although several components of social hospitality are present as discussed above, only a

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few are investigated here. Rather, this study concentrates on an unexamined dimension of social hospitality in order to challenge the boundaries of the above-mentioned subject, in which the human dimension of interaction co-constructs performances of hospitality culture jointly. One can say that this hospitality alternative draws upon public locations with appealing effect, and where random people are able to join in on the social perspectives of daily life. By far, these are places where culture might be located, be present for a limit of time, and/or where the flow of unknown people as a ‘carnival’ of social actors can be observed. Simply watching ‘everyday’ life passing by can bolster the enjoyment of a meal. This is interesting as it points towards social realities that individuals are likely to enjoy in more than one way, depending on the time of day and the purpose of visiting the establishment.

As the debate in the broader context of hospitality signifies, this thesis connects with current research in this field. The universal and often mundane form of hospitality, the basic human needs such as hunger, thirst and tiredness, echo Lugosi’s (2008: 141) earlier comments. As noted in his research (Lugosi 2009; 2011; 2014a) and in editorials by Lynch et al (2011), there has been a growing interest between academics and researchers in investigating ways of living in cities and neighbourhoods (Zukin 1995). Such social trends or renewed modes of living have been termed “urban cultures and consumption” (Bell 2007c: 7). These aspects represent ways of social lives in diverse meeting places. Thus, as we live our lives in an ever-changing world, a particular mode of hospitality is at work here. The debates about ways of relating hosts-and-guests widely influence issues in Jacques Derrida’s work (Derrida & Dufourmantelle 2000), and are important theoretical frames, not least because of their influence across a range of disciplines concerned with hospitality and the social values of the host-guest relationship (Derrida 2001). The dynamic characters of social values lead to their constantly changing and evolving over time, with cultural history and the causes behind the assimilation of different cultures also to be shared. Yet, it has to be functional and relevant as shared, common interpretations as well as mutual, meaningful relationship within distinct hospitality societies.

An important element of many social services is the person-to-person encounters that take place directly between individuals. Many times, interaction *is* the service performed. This fact has been acknowledged in various streams of hospitality research, for example, in Gjerard (2010) when dealing with basic assumptions of hospitality, and in Hallin (2009)

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when concentrating on the *tacit knowledge* of hospitality among hotel employees. Whitney et al (1992) claims “Hospitality is one of the noblest words in the English language, connoting welcome, friendship, comfort, and gracious service” (1992: 77). This is particularly related to host/guest, guest/customer and hotel agency perspectives, for example, between employees, guests and responsible members of the hotel management. In this respect, hospitality has come a ‘long way’, and continues to move and develop. The two hotels under investigation are examples of the customary differentiation between early hospitality (private, traditional) and modern hospitality (predominantly commercial). Hence, the decline of hospitality in England, for instance, dates from the sixteenth century when hosts lost touch with their guests, and the ‘free’ hospitality (offered by monasteries and private homes) started to be replaced by the hospitality industry. According to Santich (2007), the two forms are mutually exclusive (cf. Santich 2007). Thus, a wider understanding of hospitality suggests that hospitality is essentially a relationship based on host and guest.

Motivated by the knowledge of the historical hospitality debate, (Lynch et al 2011), the term referred to “codes and etiquette to the ethical treatment of strangers, to the provision of food and drink” (2011: 4). The current situation according to Lynch et al (2011) is that the concept has now expanded into a wide series of studies examining hospitality as a cultural form that is probing and exploring social dynamics and relationships. For example, in interactions and communities, business corporations and profitable hospitality relates more to the accommodation concept of hospitality, either in the domain of ‘private’ hospitality or in large, chain hotel hospitality. Hall (1997: 2) further argues “Hospitality is also an action noun that is abstract and empty until it is applied”. One way of doing this is by ‘encouraging’ personal contact with existing customers and guests as a social approach.

Hospitality, in terms of offering ways of ‘being with others’ (Molz & Gibson 2007b), and coupled with long-term public relations, appears to be much more relevant to the understanding of current hospitality than the standard, mass-marketing-led promotions that hospitality organisations have traditionally engaged in. These personally focused campaigns need to be carefully designed, however, in order to avoid criticisms regarding the potential invasion of privacy (Horner 2003). Such a ‘sophisticated’ approach to the hotel segments is of growing ethical debate and will be discussed later in this thesis. One way of doing this seems to be through the engendering of feelings of belonging and

membership to such local, national or global ‘clubs’ that bring individuals together and enhance their life experience (Horner 2003). This is a way of commencing social contacts. Creating a memorable stay for hotel guests and extending the stay by provisions of extraordinary experiences, has revolved around commercial hospitality debates concerning sociality in hospitality (Lugosi 2003, 2009; 2014a). The social and cultural aspects and hotel practices in this research study are reflected in terms of a hotel’s everyday life. And the effect of time and social situations, the impact of ‘moments of hospitality’ (Bell 2007a) or the ‘flickering moments’ that emerge when interactions and activities are organised, or those that occur more spontaneously in such environments, will be analysed.

As Lugosi (2008: 139) illustrates by references to Hemmington’s theories (2007), who attempted to shift the focus of hospitality research from a narrow set of management concerns centred on social and emotional dimensions, such as the hospitality moments of the “consumer experience”, highlight the ‘guest-guest’ relations emerging between guests and customers. However, hospitality culture is often understood as a hotel practice resulting from interactions, this time between hotel employees and guests. More precisely, hospitality is associated with encounters and is communicated through individual performances as a way of social contact (Goffman 1963; Lugosi 2008; Hemmington 2007; O’Gorman & Gillespie 2010), and behaviours played or staged (Mars & Nicod 1984; Turner 1974; Goffman 1959). This is likely to happen between hotel employees, hotel guests, and members of the hotel management, with various hotel visitors, and will also be argued further here.

So, different individuals and groups of people in hotels are associated with the ‘hospitality society’, meaning the hotel members who work and visit such places. Their daily interactions impinge on the ‘hotel climate’, the social atmosphere one might think of as ‘hospitality culture’. This is also likely to have a profound impact on the co-constructed performances within hotels. But commercial hospitality venues, such as the different hotel events inhabited by customers, guests and visitors, may engage with each other as much as they do with the hosts and hotel employees, and, therefore, might ‘create’ these moments of hospitality between themselves (Lugosi 2008). Interesting points by Lynch et al (2011: 3-24) from their editorial discussions are also relevant as part of this research study’s hospitality scenery. In what they call “a metaphorical open door”, they are exploring questions of hospitality from “interdisciplinary study of hospitality” (Lynch et al 2011: 3-

24). Furthermore, they invite the reader to join in a critical and interdisciplinary exploration of hospitality<sup>2</sup>, such as Theorizing hospitality in the journal of *Hospitality & Society*.

More recently, the metaphors of hospitality have also emerged in other fields, such as ‘new’ social domains. This is particularly related to historical accounts of the shifting social and cultural meanings of hospitality into the commercial forms often provided by the travel and tourism industry (Lashley & Morrison 2000; Lynch 2005, 2005a; Lashley et al 2007a). With this, they have jointly communicated in, and through, social networks in a number of new ways, particularly through the utilisation of the Internet and new mobile technologies (Molz & Gibson 2007a). Laurier & Philo (2002, cited by Bell 2007b) have similarly investigated communities of practices that are now found in cafés, as well as the micro-practices that owners, employees and customers perform to constitute the space of the café. More interestingly, their study focussed, in part, on “how ambience of openness and informality is maintained, by on-going interactions between staff and customers, regulars and newcomers” (Laurier & Philo 2002 in Lashley et al 2007a: 96). Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind the concepts of hospitality and the “discourse of hospitality and care for guests” (Molz & Gibson 2007b: 12), namely, the hospitality as the notion of home, forms a metaphor that suggests a range of possible homes. Metaphors as such are also utilised in the current research study in order to uncover social constructions within the realm of alternative hospitality meanings, to aid in its interpretation, and to give rise to new meaningful social domains in the context of hotels.

In this regard, Gibson (2007: 160) discusses the “metaphor of hospitality together with tolerance and generosity”, in other words, the opportunity to consider the ‘promise of hospitality’, as homes that protect, and offer food and rest to travellers. Another metaphor of hospitality observes that the hotel serves as the tourists and guests ‘home-away-from-home’ (Molz & Gibson 2007b: 10). So there exist promises in the association of hospitality that maintain and awaken a memory of ‘home’ where it is possible to “make yourself at home” (Molz & Gibson 2007b: 12), providing the opportunity to act as if one were at home.

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<sup>2</sup> The journal of *Hospitality & Society* (2011, Volume 1 Number 1) is valuable to draw from in its latest discussions and debates of social hospitality.

## CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXT

Understandings of home are however, contested. Not everyone can lay claim to owning or even having a home in the sense of somewhere to live that provides shelter from the world. Indeed, home is, according to Mallett (2004) a multidimensional concept and this has led to a growing interest in the concept of home within disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, human geography, history, architecture and philosophy. Her critical review of the literature examines and raises the question whether or not home is a place, space, feeling, and/or an active state of being in the world. Moreover, 'home' encompasses cultural norms and so to search for home is to engage in individual fantasies and memories of an ideal state of being (Mallett 2004). As such home and specifically feeling at home is part of human culture, and closely related to personal understandings of feeling comfortable and secure. Home is associated with house, family, self, home away from home, making home and being-at-home. Moreover many people own more than one home giving rise to the notion of 'second home'. This research relates home to second home, as a dwelling place inhabited by family, people one knows or have established relationships with.

Hotels as 'home' is a useful way of exploring hospitality culture because a range of different relationships are possible between those whose stay at or work in hotels. Relationships based on the provision of hospitality. Indeed, (Molz & Gibson 2007b: 17) argue that home is often idealised as a 'space of hospitality', giving rise to questions such as: "Where is home? What does it mean to be at home? Who feels at home or who fails to feel at home?" Moreover, and when dealing with hospitality encounters: "When and where does hospitality happen?" Questions such as these are central for this research study's investigation into hotels. Such locations, where 'flickering moments' of hospitality (Bell 2007a) are spatially and temporally performed in an urban context, have become socially recognised (Molz & Gibson 2007b: 17).

Along these lines, critical accounts of hospitality, and related concepts of hospitality, have been revived in order to address the human element that informs the current investigation of co-constructed performances, expressed in fellowships and/or communities, as a culture. In this particular way, Molz & Gibson (2007b) point toward the various ways hospitality is *performed* in space and time, coupled with embodied and active performances by staff and customers (Cuthill 2007). This is the concept that Maffesoli (1996: 13) proposes as being the "co-present group performance of shared lifestyles and taste" from the included

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members that are actively creating shared values and an empathetic sociality in which s/he relates to singular ambiences, feelings, and emotions of these groups. Collective emotions of a group become concrete in places such as local pubs or a social network, and become meaningful in social situations within designed spaces that bind people over a drink or a meal in a restaurant, bar or café (Lugosi 2009). Such tendencies have the power of hospitableness, and ‘inclusiveness’, in terms of the social setting being inviting. Hence, there is an appeal to feelings of belonging and individual status, or ‘exclusiveness’, in the way hospitality spaces perform and display their welcome to guests and visitors. The lack of enthusiastic engagement might hamper the process of hospitality emerging.

These are important places of lifestyle displays (Cuthill 2007), and must deal with the amount of space that people feel is necessary to establish between themselves and others. The undirected “being-together” are concepts central to Maffesoli’s arguments (1996: 13) concerning consumers’ practices, and reinforce social relations (Lugosi 2009) This further reflection on how the emergent “nature of hospitality space” (Lugosi 2009: 405) is focused, is particularly interesting to investigate. As Chapter One attempts to highlight the concept of hospitality relevant to this thesis, there is also a broader combination of elements, such as the thesis’s key concepts of *culture*, and *co-constructed performances* as a wider focus of attention. Thus, further examination and communication as a theoretical framework within which this research study, is set. This is presented in Chapter Two. Therefore, as hospitality has become a ‘human state of mind’ (Bell 2011), this indicates that *epistemologically*, it is a complex idea that includes activities of consciousness (or not), or simply associates something of immaterial relevance, or an idea or metaphor that reminds humans of something else that satisfies their wants and needs in particular social situations. In combination with certain required personal behaviour during encounters with strangers, and in required encounters while in the company of friends or accustomed groups, family and friends, such encounters are often related more to tourism than hospitality within a corporeal condition.

Indeed, hospitality exists in the heads of individuals and consists of personal experiences and attitudes together with learned and innate skills, and are, therefore, another aspect to be considered (Lashley et al 2007b). The current investigation is concerned with the hospitality society, and the participants that are involved in the research study.

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Employees and guests for example, constitute a fundamental part of the empirical data and, as such, play important roles in the co-construction of hospitality. As reported from the Proceedings of the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual CHME Hospitality Research Conference, Kulkarni (2003) discussed research into Indian hotels. He claims that a transfer of learning to the work place must be ensured, and thus, it is important to be able to identify the training needs of any staff or employees if it should be useful and contain any practical value. The imperative-aspect argument was to establish a climate that is conducive to learning in order to understand hospitality as a social concept. Employees involved with hospitality, as an act to meet the expectations of a guest is, therefore, essential to the accomplishment of attractive hospitality. Kulkarni (2003) argues that hospitality should encompass all acts that the guest may not have thought about, for in that way the highest degree of customer delight can be achieved. Hospitality pleasure or/and amusement engender satisfied guests and customers, and are consequently, likely to result in future visits. This underlying element is of particular concern in this research study. It will explore how co-constructions and performances make, or do not make, hospitality culture emerges. What Kulkarni (2003) further argues, and is important to draw on, is that the hospitality industry is concerned with the front office staff and their core tasks in service deliveries, whilst the industry fails to view the hospitality ‘business’ holistically, and thereby treating all employees as “One family”, As he states:

Almost 68% of the staff considers hospitality only as a service provider, which requires only the operative skill of ticketing, travel desk, foreign exchange, lockers, reservations front office, catering and service, but the human behaviour aspect is not considered at all (Kulkarni 2003: 229).

Such characteristics were to be found in several hospitality conference papers, such as in the one quoted above, and it manifests itself in the friendliness in human relationships and between the encounters of individuals. Extending the hospitality analysis into more human relationships is often dominated by hotel-metaphors such as ‘host/guest/service provider’ and ‘consumer’, and ‘personal comfort’, relating hospitality to social and cultural concepts that contain more than the simple term or word, and therefore associated with personal experiences and individual lived lives often included here. Ideas of hospitality in “nurturing community life and wellbeing”, as also emphasised by Lugosi (2011: 3), have gained force, and complement the current thesis. Moreover, Lugosi (2008: 140) developed

a distinction between different aspects of hospitality, "... [T] his distinction is used to understand the ways in which hospitable encounters may be produced and experienced".

Lashley (2000) distinguished between diverse types of hospitality. The notion of "stabilising hospitality" that emphasises different 'stances' of the term in their editorials forms a discussion that points to more critical viewpoints, and begins to reproduce hospitality as a social and economic phenomenon. More specifically, they argue why and how hospitality emerges in the way it does in particular social settings (Lashley & Lugosi 2011: 111 Editorial). They noted further that 'hospitality work' and 'hospitality space' are also related to those who are willing and able to perform, in the sense of carrying out or acting the technical and emotional aspects of service, and, in analytical terms, in the thoughts regarding co-constructed performances of hospitality culture as found in this research study. This reminds us of the importance of personal skills, whether learned or innate, as personal characteristics. So this thesis claims that hospitality culture involves interactions in public spaces and is very much informed by the work of Goffman (1959; 1961) in which hospitality and host-guest transactions perform and carry out "social work, reinforcing a sense of society" (Lashley & Lugosi 2011: 113 Editorial).

### *Investigation of hotels*

However, in considering the social manifestations of hospitality in commercial contexts, it is useful to quote what Bell (2007b) states about urban development and constructions of public meeting places. The hotels in this research are located in coastal cities and are seaside places with an easy door to many people. Bell's arguments are thus, asserted here:

The importance of understanding how the performance of hospitality and hospitableness in commercial settings is engaged in by staff and customers alike, who all have at stake something more than getting fed or watered. What's at stake cannot, moreover, be simply reduced to economic exchange; what's 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 revitalized, regenerated urban neighbourhoods (Bell 2007b in Lashley et al 2007a: 96-97).

In this way, social hospitality is teaming with interactions between guests and employees as well as *convivial* activities through engagements and bodily performances (cf. Lugosi 2008; 2011). Here it is reflected on as establishing a friendly and enjoyable atmosphere

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and is a lifestyle or a way of social living (Featherstone 1990). Simultaneously, in Bell's article *Hospitality is society* (2011), hospitality is a significant, stabilising element of interest to current research. Arguably, these underlying elements are to be found in commercial hospitalities and within *socialities* performed in tourist places (Cuthill 2007 in Molz & Gibson *Mobilising Hospitality* 2007). Approaches like these pay attention to the way kinship and friendship are negotiated through dialectics (interactions and debates) of hospitality and hostility (Selwyn 2000). In this context hospitality has merged into a framework for thinking about social dynamics, including *online interactions*, as another example of a cultural form based on technical tools. Indeed, online materials have increased rapidly in number over the last two decades, and might constitute both a friendly and/or frightening 'social contact'. Nevertheless, this may in turn also influence the challenge to examine concrete practices of hospitality within their commercial provision and consumption (Hendry 2008), such as in the current research setting.

In public spaces in hotels where people from multiple cultures and from different parts of the world come together, they are likely to seek, experience, and consume hospitality (Lugosi 2003; 2008). Moreover, the basic assumptions to do this are never simply based on open-mindedness, but are rather undertaken with the purpose of meeting like-minded. People choose what is of interest to them, and may then like to 'share' this with others. However, they may also, at the same time, avoid other alternatives of hospitality. A question such as; who is constructing hospitality culture, and how it is constructed in public areas? Such questions, therefore, reflect certain needs and social positions to be consciously aware of, to enjoy and engage in, and to spend time and pay visits to, whether for reciprocal reasons or even to construct strong relationships emerging over time.

Since public areas like hotels endorse a *business message* directed towards specifically guest-segments, a variety of welcomingly differences and potentially co-constructed *cultures* will occur. These are sometimes shared and sometimes ignored. This is of concern here, and the research study seeks to gain insights into the shared hospitality culture from such accounts that make it possible to explore *how* it is co-constructed, and *how* and *why* in hotels, people's interactions contribute, or do not contribute, to the co-construction of hospitality culture. If such interactions occur or happen in such a way, this investigation is likely to make sense of a "social system" (Mars & Nicod 1984: 4), and to understand the 'signify practices' (Hall et al 1997, 2013), which are likely to emerge as the meaning of

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hospitality culture. Such challenges are in line with the two research questions of this study, and the two single hospitality cultures are investigated simultaneously, but on their own terms.

Having said this, one of the most interesting aspects of this research study is the extent to which hospitality culture reveals general or unique characteristics of social interactions and hotel activities. Individual contacts, such as behaviours and encounters in public areas or designed hospitality spaces, can be passed down or reiterated in either variance or into related hotels. Nevertheless, this research study will argue that it is a sense of hospitality as a feeling of ‘a warm welcome’, being seen by employees, and contacted by their names (because they are remembered and a pleasure to see again), which stimulates hotel visits to be repeated, and is one way of motivating social contacts to take place. So, this research study is simply one element of how interactions contribute to the co-construction of hospitality culture.

However, hospitality consists of clear elements that must be present (Bell 2007a in Molz & Gibson 2007a). These social elements, as parts of a larger whole, emerge in the *process* of co-constructing hospitality as individual interactions in public places. Therefore, by drawing on concepts from different disciplines, this research study aims to contribute to the current knowledge and social dimension of hospitality as a paradigm, through distinct approaches to contemporary hospitality practices. Based on the research study, it endorses the importance and further develops the openness by which cultural codes and social co-constructed performances convey meanings in the sense of attractive hotel hospitality culture, both in contemporary time and in distinctive cultural locations. Yet, in this chapter, the study will consider a combination of elements such as current concepts of hospitality. There will also be further investigation into culture, its processes, a hotel’s set of practices, the feeling of home and space, communication forms and metaphors, and service engagement, as well as theatrical performances with an audience. This research study then, is concerned with the co-constructed performances of hospitality culture as a way of exploring the social world in hotels.

In general, hotels present a particular configuration of open, closed and negotiable abstracted spaces, offering a range of opportunities for *adventure* to guests. For example, exciting events, or face-to-face encounters with guests out of everyday routines. Public accesses to adventure that provide affective qualities of *atmospheres* – “homely, serene,

erotic and so on, provide a kind of intensive space-time” to be co-constructed (Anderson 2009: 80) - whether men or women, regular business travellers or occasional tourists. Clearly, there is a need for a much deeper understanding of hospitality culture in hotel space and spatiality (i.e. physically, visually and theoretically – social relations and social practice in designed spaces). In public places such as these, people recognise the social context and the cultural influences that come into being within this unique liaison. The reasons for the investigation, then, are threefold.

Firstly, hospitality and hotel spaces provide an underdeveloped research in the context of social hospitality. Secondly, more focus is needed on co-constructed performances of culture in everyday life in hotels, as a process of interactions, with the flows of different people. Thirdly, this focus enables a variety of research gaps to be addressed. The research study thus departs from a focus on business and management orientated research while acknowledging the gap in the interdisciplinary nature of growing approaches in hospitality studies – hospitality culture and social aspects of hospitality, as they relate to tourism studies (Lugosi 2014; Müller 2014; Pantelidis 2014; Lynch et al 2011; Lashley et al 2007b; Molz & Gibson 2007a; Botterill 2000).

Many types of hotels are unique in terms of their locations and social standing, and they allow access (up to a point) to anyone who is interested in visiting them. Some hotels are likely to operate day and night throughout the year, and provide service and comfort to those who pay for it. Visiting particular public areas such as hotel lobbies, restaurants, cafés or bars expresses personal taste, and aesthetically reflexive customers (and consumers) are particularly “adept at expressing senses of self through participation” (Cuthill 2007: 85). According to Cuthill (2007: 85) ... “changing performances of socialities and hospitalities in eating and drinking venues reflect social, cultural and economic shifts in place that shape tastes in and of place over time.” This is reflected in the flow of people that visit places continually being repositioned through intersections of complex “mobilities”. Although cultures as social practices cannot be ‘shared by all’, the hospitality sceneries are constantly developing and changing and, thus, “emerge as appealing alternatives to participate in” (Cuthill 2007: 85), and to enjoy for many diverse social groups.

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The purpose of the literature review will be to identify a gap so as to arrive at the key concepts that will help to answer the research questions. In doing so, this study will adopt the most appropriate and suitable research design based on the knowledge of the research methodologies acquired by the researcher, and reflected upon prior to the conduction of the empirical data gathering, as outlined in Chapter Three. How these questions are therefore addressed to meet the research goal will be presented and discussed in detail in this methodology chapter.

In hotels, people come and go freely, meaning that they are hotel guests, but not *invited* (Telfer 2000), perhaps not in the conventional sense of the term. Therefore, the hospitableness of commercial hospitality space is also constantly negotiated and renegotiated in the intersections of co-constructions and performances of social and cultural liking. Hence, those guests and customers, daily visitors and residents attracted to particular hotels, might represent a worthwhile hospitality culture in which they want to engage. The investigation will focus on two hotel cases, The Hydro Hotel Eastbourne and The Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel, as the setting of public places; the two hotels are individually presented in Chapter Three.

Hotel developments are context related; for example, an American hotel might be looked at as a community institution or as “the centre point of civic hospitality” (Wharton 2007: 106), and hold a certain type of mundane culture, such as: people living in cities; the habit of dining out frequently or enjoying weekend lunches; utilising the urban facilities; and thus, emerging as a lifestyle and social construction. Hotels often have a central position in the place they are located. It is further anticipated that they represent everyday experiences for many different people who visit them for several reasons, and are exposed to, and represent, diverse cultures through both their employees and guests. Hence, hospitality culture in hotels might provide a more profound understanding of the people attracted to diverse hospitality cultures and of how they experience and co-construct this culture through sociocultural hospitality found here. As human beings, we construct the world we live in and will continue to do so (Sartre [1905-1980] 2003). Thus, people are continually building cultures, and shaping and moulding them to fit the dynamic nature of how they live and see themselves.

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Besides, hotels also provide ancillary services on a short-time basis for people away from home (Larsen 2007), either by individual choices of needs and wants, or determinedly. Based on the designs and hotels scenarios that are performed and jointly utilised by employees and guests, they produce and create the culture of hospitality. The co-creation and co-construction of culture where hospitality emerges in public spaces can offer an awareness of the “insidious aspects” (Lugosi 2014b: 87) related to hospitality. In other words, what we would like to think of as positive contacts between different people and different cultures might also bring to the surface some negative ambiance and indicators, such as hostile attitudes and people who shun contact with ‘others’ or people with a different nationality from their own. Still, the aim of this thesis is to adopt and explore the positive elements, as perceived in this context, such as encounters that bring to the fore common values and shared experiences.

As noted by Bell (2011), hospitality, in terms of hospitality work and spaces where hospitality emerges, is often used in various commercials and is presented on social media as a positive experience that supports social life and everyday activities attractive to many people. The research study in this context should provide a more profound understanding of the social processes that occur in the co-constructions of hospitality culture through social involvements. The purpose is, therefore, in this regard, to explore and analyse to develop knowledge and to understand, clarify and explain rather than to simply discover it. The study seeks new insights into the social structures of hospitality along with people who frequently visit the hotels investigated here, global to local interactions and constituted by multiple bodies (between employees and diverse guests) through leaving and joining social groups as dynamic hospitality society. Hopefully, this fresh perspective will facilitate a more understandable hospitality culture as meaningful alternative social works and services, and benefit both scholars and practitioners investigating such social dimension of hospitality.

The contextual framework for this research study is such that it represents a novel aspect of hospitality as a social process - involving interactions at an intimate and spur-of-the-moment (spontaneous) level. Indeed, it is also very much related to the intangible expressions found in language and oral expression in local traditions and cultures. Such spontaneity is essential in social practices such as festivals (Jaeger & Mykletun 2008; Getz 2007), where local events and rituals are performed and participated in while the ‘show

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goes on' (Einarsen & Mykletun 2009). The purpose of the theoretical framework linked to the research field is, therefore, to encourage the need to understand hospitality from the different disciplines that are concerned with various concepts of hospitality. Such debates are stressed in Lashley & Lugosi (2011 Editorial) in the first issue of *Hospitality & Society* (2011), "as reference to the factors, forces and agencies that reproduce hospitality as social and economic phenomena".

What these examples indicate is the basic foundation of the thesis that has been briefly presented in this chapter. With an interpretive research study, the assumption is that knowledge is gained or filtered, either through social constructions such as language, consciousness, or through shared meanings (Rowlands 2005), as well as where co-constructed performances and culture are individually explored through hospitality as a social lens (Lashley & Morrison eds. 2000; Laurier & Philo 2006; Bell 2007b). In this respect, the work of key writers and scholars will be analysed. The implications of the views of some of the most influential, such as Lashley & Morrison (2000), Molz & Gibson (2007a), Lashley et al (2007), Lugosi (2003, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2014a, 2014b), Bell (2007a, 2011) and Goffman (1959, 1961, 1963), will be discussed in terms of how they inform the current research study. Subsequently, this study investigates two examples of what Pritchard & Morgan (2005) emphasised in further research on hotels, as a sociological construct – which in this instance is represented by exploring the processes involved in co-constructed performances of hospitality culture.

Chapter One refers to social theory, first and foremost, in order to establish an understanding of co-construction in terms of interactions with, and social engagement in and through, hospitality. The wider theme of this research study, the key concepts and their inter-relationship, follow in Chapter Two. Before proceeding to the next chapter, three supplementary issues need to be reflected upon and commented on further: the practice of reflexivity - positioning the researcher, positionality and personal considerations, and the writing voice of the thesis. These qualitative research issues will follow before the structure of the thesis marks the end of Chapter One.

## 1.4 Reflexivity – Positioning the researcher

### *Introduction*

An individual's biography clearly influences both the topic of the research and the way it is conducted (Lofland & Lofland eds. 1995; Lofland 1973). Therefore, the researcher's biographical note is included to help understand the relationship between the participants of the study and the researcher. During the data gathering in the current investigation, collected through informal communications and semi-structured interviews on diverse levels of interactions between the researcher and the participants, represent 'techniques' or 'tools' and are helpful to the interpretive hermeneutical processes. The 'hotel society' consists of groups of people in social space. Following Augè's thinking (1995), the concept of social space is based on sociocultural relations and the physical space where actions and activities occur, just as the nature of co-construction and performance in the context of this thesis. However, these are never the same people, new guests and new employees are instead in dynamic "movability" (Finlay 2002: 212).

As such, qualitative researchers need to continually reflect on their relationship with the research in its entirety. I have learned that this is particularly important to be mindful of in terms of fieldwork, and being in the place, present as the researcher, where the research study is taken place. Therefore, in order to fully explore my own subjectivity, I employ my reflexive abilities and try to make sense of my positionality, and use the first person in the next section. This section outlines some of the reflections made by the researcher on the personal relationship to the field as well as the impact of own lived experience on research.

### *Reflexivity*

Reflexivity is a central element of philosophical argumentation (Bartlett 1987). However, reflexivity is a relatively recent topic in fields such as anthropology and sociology, and has emerged, in particular, from discussions about representation and objectivity (Salzman 2002). Reflexivity then, is one characteristic of postmodernity – a critique of modernity itself – where formerly established rules for society break down and where knowledge is difficult to be claimed, given that the researcher is recognised as the *interpreter* of social phenomena (Hall 2004). Furthermore, Hall (2004) argues that reflexivity is a practice rather than a theory or a model. As such, reflexivity is a set of actions that lead to positionality (Kvale 1989), which is the researcher's conscious awareness of his/her position in relation to the research as a whole (England 1994; Cooper 2016). This includes the process of information sources, the data gatherings, the generations of findings and the

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interactions and conversations with the participants in the investigation. In post-modernity, the broad spectrum of possible interpretations is acknowledged, as “meanings are negotiated within particular social contexts so that another researcher will unfold a different story” (Finlay & Gough 2003), and does so within a new but similar context.

Within social sciences, there is increasing acknowledgement of the researcher being personally involved in both the fieldwork and the social world under investigation (Finlay 2002; Flick 2007). This is a vital part of the interpretive understanding of sociocultural research. Therefore, reflexivity is the recognition that researchers always carry with them their own portfolio of knowledge and experiences. In this way, they become the centre of the research process (Feighery 2006). According to Hall (2004), it therefore involves a process of self-consciousness, which constructs the participant observer and her/his position as an *emic* member of those who participate in the investigation, and like an insider, and not a detached observer (Phillimore & Goodson 2004a; Blaikie 2010; Flick 2007). Reflexivity suggests that because researchers are inherently part of the social world in which they are conducting an investigation, that “findings in social research can never be entirely objective” (Descombe, 2003: 240).

My own position and understanding of social structures affects how I understand and interpret the world and, as a result, affects the research outcomes. In this research, the intentions are reflexive, dynamic, emergent and focused communications (both listening and questioning) between the researcher and all participants. Such an approach makes it possible to create new forms of interaction, responsibility and trustworthiness (Decrop 2004) among the participants, and between the participants and the researcher, with the aim of generating ‘open dialogues’ of sincere and straightforward responses (Kvale 1989; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Applying reflexivity offers the possibility to direct a subjective concerned and personally interpreted research, which acknowledge a researcher’s contribution within the study and, thus challenges objectivity (Mauthner & Doucet 2003; O’Gorman & Gillespie 2010).

Reflexivity is linked to various disciplines and is discussed using a range of approaches and practices (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). It is important that it follows the research approach, the methods that aim to answer the research questions proposed, and that it is linked to the context within the particular research design. The concept of reflexivity plays a major part in the social psychology of George Herbert Mead. In *Mind, Self, and Society*, published in 1934 with several excerpts appearing in Strauss (1956), Mead emphasised the social nature of being human, such as the formation of the individual resulting from constant interaction with others, which, as a consequence, makes ‘the other’ more widespread (Strauss 1956: 231).

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The process that made this possible was, for Mead, reflexivity. Being meaningful to reflect on in my research, it is, therefore, quoted below:

It is by means of reflexiveness - the turning-back of the experience of the individual upon himself - that the whole social process is thus brought into the experiences of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it. Reflexiveness then, is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind (Strauss 1956: 211).

It has become clear to me that the research needs to concentrate on the public area available for empirical study, where I will be a part of the research study through my presence and participation in situ. For these reasons, it is important to identify my own position and background as the researcher, and to recognise how this has influenced my understanding and interpretation of the co-construction of culture through hospitality in English hotels. It is essential to present a personal analysis since my identity and self-perception clearly guided the development of the research design and the progress. The baseline form of reflexivity is associated with self-critique and personal quest, and plays on the subjective, the experiential, and the idea of empathy (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 395). This reflects the thoughts that have been particularly relevant to this thesis and it also serves to acknowledge my role within the social situations and interactions of conducting fieldwork. Briefly, this section deals with the question of how the researcher (me), influenced her own research study.

### *Positionality and personal considerations*

Many challenges have followed the operations in hotels when it comes to diversity among, and inconvenient working hours for, employees. This has also influenced my research, as well as developing a personal awareness of not interrupting participants in their work or when guests and/or employees seemed to seek some privacy by sitting in sheltered areas away from individuals. In fact, self-reflexivity is one of the most celebrated practices of qualitative research (Richardson 2008), and is essential in the early stages of the research study and continues through negotiating access and trust, data gathering, analysis and presentation. This is one way to become aware of, and to examine my own impact on the research scene and enables me to note other people's (participants and the presence of other individuals in the space) reactions to them. At times, I found it valuable to think

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about the type of knowledge that was available in spontaneous dialogue with each other, and at the same time reflect over which is likely to be hidden. I always included such self-reflexive commentary in my field notes, whether they are subjective feelings or sense making (Suárez-Ortega 2012). I have used the first-person voice (e.g., “I” and “me”) to appropriately remind the reader of my presence as researcher, and my influence on both the participation in, and interpretation of, the scene. For me, this has been a way to “illuminate the reader’s understanding” (Tracy 2010: 842) of cultural practices, particularly in conversations and interviews with the hotels’ employees. According to Tracy, (2010) self-reflexivity is a valuable means by which to achieve sincerity (being earnest and vulnerable) in qualitative research. The practice of reflexivity entails addressing my social background, my assumptions and worldview in what is called my positionality (England 1994). This is presented below.

As a researcher, I have come to learn, it is of greater value when the research, within these cultural environments, is able to clarify some of the social findings and significant cultural patterns discovered through the research, and is then able to apply these to the management of the hotel during the research period. This has been an important part of my approach to the hotels throughout this investigation. Due to the fact that the researcher has been working with hotel development from the inside of hospitality spaces as designed areas for public relaxations, and because there has been a particular emphasis placed on exploring the meaning of what the guests and customers see, that is, what is visual and appealing, this research is of particular importance to hotel management. But it has been my experience that this was not always the case with users of the hotel, namely, the guests and customers. It was service with a personal engagement that was much more appreciated. The researcher has been fortunate enough to be trusted to develop the visual atmosphere, the designed spaces in the hotels through close contact with the users. The possibilities herein have given me the confidence of knowing how teamwork flourishes and how these possibilities affect all people involved in such developments.

Through the many aspects within hospitality as an industry, this work has provided an insight into potential ways of respecting ‘both sides’ of these social environments and has also driven my desire to continue this engaging research journey. Even at this stage, it is inevitable that my own work history and knowledge of hospitality culture will affect my perception of various hospitality moods that are present in the hotel selection process.

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Consideration of my own background after several years of both practical and academic-related work as a research partner in Norway, as well as investigation of hotels and hospitality management perspectives, has given me, as the researcher, experiences that might help in gaining access to this field of research. These suppositions have been to the fore in my approaches to the hotels in this research, and have allowed for closer contact with several of the front staff and responsible employees within the hotels selected.

Taking hotels seriously, by which I mean being conscious regarding what to give back, may give the researcher an advantage in addition to access. There is a need for detachment and discretion at the same time, “and to know enough about their world, to ask the right questions” (Mars & Nicod 1984:10). This might be a way of looking at the role of the gatekeeper in this context. When looking further to my position as a researcher and my involvement in the hotel histories and hospitality contexts, the reflections reveal a very useful personal engagement, and informal relationship, with participants. The fact that I am an adult female researcher with three grown-up children has helped me to be patient. Personal experience like such has given me great comfort in both listening and arguing when approaching others. At the same time, this has aided in deciding the appropriate moment to record interviews and contact participants in a friendly manner throughout the three-year research period. Therefore, once I grow accustomed to my setting and research study, it will be important to have the ability to explain and describe details that might otherwise be taken for granted.

### *The voice*

The researcher has made a conscious decision to become a central part of the research rather than adopt the commonly used ‘hidden research position’. The resulting biases will, be a vital part of this research. However, the impact of these biases should be mitigated once the ‘method triangulation’, as described by Denzin (1989a, 2001), as multiple methods or use of mixed methods, properly implemented. Except for the use of the first person and the active voice to highlight my own interpretations and considerations, this thesis will be written in the third person in order to highlight the participants’ interpretations. However, where appropriate, the researcher will acknowledge the positionality and the personal role in the co-creation of knowledge.

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Following this plan, the methodology, analysis and findings appear mainly in the first person (Chapters Three, Four, Five, Six and Seven while the introduction, context and literature review (Chapters One and Two, excluding 1.4.), will remain in the third person, in which to expression with respect to authors and scholars, the nature of knowledge creation. Presented in 1.4. - *Reflexivity – Positioning the researcher*, is concerned with the author's current investigation, which explains the use of the first person here. The ambition is to avoid a controlling interference on the voices of participants and accounts for reasonable beliefs instead of general opinion. In other words, in trying to support and probe the conversations with guests and employees, individual understanding and meaning must be allowed to come through in the way it is told, thus representing a small part of the social world rather than encompassing the whole universe (Van Maanen 1988). The purpose is to create a bridge between the researcher and the researched (Kvale 1983), such as the utterances or statements of various types that might flow in the communication between the interviewees and the interviewer - between the participants, and myself as the researcher.

### **1.5. Thesis structure**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first has been introduced, and includes the rationale and important concepts of hospitality involved in the research, as well as the aims and the two research questions. This chapter also encompasses the reflexivity and positionality of the research. Within this section, the role of the researcher and the personal considerations found in the thesis, are presented and described. This structure of the research concludes Chapter One.

Chapter Two examines the theoretical framework within which the investigation is set, that is, the wider themes and theories of culture in general and its meaning in our social life. This is contextualised in the theoretical analysis of the co-constructed performances of hospitality culture. Chapter Two will illustrate the overall theoretical framework with respect to the key writers and academics, and through the relevant literature from three multi-layered disciplines (sociology, anthropology and geography). Additionally, this chapter scrutinises the state of theoretical areas that are particularly relevant when it comes

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to social constructions of culture and hospitality making, reflected in the thesis title. In that respect, the chapter contains some important social concepts, which are to be moulded into this study, and it will end with a chapter summary.

Chapter Three focuses on methodological issues and the philosophical position of the research study. A focus on culture places the research within an anthropological framework, and draws on ethnographic principles as well as utilising several of the methods associated with traditional ethnography. Thus, interactions between people will be investigated through participant observations, interviews and spontaneous communications as well as semi-structured interviews. Then, the methods selected to gather empirical information are discussed showing how these have been handled and how they are employed in the two hotels. This discussion, which will be illustrated using diagrams and figures, is to include the interview themes and the participants involved in the studies. Next, the research study continues to present the case studies, the sampling and classification of the selected hotels. Some figures and supporting photographs have been produced and will appear here, but are also added in the appendices. Several have been provided in order to provide clarification of the text. The methods, and how they are implemented, are introduced in conjunction with a navigation of the field and the social setting. The ethical considerations and guidelines are also included and close this chapter.

The approach to analysis, following in Chapters Four and Five and using interpretive hermeneutics (Palmer 1969, Lofland 1973; Atkinson & Coffey eds. 2002), forms the subsequent part. The analyses are related to the inferences between the researcher and the participants. This method allowed the revelation of 'something hidden' in the small narratives that were told, often as a result of informal dialogues, in order to understand what lays behind any little-known social concepts. Chapter Six brings together hospitality in the conceptual framework along with the elements that construct hospitality culture. Finally, the document draws the last summary together in Chapter Seven, which forms the conclusions. The chapter provides the contribution of the study and suggests further research possibilities, and outlines the limitations of the research at the end.

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# **CHAPTER TWO**

## 2.0 THEORETICAL CONTEXT

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature underpinning the concepts of hospitality as discussed in Chapter One, and the ‘building blocks’ in a wider theoretical context. The relevant literature addresses the broad themes in the review, providing a conceptual ‘map’ to guide the way through the vast amount of theory. The chapter will trace and examine culture through hospitality, informed by an anthropological understanding of culture, look at questions such as what particular meanings are embedded in the experiences of culture through hospitality, as well as the ways in which they are interconnected and organised. This review was deemed an essential starting point for assessing the state of the existing knowledge associated with the key concepts and research questions presented in Chapter One, and aims to provide the reader with an in-depth review of the relevant literature. Thus, it focuses on the literature domains of hospitality as well as the culture of social life and their interconnected socio-cultural system. These social ‘building blocks’ need to be outlined and understood.

It is put forward that managerial interpretation of *organisational culture* has important implications for the strategies and procedures implemented in an organisation, and for the ways to address and train employees within a particular organisation (Goss-Turner 2010). Commercial and organisational-culture contexts are similar to those Argyris & Schön (1978) identify as ‘theories-in-use’. These implicit theories that indeed guide behaviour, tell members and employees how to perceive, think about, and feel about things (Argyris & Schön 1978), which again form the social understanding of culture that is often taken for granted, and is accepted and acquired instinctively in their working environment. As such, the social and anthropological basics of values, duties, behaviour and personal understanding that govern the daily practice in hotels, have a significant impact on employees and their interactions with other employees, with and between members of the management, and, not least, between the hotel guests/visitors and employees working with hospitality services. While the link between hospitality and culture has a long history and can be traced back to ancient times, its meaning has grown significantly, along with the social development, in many directions, in particular from perspectives that underlie everyday life in terms of basic elements of:

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- *daily life*, that is, how people go about their daily lives (how they present themselves in public areas)
- more sophisticated elements of the *good life* of residents, such as art, museums, events and food/beverage (and amuse themselves)
- elements of *work* in society (wider social conditions)
- *cultural fragments of the past*, with an emphasis on architecture, design, religion and status (emotions and belongings)

(Modified after Ritchie & Zins in Ritchie & Crouch 2003: 117)

The simple figure initially introduced on page four, constructs the research path more clearly from the start, and Figure 1 (p. 4) also includes the wider themes that illustrate the key concerns included here. Additionally, Figure 1 (p. 4) indicates an understanding of *culture* as a complex concept, consisting of different aspects (for example, national culture, organisational culture, home culture or religious culture). Following Delaney (2011: 373), “a combination of them”, indicates the literature domains concerning hospitality as well as the culture of social life turn out to be a complex and ambiguous entity. Against this background, Chapter Two will critically review key theoretical debates to be taken forward, in order to highlight the current theoretical framework that informs this research. It is structured around the key topics: the concept of culture, the concept of space and the concept of performance as distinct, and to which the chapter now turns.

### **2.2. The concept of culture**

Carol Delaney (2011), through her focus upon culture and anthropological thinking, provides the research with additional understanding of ‘everyday life’ as a way of ‘seeing’ human culture, and allows us to come closer to its many aspects which are of particular help in this investigation. As Delaney puts it, “through the text and ethnographic exercises” the author of this investigation is able to “think it” too (Delaney 2011). In other words, to be aware of and thus, ‘see every day life’ or daily life, if you will, through a cultural lens. *Anthropology* is about human behaviour; the kind of studies Margaret Mead (1928) conducted, and which fall in the major “subfield” of the discipline of social and cultural anthropology. The important element here is the *theoretical* stance one takes toward the material one studies. For Carol Delaney (2011), the different aspects herein have to do with the ways individual people define, or at least imagine, human nature and culture. In this way, Delaney refers to the path to *civilisation*. The culture debate might have started

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with ‘*culture*’ and how the term emerged from ‘*cultivation*’ (Delaney 2011: 12), following the idea of civilisation. This also involves thinking of local culture in narrow terms, and forces us to conceive a global view where cultures may have something in common in which they can be explained through each other. This makes it possible for individuals to confront that difficult borderline, and the forms of experience between what a person takes to be the image of the past, and what is in fact involved in the passing of time and in the passage of meaning. Thus, to define culture in isolation from the rest of our social life is to not consider its theoretical concepts – including articulation, co-occurrence as social events, hegemony, ideology or dominance, identity and belonging - and *representation* (Hall 1997). An open individual interpretation is, therefore, useful as a part of anthropology and as one anthropological principle utilised here in the departure from theoretical debates.

The anthropological influence encourages researchers to consider culture in terms of a system of sub-cultures, symbols, signs, and meanings. Such a system leads to the understanding of culture as having a significant meaning that is constructed, shared and worthy. According to Delaney (2011), the concept of culture should be retained because it

is the conceptual and discursive space we reserve to struggle to refine our understandings of social differences and similarities? It is that elusive abstraction we find it impossible to agree upon but one that we find it equally impossible to live without (2011 on line).

Sylvia Yanagisako made an eloquent argument, at a small conference in 1993, for retaining the concept of culture. “[W]e need to explore and refine explanations of difference other than what I call the three R’s: Race, Religion, and Reason or Rationality. These three R’s were the forms of explanation of social difference ... in the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (1993: 9-10). As Carole Delaney (see Yanagisako & Delaney 1995) claims in this regard, ‘a cultural analysis should make explicit the social positions of the person doing the analysing and the person being analysed, as well as the differences of power and status among the individuals and the groups being studied. This is not always easy, however, for, as my colleague, Sylvia Yanagisako and I argued in our coedited volume, *Naturalizing Power*’, “differentials of power (often) come already embedded in culture ... [so that] power appears natural, inevitable, even god-given” (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995: 1). Such an explanation enables this researcher to jointly draw and build upon knowledge from the social and biological disciplines as well as the humanities and physical sciences. For the

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most part, theoretical debates concentrate on the structural mechanisms that underpin social and cultural constructions, rather than on the ‘everyday practice’. Moreover, sociology is also an illuminating field of study that analyses and explains important matters in human personal lives, in communities (in societies where norms and rules have a strong bearing on daily social behaviour), and in the world.

*Culture* itself is subject to many different definitions and interpretations, often dependent upon the scholastic and ideological position of the person addressing the issue (Goss-Turner 2010), which argued here, support a particular perspective, namely the hospitality culture as it relates to the Western understanding of the social world. The challengers argue that the concept of culture is too often equated with nation-states with territorial boundaries. This not always means *country*, but once referred to *people* bound by language, religion, and birth (from the Latin word *natio*, which comes from the verb meaning “to be born”) and not by territorial boundaries or government. What is at issue here, Hall et al (2013) argue, is that “*Culture* is one of the most difficult concepts in the human and social sciences, and there are many different ways of defining it” (2013: xvii). The *traditional* definition of the term is said to stand for the “best that has been thought and said in a society” (Hall et al 2013: xvii). Likewise, it is the sum of the great ideas, as represented in the classic phrase “high culture”, and belongs to what we normally have expected (in Western cultures) as works of literature, painting, music and philosophy.

Culture is, in the field of cultural anthropology and by several scholars, equated with the study of social practices, communicative forms, and language use, through which meanings are constructed in human societies. The social anthropologist seeks to understand a culture and do that by observing behaviour and interaction among individuals within a small or limited society or a specific social system. According to Burns (1999) the area of study has been primarily termed ‘social anthropology’ in Britain, and largely ‘cultural anthropology’ in the United States (1999: 18).

From a *homogenous* way of emphasising culture as a similar set of signs and meanings, the concept of culture has been further challenged in the ‘social science’ context, for example, by Hall & du Gay (1996), and is merely related to how culture is understood in this research study. Stuart Hall’s notion is linked to his written work with cultural studies, where Hall (in Hall & du Gay 1996) states that cultural studies are not one thing-in fact it has never been one thing. His work includes a *moment of self-clarification*, which, as Hall

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emphasises, has yet to be undertaken by many studies of culture. There has been little focus on different positions, or on what questions to ask, which again depends on their context (Bhabha 1994). Regarding culture, Stuart Hall continues:

Even when cultural studies is identified with a specific national tradition like British cultural studies, it remains a diverse and often contentious enterprise, encompassing different positions and trajectories in specific context, addressing many questions, drawing nourishment from multiple roots, and shaping itself within different institutions and locations (Hall, in Grossberg et al 1992: 3 [Introduction]).

The way to understand is along the passage of time, through many encounters within new historical events, and through the extension of cultural studies into new disciplines and in a national context. All this has inevitably changed the cultural meaning as well as its use. Echoing Hall, it is clearly not possible to hope to control these developments.

### *Culture – the ‘beginning’ of cultural meaning*

Culture as a concept manifests itself in the social life and daily work that provide meaning to societies and social groups. In the present time, anthropologists have realised that different cultures are just that: different; however, cultivation remains one meaning of culture. The usage develops in relation to, and often in contrast with, the term social. In this sense, culture is of fundamental importance for the creation and building of social identity (Lefebvre 1991[1974]; Urry 2000; Palmer & Lester 2007), when referring here to context. The particular concern here is with the ways in which the cultural dynamics or ‘indicators of identity’ communicate. However, it is important to go back several decades in the theoretical debate and acknowledge that the concept of culture has undergone a significant change during this time. Following the ideology of the time, cultural meaning has been evaluated in practice (i.e. through semiotics in general – the study of signs and symbolic meanings) by Edensor (2001), MacCannell (1999 [1976]), Oswell (2006), and within the theorising of cultural meaning presented in Geertz’s *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973: 4). Culture as a concept embraces a search for a deeper meaning of objects and actions important to those who live in that particular culture, and in that shared and learned social environment that gives meaning to social life. One way of describing the ‘richness’

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of culture is through the lens of how to be human. Thus, it is ‘not to be Everyman’. To emphasise further via Geertz:

It is to be a particular kind of man, and of course men differ: “Other fields,” the Javanese say, “other grasshoppers.” Within the society, differences are recognized, too – the way a rice peasant becomes human and Javanese differs from the way a civil servant does (Geertz 1973: 53).

The statement explains how culture was looked at in a particular time and context, and through the way in which it is closely connected to social positions and identity, namely, who people were and what had become of them, as well as their belonging to that particular social system. Culture here is meaningful in terms of how to accept and understand individual behaviours and attitudes that reveal personal characteristics. One way to describe it is through the cultural understanding of ‘one universe’ or, in one social group, not the whole universe (Delaney 2011; Blaikie 2010). This interpretation has developed along the different social systems.

Culture, then, in all its flexibility, tolerates the idea that people do not only think of the ‘material’, such as tangible elements or physical things that is carried with it, but also rather include the understanding and meaning of these sometimes ‘activities and objects’ that is ‘learned’ and therefore, vital in human behaviours and attitudes. This can be seen in the transportation of people (Eriksen 1993; 2001) for example, (in the movement or transport of people themselves) as proper behaviours and ways of expecting to live meaningful lives in societies and communities, where one move to and ‘fit in’ and dwell.

When people normally speak about culture, it is likely that fellowship or a social community are what count. It is related to such concepts as a ‘practice or a matrix by which people think and act’ (Eriksen 1991: 65 and translated by this author). The term ‘ideology’, i.e. as a leading and cultural system, as discussed in Geertz (1973), once meant a collection of political proposals (prioritised needs and motifs). However, the development of many, if not all, fixed terms might represent a much deeper meaning in the better-known social world of today. The representation of this ideology (a belief, system, thought that is fundamentally socially-embedded) is rooted in the social context in which it takes place. This is true of all societies and has been explored and discussed in several ethnographies (Malinowski 1984 [1948]; Lévi-Strauss 1986; Evans-Pritchard 1965 as

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some of the ‘fathers’ of anthropology), in which the main foci have been on ‘unknown cultures’.

For Malinowski’s work *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), the anthropological strategies were unlike the one utilised in the *twentieth-century*, and “there is no politically innocent methodology for intercultural interpretation” (James Clifford, in Grossberg et al 1992: 96) when different lives are to be represented. Malinowski’s (1922) ethnography, an evolving practice of modern travel, has become increasingly suspicious of certain localising strategies in the construction and representation of “cultures”. Malinowski’s (1922) work is argued to be one of a few crucial texts that established the modern disciplinary norm of a certain kind of participant observation, such as, a vital method with which to explore culture. It was claimed that this fieldwork rejected a certain style of research: living among fellow whites, and calling up “informants” to ‘talk culture’ in a campsite while driving forth to “do the village” (James Clifford, in Grossberg et al 1992: 96).

Moreover, a great many of these “interlocutors” are complex individuals who are routinely prepared to speak in order to gain “cultural” knowledge, and they often turn out to have their own interesting “ethnographic” histories of travel. In the history of twentieth-century anthropology, therefore, as expressed by Clifford, “informants first appear as natives; they emerge as travellers” (Clifford 1992: 96-97). This is interesting discourse and knowledge, and, as such, is valuable in this research, for when dealing with hotels as public meeting grounds, it is clear that the people involved are basically strangers ‘living’ together in a hospitality society (hotels), and in line with the cultural development *in time*, and therefore related to current time in context. This is due to the fact that the culture and the social system through this lens are diverse, but inseparably linked in terms of how various participants and (different) researchers are involved in the constantly changing and dynamic, interacting culture. Thus, the term culture, in postmodern times, continues to conflate social issues, and is currently used to refer to whatever is characteristic about the ‘way of life’ of a people, a community, a nation or miscellaneous social groups. In order to aid this understanding, the work of Clifford Geertz (1973) is of significance particularly in the way he expresses it here:

One of the more useful ways-but far from the only one-of distinguishing between culture and social system is to see the former as an ordered system of meaning and

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of symbols, in terms of which social intersection takes place; and to see the latter as the pattern of social interaction itself (1973: 144).

This has been referred to as the ‘anthropological’ way of defining culture. According to Hall et al. (2013), this again has been termed the ‘cultural turn’ in the social and human sciences. The fieldwork dramatised by Malinowski (1922) required one to live full-time, (according to Clifford 1992), in the village, learning the language and being a seriously involved participant observer, while centring “the culture” on a particular locus, “the village”. For Clifford Geertz (1973) anthropologists did not study villages, they studied *in* villages. And within Geertz’s way of asserting culture, it is a study of the individuals and the groups. As is true of this research study, it is the human aspects that are of particular interest, the social dimension of co-construction and performance, although the loci, the environmental setting of hotels, mean a particular hospitality society. In the socio-cultural setting that is hotels, the interpretation of ‘what is going on here’ allows empirical research studies to understand the behaviours and reveal their meaning.

The current practices of working in the field, where social behaviours and activities take place, are also of importance to this research study. The current researcher visits the field, and the hotels, as social locations in order to observe human behaviour and activities as a *social practice* through hospitality. In doing this, the empirical approach is based on an ethnographic account to understand how a particular culture emerges. As a result, and as is generally argued, anthropologists use words with a variety of novel interpretive and written strategies. For Hall et al. (2013) this shift in anthropology, from the positivist and structuralist concern, and with language seen as a system of abstract cultural categories, towards the understanding of *meanings* are argued and communicated in terms of social values and shared cultural understanding. Perhaps we understand what this concept *is not* better than we understand what it is: “Culture is learned, not inherited [i.e., it is not biological]; it is shared not idiosyncratic [i.e., it is not psychological]; and it is particular and not universal [i.e., it is not a matter of philosophy]” as noted by Yanagisako (1993: 10). These notes also need to be taken into account when it comes to the anthropological field. One needs to be more aware of the ways social differences and their *meanings* emerge in a particular cultural context. They are thus, *culturally constituted*, which means that they emerge in relation to interconnecting patterns of meaning that are constructed, and struggled over by people who occupy different social positions and hold varying

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degrees of power (Delaney 2011). Such interpretation is likely to represent a social system that forms the hospitality culture in hotels. This is particularly true in terms of hotel practices in large hotel-chains, where hotel values, profiles and branding are competitive elements in the business strategy and that must be maintained and carefully monitored.

Looking into definitions of culture, the emphasis on cultural practices was previously mentioned in this research study in the introduction of this thesis. However, while attempting to define culture, the very analysis of culture makes it all the more diffuse, due to the compound and dynamic characteristics of this social phenomenon. For Geertz (1973), culture is emerging from representing *learned behaviour*. Thus, Geertz (1973: 14) emphasises that it is the behaviour of individuals and groups, namely, how they “act”, how they behave towards each other that is of paramount importance in a study of culture. This is significant in understanding culture in the current research study too.

A fundamental principle is that norms are rules to live by, whether of a unitary wholeness or an idea of collective consciousness (Durkheim 1933), and, therefore, represent the understanding of *cultural consensus* when it comes to commercial hospitality culture, as is the case in many hotels. Culture is also viewed as comprising of ‘social structures and social facts’ and of processes of common structures. These forms “social cohesion” (Burns 1999: 19) and there are “regulations within which they function”. The social systems in hotels are thus to be understood as the hotel society within each hotel case investigated here.

So, the recognition of the importance of culture, and what culture means in order to understand hospitality within this research study, is undoubtedly a concept of the social sciences. As has already been argued, a focus on culture locates the research within an anthropological framework. Anthropology, as debated above, is concerned with understanding the world through the social and cultural structures and social processes that individuals use when they organise, guide and give meaning to their lives: ‘structures such as work, play, kinship, ritual and faith’ (Palmer et al. 2010: 313). Through these structures, fundamental concepts such as family, familiarity, belonging, security, care, and lifestyle are all constructed and explored by individuals and groups as they experience the world around them (Goffman 1959; Van Maanen 1974; Cohen 1986; Palmer 1998). Consequently, work, as well as the particular hospitality job undertaken, visits to new places, and ephemeral encounters with different lifestyles all help to frame the way in

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which people think and feel about what being in the world actually means (Featherstone 1990). For Selwyn (1980),<sup>3</sup> the interpretation of cultural meaning through hospitality (e.g. gift exchange in terms of trade) is one way to understand the system that encompasses culture, and the early debates he illustrates with this example, highlight the discrepancy and consequences. We “...would strive to maintain an analytical separation between the types of hospitality we have been concerned with here, and commercial hospitality. There would be many, ...who would feel a sense of anxiety if ever these two were to lose their separate identity.” Selwyn ends this argument by stating: “Perhaps this is partly why some would be concerned that the vast majority of post-1975 books in the British Library’s catalogue under keyword ‘hospitality’ are devoted to the hospitality industry.” The bridges of cultures that Selwyn (1980) reconstructed through interpretations represent acts of giving and receiving at a microcosmic level of much larger events, reaching far down into day-to-day social life, and influence the way it is displayed in public and commercial arenas ‘everywhere’. To illustrate the close relationships between social and commercial hospitality, it is interesting here to quote Lugosi (2003):

...[I] am arguing that it is only possible to understand the commercial organisation of hospitality by critically examining the social aspects of hospitably production and consumption. Consequently, I am arguing that it is misleading to distinguish between the commercial, social and private or personal aspects of hospitality exchange. Issues of cultural and individual identity, social status, power, mutually defined norms and obligations are evident in all the various contexts of hospitality and at every scale (2003: 13).

However, the world is not so simple and the development of the social world has revealed (and does so continually) that it is impossible to divide societies as such, to push them into detached groups (Eriksen 1993; 2001). Depending on what and where social culture is to be explored, every society has developed a set of rules and human order that brings everyday life together into a system and practice that sets out how to act, behave and communicate (Geertz 1973). Belonging to the same frame of reference as a ‘modern’ position in its associations, the term *culture* is also used to refer to the widely circulated (global) form of pervasive and well-known music, publishing, art, design and literature. In other words, the activities of leisure time and amusement are what are known as the *mass culture* or the *popular culture* of an age. These two clichés, *high culture* versus *modern*

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<sup>3</sup> Tom Selwyn 1980, in Lashley and Morrison eds. 2000, and his work carried out in an Indian village of Singhara, illustrates the social system of rules and practices of Hindu hospitality in a rural setting.

*culture*, were, for many years, the classic way of framing the debate about culture, and had powerful effects and impacts on people's social lives (Hall et al. 2013). It is further argued that an individual's value system reflects their personal thinking and forms an individual's pattern of daily life that each person finds meaningful. For example, local main streets, designed environments surrounding parks and public buildings, and often hotels as public space, where people gathers in evenings, to socialise and are walking up and down to watch and gaze in front of others, are cultural expressions performed by young people. The liminal status they represent, explore places of pure potentiality. The youth dominate parts of the community areas, and express their culture (their beliefs and thoughts) through their visual occupation, and often using graffiti as their tool. The streets have become public locations, and have given rise to something new when it comes to feeling and meaning. Thus, in general, culture is an overarching social construction that evolves over time. It is a human concept that is broad in nature, but quite specific when it relates to particular societies. The following section will now reflect upon what we mean by hospitality and culture as it relates to modern and particular spaces. The chapter now turns to how space is co-constructed in this context.

### **2.3. The concept of space**

In the context of current thesis, the concept of space is used in several ways to understand the ever-increasing social relationship of our social lives. It comes into daily life in public areas as designed spaces in hotels. This chapter will explain: familiar and interesting spaces where to spend time or *flickering moments*, which are both everywhere and nowhere. Drawing from Edensor (2007: 31) provides a general definition of space that is useful in this context tourist spaces are realms in which particular kinds of tasks are accomplished, reproduced or performed.

This thesis seeks to understand the located social spaces in hotels referring to physical space imbued with meaning through social interactions also "as a stage, a tourist setting" (MacCannell 1973: 597). The co-construction emerges between and through interactions with other people, as noted previously, such as with members of the hospitality society established in hotels, and within the complex *togetherness* and ephemeral human encounters that occur in such public *spaces*. These interactions or more accurately the way these interactions and human contacts come into being, take place as a daily practice in

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areas and locations in hotels. Hotel spaces, airports and supermarkets, are discussed and analysed by the anthropologist Marc Augé (1995). Augé goes on to map the distinction between place, places that have a history and are where social life takes place, and non-place, places that people pass through, that are transient rather than places where people live. Commercial homes may be contrasted with the so-called *non-places* of modernity (Augé 1995) such as motels, the latter very often designed to a standardised formula in order to provide the needs, expectations and likely stop-off locations of the commercial traveller (Lynch 2005).

Furthermore, Lynch et al state “commercial homes may be deemed to represent the quintessential place of modernity, whether urban or rural...” (2007:124). The definition of the commercial home refers to the sharing of (public) space, as one way of looking into the commercial home aspect. The home/hotel dichotomy (Douglas 1991) themes related to meanings of home, and the home and hotel as *antithetical* concepts. Equally, Douglas notes that the commercial home provides a bridge between pure forms of the private home and hotel, owing to its combination of the social, commercial and domestic domains. Hotels are in many ways liminal non-places (Augé 1995) providing little opportunity for human interactions. Also found in the work of Pritchard and Morgan (2005) hotels are remarkably, under-explored spaces. However their work focuses on the liminal non-public hotel spaces of transition and transgression, spatiality and sexual adventure. Through this focus they argue that a hotel is a complex, culturally contested and ideologically loaded place and as such further research is needed into the hotel, as a sociological construct.

Hence this research study focuses on hotel space understood as the sociocultural public area where guests have time to sit down, relax and make contact with employees or with fellow guests and in this way contribute to the co-constructions of interactions and performances as a culture, through hospitality encounters. This is one of the reasons the chapter now turns to how space is co-constructed in the context of hospitality culture.

According to Low (2017), interest in space and place is growing as a result of research in environmental studies, urban studies, global system analysis, migration studies, build and design, and technologies – and other fields concerned with space, place and territory. In the field of hospitality, hotels are hospitable *stylised* hospitality spaces (Cuthill 2007). Consequently, this investigation understands space as designed spaces for socialising and interactions, communications, relaxing, and watching the *world go by*.

Hotels provide a socio-cultural space that is constructed by people as they live, albeit temporarily in the public and non-public spaces provided. In this respect, Lefebvre's (1991) concept of *lived* space is especially useful for the current context because he argues that social, lived space is not geographic space, but is rather constructed or produced by social relationships (Lefebvre 1991). Within hotels, hospitality culture is constructed and produced through the social interactions that take place as life is lived. These interactions are co-constructed performances carried out between individuals in public spaces – where people are gathered and meet face-to-face whether as guests (strangers) or hotel employees. This research focuses on the interactions that take place within the social, lived space of a hotel. This chapter continues with concepts of co-construction and performances and their position in the processes of hospitality culture.

### **2.4. Culture and hospitality**

This chapter continues to discuss the current state of the concept of hospitality. In the light of the welcoming way of performing hospitality, the initial greetings between host and guest, these will be discussed drawing on 'theatrical performance' and 'displays' in front of an audience (other guests) noted by Goffman (1961; 1963) and Turner (1982) respectively. The categories of participant-role that underlie the nature of *interaction* will be observed in this public context.

In recent years, the term 'hospitality' has been used more frequently between the many hospitality sectors (Pantelidis 2014). However, the concept of hospitality is much more than - and beyond the mere understanding of - hospitality as an industry. As the very "heart of the hospitality" (Pantelidis 2014: 2) is difficult to grasp, it has been argued that different approaches to hospitality, as concepts rather than definitions of hospitality, are likely to bridge any gaps in order to link the diverse interpretations of the term. A deeper meaning of the term that develops and contributes to a broader understanding of hospitality, for example, hospitality culture, is also an area into which this investigation seeks to gain insights. The research study, therefore, focuses on the social elements of the concept of hospitality, namely, how hospitality culture is co-constructed between participants in the hospitality society. It also examines how interactions occur throughout the individual interplays and social *performance(s)* between guests and staff, staff and staff, guest and guest, and the ways in which the above contribute to hospitality culture within a hotel.

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However, the current interest in hospitality ‘experiences’ among scholars and researchers (Lugosi et al 2010; Lugosi 2009, 2003; Cuthill 2007; Bell, 2007b; Molz & Gibson 2007b; Lashley & Morrison 2000) lacks the prolonged focus of attention required when it comes to understanding hospitality in public places from a cultural and sociological viewpoint. Hospitality issues as ‘spirit of hospitality’, as highlighted in Lynch et al (2011), ‘hospitality as the ethics of social relations’ in Molz & Gibson (2007b), and hospitality studies about ‘social work of hostgusting’ (Bell 2011), who also explores ‘Hospitality [as] Society’, are conceptual contributions that provide support to this research study. The social work of hospitality, and where it occurs, is vital due to the way it is emerging in hotels.

Dregen (2008) describes hotels as those ‘public places [,]... the physical locations where we learn to live with strangers’ (2008: 23). Conscious hospitality culture is likely to manage just that. Hospitality is a phenomenon that evokes the age-old and persistent question of how we should welcome the stranger. To borrow from the Editorial Introduction to *Mobilizing and Mooring Hospitality* by Molz & Gibson (2007b),

Hospitality is a profoundly evocative concept that reverberates with culture, political and ethical undertones. It conjures up a jumbled collage of images and senses drawn from ancient mythology, cultural traditions, scriptural references, tourism metaphors, regional stereotypes, national narratives, and government policies. Hospitality reveals its complex nature in a range of places, moments, objects and fantasies, from the material gestures of a warm smile, laden table or cosy bed, to the moral tales of Philemon or the Good Samaritan, to the iconic symbols of an open door or of the Statue of Liberty welcoming the world’s tired, poor, huddles and homeless masses. At the same time, the concept of hospitality embodies its own impossibility, calling to mind images of exclusion, closure and violence: walled borders, gated communities, asylum detention centres, and race riots (2007b: 1).

Hospitality studies allow for a scientific examination of the social dimensions involved, along with the studies of the economic nature of hospitality and the service management hospitality locus. Indeed, many interesting prospects and research avenues are being presented in journals and literature, and new areas in this discipline of social hospitality have moved the host/guest perspective towards the centre of hospitality interest, to where it once started (Lashley et al 2007a). All these ‘new areas’ in which hospitality is at the centre, involve societies and the philosophy behind the construction of social hospitality and hospitality culture. As such, it is understood as the act of giving hospitality and receiving hospitality. This subject is central here and, as such, will be explored thoroughly. Certain elements of culture in hospitality serve as one of its main functions, which are to

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establish relationships, and make friends and familiars out of strangers and people from cultures with unfamiliar codes and attitudes. Being intimidating or unfriendly in this context is not an issue, since the alternative to giving hospitality is choosing simply to ignore (meaning overlook, and not pay attention to all guests) other's existence in this context. To offer no response, to ignore the reciprocity of a friendly approach or to refuse to share an experience with another person is also a human element of hospitality. Various types and grades of behaviour represent hospitality culture as is often observed in public places (Bell 2007b; Lugosi 2006; 2009).

In order that hospitality culture will contribute to the broadening of our conceptual knowledge, the social value of interactions and work performances should be both acknowledged and understood. Firstly, the concept of hospitality culture needs to be centred on a sociological level in the form of relationships, thereby shaping the hospitality culture offered in context, and in everyday practice, within this context (Cockburn-Wooten & Brewis 2014). Thus, the current state of the concepts of hospitality are reflected round the purpose of this research, between ethics, and standards and values that have developed on a sociocultural tentative notion of 'otherness', and hospitality as the ethics of social relations (Molz & Gibson 2007b).

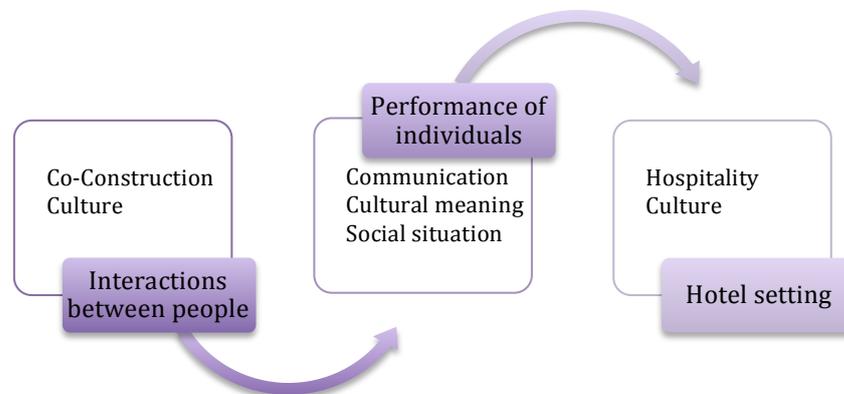
The following attempt to draw on the latest hospitality-focussed research studies, which relate directly to the current thesis, is therefore, not only fascinating, but also acutely necessary. Nevertheless, it is not the purpose of this chapter to fully elaborate on the development of hospitality as such. Rather, it is to provide the reader with a context that emphasises the significant 'paradigmatic changes' that have occurred in the social and cultural aspects of hospitality as a result of efforts to both understand and realise the meaning of the social dimensions herein. It also indicates that the study of hospitality is more broadly concerned with sociocultural explorations. The development of hospitality as an academic subject belongs to the study of hospitality that must engage in "the presentation and representation of hospitality in all its forms if it ever is to be properly understood" (Lashley et al 2007: 152).

Drawing on Goffman (1959), and his primary concern regarding working places, hospitality culture will be evaluated. In addition to this, "the creation and extension of hospitality relationships" (Andrew 2016) as *the interface between guest and host*, might be revealed. The processes of hospitality culture are represented as *signifying practice* (Hall

1977) and as a model of dialogue. However, as Hall et al (2013: xxvi) puts it – *dialogic*, and the presence of shared cultural codes, are only to ‘some degree’ shared.

Thus, in general, culture is an overarching social construction that evolves over time. It is a human concept that is broad in nature, but quite specific when it relates to particular societies. This section will now reflect upon the growing nature of culture as it relates to modern life in terms of hospitality. Figure 2 illustrates the three concepts of *culture*, *co-construction* and *performance* in this research study and their influences on the social life of hotels.

**Figure 2 - Influences in the social life of hotels**



The nature of hotel practices and operations is generally people engaging in daily interactions. The way it is delivered becomes the hotel hospitality culture in this study. In contrast with other public places (conference sites, shopping malls, airports and so on), hotels seem to have a different role, that of an attractive destination of hospitality, while at the same time enjoying the advantages of being just that, a ‘destination’ in itself. This means that there is competition between hotels ‘out there’, locally, nationally and globally. The fact that hotels specialise and perfect their products, recruit skilled employees, provide training programmes and offer internal reward systems to employees confirms this position (Molz & Gibson 2007b; Bell 2011). They *sustain* their culture, and co-construct their culture position as cultural hospitality institutions while doing so. The comforts and benefits of home are reinforced or reinvented through their exposure to difference.

This is part of the hotel strategy. This may not be true of all hotels, but is so for hotels that have guests who request an extended stay from time to time (Dregen 2008). The hospitality

culture, and how it is co-constructed and practised, might suit the guests. The purposes of the hospitality attitude among employees are created in order for the guests to feel comfortable. The ‘wellness’ elements have a strong position in many public places where people come together (Cuthill 2007; Lynch 2005). Certain types of place can evoke different types of experience, both good and bad. Pleasant memories that people hold for places motivate them to repeat visits (Burns and Novelli 2008).

The values of being an attraction strengthen the hospitality culture. It is likely to create positive vibes, because employees feel proud of their place of work, and they identify with it (Goffman 1961; 1963). The experience of hotels, as might be practised through hospitality, fits well in this concept. Hotels often evoke extraordinary images (reputation and historical memories), and are frequently located in picturesque or scenic surroundings, depending on the type of hotel, their hospitality products, services and amenities offered (Laerdal 2012; King 1995). Of particular interest in the context of this research study when it comes to exploring hotels in terms of *liminal sites*, are Lugosi (2008; 2009) and Lugosi et al (2010), and also Pritchard & Morgan (2005). Yet, liminal sites are not discussed in this research study, but are interesting to bear in mind for further investigations. This is mentioned here related to the hospitality society and the group of people that visit, stay and sometimes live in hotels. As such, the former represent the group of guests in time and in the nature of the range of efficiencies/pleasures provided, and the latter related to critical interaction spaces (designed for a purpose/pertaining to co-construction and performance in limited time) in this context. The following section will introduce a stimulating establishment of culture through hospitality activities – namely, its co-construction.

### **2.5. Co-construction of culture**

When humans encounter, cultures encounter too, and *new* culture emerges. Individual languages, customs, ideas and traditions can separate humans from each other. But, if humans strive and are committed and endeavour contacts, they can build bridges together – across interactions, through activities and communications. Co-construction has, in the broadest sense, the ability to create ‘togetherness’, meaning that co-construction is constituted by people and for people (in hotels). In this case, it is between guests and guests, guests and employees, and employees and key persons in the management (general manager, front staff and responsible employees and corporate partners – as will be further presented in Chapter

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Three). Their interactions and activities co-construct a hospitable environment that stimulates interaction. This type of contact creates friendly, social situations that the participants involved enjoy together. Hence, they are able to establish new relationships both in the short term and in the long terms, a condition that is meaningful for both guests and employees. Guests might perceive welcoming procedures as being more honest and real (Bell 2007a; 2011; Botterill 2000; Cresswell 2006; Cohen 1984). It is also mutually beneficial to the relationships between employees and guests, who might see each other again, possibly during frequent visits. The result of relationships such as these are valuable, and they underpin the feeling of ‘coming home’ which is often experienced the next time people enter the hotel.

Furthermore, as a freestanding term, the word co-construction refers in this study, to joint creation, skill and social performance. This means skilled and specialised personnel, learned behaviour through hospitality training, innate characteristics and individual appealing conduct, manner and etiquette. Such behaviours are also related to ways of delivering services as well as the ability to create social individual contact across borders. These *dimensions* are again related in the current study to emotions, activities and social actions or other culturally meaningful realities that might occur (Jacoby & Ochs 1995). The co-prefix in *co-construction* is intended to cover a range of interactional processes, including collaboration, communication, language behaviour interactions, and teamwork in hotels (Lugosi 2014a; Lugosi et al 2010; Lugosi 2008). One way to understand co-construction is related to language behaviour, discourse, and social interaction – which some might call linguistic or communicative *performance* (Ochs 1993) – and it is used to study communicative *competence*, not as an abstract construct or a model, but as a performance which plays out in all its incredible complexity as people go about managing their *selves*, their identities, their relationships, and their lives (Briggs 1984; Ochs 1993).

In a different vein of co-construction, it is about conceiving two constructs that create one theme, just as two individuals with the same logic share and understand each other’s meaning. In this research study, co-construction relates to human activities. It concerns guests and visitors together in a daily routine, and in company with hotel employees, namely host and guest. Culture is a social construction in itself, and needs individuals or societies in order for it to become specific and particular in social situations. This is done by bringing in personal culture and meaning to joint activities. Hence, the situations often

have socially and already established structures of how to ‘understand’ the social life *per se*, as well as the pattern of individual behaviours.

Still in hotels, the relationships between people are not always obvious and do not necessarily come naturally. It might occasionally come voluntarily, from both guests and employees, who are working and ‘living’ there. They might also have their particular and personal contact patterns when interacting with each other in the first place (Lofland 1976; Lugosi et al 2010; Lashley et al 2007b). The following section takes the social perspectives to be understood within this context, as the culture the hotel society lives by.

### *Culture – understanding social perspectives*

This section continues to focus on important perspectives of culture, and any conversation and exploration of culture needs to acknowledge the complexities and contradictions inherent in the concept (Delaney 2011; Palmer et al. 2010). Such a condition is necessary due to the many different ways culture has been, and still may be, defined. ‘Culture is public because meaning is’ (Geertz 1973:12). That is to say, culture consists of socially established structures of meaning that belong to, and make sense to, the people who live their daily lives within or through it. Geert Hofstede (1984; 1998) has defined ‘culture’ as the collective programming of *the mind* that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people, from others. In 1980 he published his book *Culture’s Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. As the title suggests, this book was entirely devoted to the study of culture at the national level, in which values played a major role. The book’s main innovation was its use of the concept (paradigm) of dimensions of culture: basic problems to which different national societies have, over time, developed different answers. Understandings of culture then depend on the perspective of the individual or group concerned and the context in which the concept is being explored and analysed. The views discussed above, take into account the interpretations that belong to meaningful exchanges of culture.

Looking more closely at what occurs in cafés, as public meeting places, Laurier and Philo (2006) discuss what they call ‘the welcome of customers’. Here, workers perform ‘hosting’ in commercial hospitality spaces, they argue, for example, through their reactions to each other, their willingness (or not) to share space or assist one another. Guests perform host-

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ness through their interactions, and in so doing they provide a silent or tacit *feel* of the place which they share. It is also noticed by Laurier & Philo (2006) that during the welcoming performance, employees may choose to make a very selective welcome, and, therefore, be inhospitable to ‘others’ whose presence is not valued, or choose between diverse mood of attitude and behaviours appropriate to them in social situations. So, the concept of hospitality culture can be fragile and spontaneous at the same time (Laurier & Philo, in Molz & Gibson (eds.) 2007a).

According to Burns (1999), the *co-construction* of culture has a range of meanings, and these meanings are related to the context in which they function. If, from an anthropological viewpoint, one’s own habits and perceptions are understood as being created and shaped in a particular atmosphere and milieu, then it might be easier to accept conditions and value systems in societies external to one’s own. This is likely to be the case in public places and even more so where many different people come together and enter or leave as a constant flow of ‘strangers’, as, for example, in the case of hotels. Eriksen (2003) states that it is not possible to draw boundaries for a society and, hence, to contemplate societies as ‘demarcated’ wholes; in other words, viewing a society as one unit. Eriksen (2003) explains this by using the criterion of *political power*, where the society in this case is the relationship of people operating within the same apparatus of political power (a group of people working with political issues and community concerns, having their particular culture excluded to others). This confirms that culture is context-related and unfolds over time.

Additionally, human activities and interactions within a certain context are designed by the language that people use to clarify their meaning of objects and *things*, as well as through the feelings and emotions that are expressed on people’s faces. It is by the use of *things*, what is said, how individuals think and might feel about them, and how they are presented or represented, that offers their meanings in daily social life (Delaney 2011). The way individuals represent themselves shows their social members, as well as like-minded others in the same setting, what they like, who they are and how they might understand the social situation they share – but in their sociocultural context wherein an individual belongs or fits in (Delaney 2011; Hall 1996; Moore 2012). Culture is involved in all these personal practices, and people - that is, the guests and employees involved in this research study -

invite others to join in and share values and meaning, experiences and memories, by making them meaningful during encounters and relationships.

Equally, *globalisation* also influences everyday life as much as it does events happening on a world scale. In a “globalising world, where information and images are routinely transmitted across the globe”, people are frequently in contact with others who also might think differently, and live differently, from ourselves (Giddens 2001: 4). This has consequences for cultural complexity. Indeed, it can be argued that anthropology is vital for understanding the present world. The next section will outline the current state of this research where the co-construction and performances will be highlighted in a symbiosis of ‘hospitality as *home*’ and ‘hospitality as *commercial*’. Before this outline, the concept of performance will be discussed in general.

### **2.6. The concept of performance**

This section will like to point out more generally what and how to understand performance drawing from the work of Richard Schechner (2003, 2006). The phenomena called either/or “drama,” “theater,” “performance” occur among all the world’s peoples and evidence indicates that dancing, singing, wearing masks and/or costumes, impersonating other humans, animals, or supernatural beings, acting out stories are a fundamental part of the human condition (Schechner 2003, 2006). Schechner (2003) argues that *Performances are actions*, they are what people do in the activity of their doing and as such culture manifests itself through ‘players’ in on-going relationships that are performances. However, performances must be constructed as a broad spectrum of human actions and activities ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and as argued here hotels. Some of these performances are one of a kind while others are generic; some are rituals; some entertainments. The work of Goffman is useful here with his focus on how everyday life is framed and performed, “all the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn’t are not easy to specify” (1959: 72). It is not easy because everyday life is submerged with interactions that are rule-bound, conventions that are networks of reciprocal expectations and obligations.

So, what is performance, and what is to perform? In business, sports, and sex, “to perform” is to do something up to a standard – to succeed, to excel. In the arts, “to perform” is to put on a show, a play, a dance, and a concert. In everyday life, “to perform” is to show off, to

go to extremes, to underline an action for those who are watching. This is how Schechner (2003) explain how performance can be understood. He explains further that in the twenty-first century, people as never before live by means of performance, and can also be understood in relation to:

Being

Doing

Showing doing

Explaining “showing doing.”

“Being” is existence itself, it is a philosophical category pointing to whatever people theorise is the “ultimate reality.” “Doing” and “showing doing” are actions. This nicely illustrates how performance is used in this research. A hotel is a theatre within which culture is performed through the being, doing and interactions (the ‘showing doing’) that occur between people as they request, give and receive hospitality. The next section discusses performance, space, home, and culture in relation to the focus of this research, hotels and hospitality.

## **2.7. Investigating Co-construction and Performance**

There is a different and new ‘position’ of hospitality, as Botterill (2000) points out, which includes the hospitality industry as a ‘working place’. For Elizabeth Telfer (in Lashley & Morrison eds. 2000), the commercial hospitality seems like a contradiction in terms: its location is not a home, the hospitality is not given, and the guests are not invited. But Telfer (2000: 40) argues further regarding the differences in “home and commercial hospitality” and states that it can be too simplistic in the general sense of the word, and that the commercial one may be motivated by a concern for guests’ welfare.

As Telfer (2000) continues with her argument, commercial hospitality “at its best shares many features of private hospitality”, and she also argues that it is possible that commercial hosts may possess the skills of being a *good host*. The hotel as a commercial location, is acknowledged as the icon of the hospitality industry, and is the key field in which to investigate hospitality culture (Bell 2011), and to establish how it is constructed as a hospitality practices in everyday life situations in this context. The host/guest

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relationships provide this study with important participants who act as social inter-actors and co-constructors of the hospitality culture. So being a good host involves skills as well as effort, and the basic skills of what good hosts are good at involves making their guests happy, and fulfilling their needs. Moreover, the hosts should know how to please the guests and should be able to bring this about by drawing on Telfer's "skilful and attentive" work-acting (2000: 44). Welfare then, and pleasure and proper services, have to be considered to be motivators in establishing hospitality. If the hosts (e.g. employees working with hospitality attitude and deliveries, or front staff in hotels), when they are not initially inviting their guests, they rather mobilise the 'spirit' in which to provide a *hospitality mood*, and employees are *entertaining* and must have some regard for the guests.

This *mood* is closely related to atmosphere, the way Ben Anderson (2009) describe and argues atmosphere used in everyday speech and aesthetic discourse. He deems the word atmosphere as used interchangeably with mood, homely, feeling, ambience, tone and other ways of naming collective affects. Anderson refers to what Gernot Böhme (1993) argues that atmosphere of a destination (hotel) is the subjective experience of *place reality* that the people in the destination share with one another. However, atmosphere, he claims, has always a subjective part, and it is felt or sensed the moment one become touched or affected by the particular atmosphere. So, it is to believe that it is empirically adequate as well as context related, in the way it is sensed, felt and understood as a part of the social meaning in co-construction and performance of hospitality culture. To enable the reader to consider how atmospheres surround people, things and environments:

Thus one speaks of the serene atmosphere of a spring morning or the homely atmosphere of a garden. On entering a room one can feel oneself enveloped by a friendly atmosphere or caught up in a tense atmosphere. We can say of a person that s/he radiates (or releases) an atmosphere, which implies respect, of a man or a woman that a sensual atmosphere surrounds them.

(Böhme 2009: 113-114)

Goffman (1959, 1963) clarifies behaviour in public places as well as utilises his 'framework' of *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, in order to demonstrate the fragility of hospitality as a culture of highly skilled and socially co-constructed performances. Goffman explains his use of the metaphor of a theatrical performance, and asserts:

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I have been using the term performance to refer to all the activity of an individual, which occurs during a period marked by his (sic) continuous presence before a particular set of observations. It will be convenient to label as front that part of the individual's performance, which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance.

(Goffman, 1959: 32)

*Theatres* of activities from another vein of social performance, serve as one means of articulating social structures. They provide the symbolic means to enable people to leave and/or join social groups, when they are familiar with their cultural codes—or leave if they feel alienated and disaffected (Turner 1974). Based on how 'to fit' in and 'to feel welcomed' in the hotel, the reception spaces in hotels serve to interconnect the hospitality ambiance which, in many ways, is intangible, but is nonetheless sensed and attentive. The cultural codes refer to the organisation of the hotel and the practices in terms of employees 'clothing' and dress code. Such codes also refer to the interior and design, for example, the carpeting, fabrics and colours, and flower arrangements in addition to all the other material objects that bolster the settings. These signals and social symbols make it easier to navigate between the many hotels and to choose the one that matches personal interests and tastes. The hospitality culture will also reflect the norms, rules and traditions of individual behaviour in that particular social situation. This concept is supported by MacCannell (1999), who argues that all cultures are composed of the same elements, though, in different combinations. So the understanding of culture in the western European societies is that the mix of many cultures constructs a new culture with which it is possible to identify oneself.

### *Social situation*

Some scholars use *cultural* and *social* in similar ways, and this may be perceived as blurring. However, the fact is that the one cannot exist without the other. Another important aspect, which has already been noted, is that culture can only be created and constructed between and by people in *social* situations. Social situations cannot happen without culture, although culture, on the other hand, is non-existent without a social situation (Giddens 2001). The following explanation is an attempt to outline what culture means today and how it can be used in this research study. As an example, a theatre and a theatrical scene cannot exist without actors and audiences. There must be a relationship or

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a social bonding between the performer and the receiver, and vice-versa. This interaction (two-way communication) or shared social relations *are* culture – a view adopted in this research study. Culture today is best understood as relating to an individual's daily life that is shared with other individuals, embedded in common values, norms and customs, symbols, metaphors (in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used of one thing is applied to another) as is argued, for example, by Pine & Gilmore (eds.) in their work entitled: *The experience economy. Work is theatre and every business is a stage* (1998). This forms mutual understanding and respect within a fixed social group is valuable position in this research study. Who is entertaining and who is entertained, might well be identified and social situations may be revealed alongside the analysis, through the hermeneutical interpretation in this research study.

In identifying parallel debates in culture and hospitality studies (Lashley et al 2007; Hollingshead 2004; Molz & Gibson 2007a; Bell 2011), the concept of culture differs from the concept of social beliefs and practices. In every society, it has been said that humans, for example, have constructed mind-sets of social reality and they have implemented these as social practices. From the perspective of each society, what they say and do are not part of a culture but part of sociology of everyday life. However, there are many groups, beliefs and practices of others. What is more, such differences, as argued by Robert N. St. Clair, (2015) are of a cultural nature. The concept of cultural differences, therefore, which influence the different domains of social practices, is not limited to psychiatry. In the area of business, for example, scholars and researchers have compared how business operates in seven different cultures. It is argued that even if these people were given the same model of business, they would change it to accommodate their cultural traditions (St. Clair 2015). In this research study, it is expected to reveal that both employees and guests will use their own and specific combinations of actions, cultural behaviours and objects in order to create and construct unique performances. They display as their show or play with a twist and hospitality spirit - enactments and hospitality moments, and all this in given situations/events in spaces where it clearly emanates and emerges, and discussed in this Chapter Two. Nevertheless, it is not the purpose here to fully elaborate on the construction of alternative hospitality, but rather to provide the reader with a context that emphasises certain paradigmatic elements in hospitality culture. This is where the thesis now turns.

### *Traditions and Metaphors*

*Tradition* is an important element of culture both in tourism and hospitality locations. People seem to relate to traditions that have memorable events, particular costumes and clothing, as well as local design, handicrafts and food. Eating out has become ‘a tradition’ in local societies and within all social groups, a custom that hotels utilise in many ways. For example, hotels with a focus on hospitality culture have placed an importance on ensuring that their kitchen has a high level of food preparation with fresh ingredients guaranteed. Tradition is brought into a hotel experience through novel ways of providing food and everyday meals for guests and visitors. Certain forms of food have become ‘trendy’. A traditional ‘Farmers’ Market’, where farmers can sell their products straight to the customer, has today turned out to be a popular place for ‘short-travelled food’. As is the case in hotels, this is associated with healthy and fresh food free from additives or flavourings, and is in line with the current culinary and cultural thinking that accompanies ‘the good life’.

Tradition therefore, is a *term* in this research study of hospitality culture, with connotations and meanings often related to ‘home culture’ and the way people might take care of social structures in a ‘homely’ environment. They are emotionally connected as well as comfortable with certain social objects. Giddens states that ‘traditions evolve over time, but can also be quite suddenly altered or transformed’ (2001: 40). Generally speaking, Giddens argues from a deeper sociological perspective that tradition is both ‘invented’ and ‘reinvented’, and that tradition always has incorporated power often to suit kings and emperors, priests and others, in an attempt to legitimise their rule.

Invented and reinvented traditions can be seen as public celebrations whose purposes evolve over time. Bonfire Night in the UK is a traditional event. Today, many people simply enjoy the evening for the bonfire itself, the smell of fire and sounds of drums, as a social activity and as a remarkable night of cultural experience, rather than marking it as a political event. The initial meaning and purpose of many sports and cultural events have also changed to become modern happenings on a much bigger scale, one example being The Olympic Games (History 2010). These big events build on traditions, but because they have reached a level of vast engagement, there are significant impacts on the host

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community and the local hotel industry, which are also important elements of the current study.

Traditions are as diverse as culture. In other words, what is argued here is that it is wrong to suppose that for a given set of symbols or practices to be seen as traditional or even to be called a culture that they must have existed for centuries. Culture is an everyday concern, and traditions are also invented to become just that: a tradition, meaningful to individuals and societies in different places, from an international perspective as well as a local one. Some of these social aspects (current culture, representation, social meaning) will be discussed and analysed later in this document.

Current research study takes performance as Metaphor (Crang 1997; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Goffman 1959), and it bridges the gap between hospitality delivery (in the doing) and the co-construction of hospitality cultural engagement (in the desire to do), and between work and emotions, which are also important in this research. The pictorial elements that are illustrated in the study are represented as symbols. They are strategies that explain the meanings and understanding *outside* the picture, in the way that they mentally indicate hospitality and something of tangible possession. In both art and advertising, the intent of photography is largely metaphoric. The hotel brochures or the photographs of the interior design and materiality are excellent examples and are of particular use here. These objects present possible 'experiences of pleasure' or 'moments of hospitality' that people will be able to participate in if they visit this hotel. The metaphor stands for something else; there is a hidden message or meaning. Based on this, it is useful to look to metaphors as a literary way of making sense, since metaphors are often used to carry another meaning and can either understate or exaggerate a narrative (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

Thus, to make it clear, a metaphor is a symbol that stands for something else. Eriksen (2001) explains this using an example of the way the milk tree among the Ndembu stands for fertility among women. It can also be seen as a 'collective representation', namely, what it means to people, how it helps to make sense of the world, and how it gives meaning and direction to human existence. These are also thoughts that are shared and found in hermeneutical and interpretive systems, and are evident in Evans-Pritchard's work on the 'Nuer' religion (1956), and in an essay by Geertz (1973) concerning 'Religion as a Cultural System'. This is mentioned here because it is related to social functions, and

holds meanings for the people belonging to this culture. The Oxford Dictionary definition of metaphor is:

The figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object different from, but analogous to, that to which it is properly applicable.

### *Culture – processes of human practices*

Burns et al. (2010) state that the interest in culture has grown to such an extent that it has become a factor of economic significance in many destinations throughout Europe. Due to its importance and the growing interest among travellers to visit and interact with ‘other’ cultures and to experience the mixed and multifaceted nature of cultures seen and visible in hotels, these locations both provide contrasting hospitality culture and make use of it in terms of conference themes and special arrangements (hotel websites and online information). People that are residents, guests and visitors are likely to feel comfortable because they can come and go as they please, meaning that they share something in common, they are interested and feel attached to some social events. Individuals can join in as hotel guests or visitors. This aspect encompasses the possibility of creating new social places, which are to be experienced and engaged in, albeit to a limited degree, in contrast to open access for *all*. Culture is a dynamic process. The cultural networks continue to develop and create meaning directed from new social trends and ways of everyday living. This is further emphasised by Anderson:

We live in a world of cultural places. You and I, and that person across from you in the library/café/bedroom, are in the cultural world. We live in it, we survive it (hopefully), and we contribute to it, every day and night (2010: 1).

This definition mirrors the empirical world and recognises that we all are co-creating the cultural places we live in. This definition has a bearing on understanding culture, and deems it worthy to investigate the co-constructed performances of hospitality culture in public spaces, such as in hotels. However, culture is complicated and before ending this section, a reflection from Anderson regarding research on ‘culture’ would be helpful in setting the on-going agenda:

*What is this thing called ‘culture’? Culture is human practice* (2010: 27).

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Moreover, culture is no longer entity acting above and on human beings. Based on a further explanation of what culture is:

[It is a] process in which people are actively engaged ... [it is] a dynamic mix of ... practices that people create, not a fixed thing or entity governing humans (Anderson & Gale 1999: 3).

The meaning of, and method of understanding culture here, is about the approach to culture: what people make, how they make it, and the effects that these yields have. The dynamism is controlled in the people themselves, it is argued. It is not about what culture has done to them; rather, it is what people do. As such, this is an aspect of culture that focuses on people, the different and numerous individuals and their social life. This is also of importance to the current investigation. This research study is about hospitality culture, the co-construction of it, and, hence, about the people who construct this culture. It is about interactions between people, performances and the taking and giving of hospitality (reciprocity) between people, and the public arena where hospitality culture is constructed and occurs (Lugosi 2003; 2006; 2009; Selwyn 2000 in Lashley & Morrison (eds.); Selwyn 1980; Pantelidis 2014), and also paid for.

The experiences and individual creativity people utilise in order to form their understanding of culture in a global perspective does not mean that it draws only on extended elements from 'out there', but also from 'in here' within their own cultural systems. In that way, it is possible to 'take the best of each' type of living. People do this, and also mix lifestyles, food and places to live. Occasionally, individual lifestyles seem to display new ways of social status and are present among people of all ages, particularly in the Western world. Based on everyday encounters with guests in hotels, which are also called the *moments of truth* (see Carlzon 1989, 2014). This phrase refers to the production and performance of hospitality happening simultaneously, where the welcoming sequence in the hotel reception area, the first encounter between the employee/host and guest, is a fresh delivery of the hospitality experience as service. This activity cannot be met more than once. Thus, it has to be done the right way the first time. There is no second chance in this context, and the hospitality experience in terms of performance is not a 'shelf item' (Heide et al 2007; 2009; Lugosi et al 2009; Gjerald 2010). Hotels have their particular way of delivering their hospitality and thus, closely connected to a 'this is how we do it here' type of attitude. From here, the understanding of hospitality culture related to hotels, the

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line between generating new, broader insights and the contribution to knowledge might be spawned.

The reflections of recent research in the field (Lugosi 2014a), and the focus on those theoretical insights that are particularly relevant to this research study, will guide the understanding of social hospitality and will be the lens through which hospitality culture in hotels can be observed and understood. Hospitality culture in hotels has not been challenged from an ontological stand. Consequently, the central elements these cultural locations contain, such as designed spaces for public activities, décor and material objects, and the cultural diversity of people, must be closely observed and mapped, as a way of embracing deeper meanings of hotel practices. ‘After all, hospitality is the act or practice of receiving and entertaining guests, visitors, and/or strangers, with liberality and goodwill’ (Lashley et al. 2007a: 101).

The hospitality industry and job roles are still under-explored in this context. Employees need to understand their work, the hotel practices and what kind of challenges their work might confront. Hospitality work is often related to emotional work (Hochschild 2003, 1983). It is about putting oneself at the service of others, and this is generally consistent with the earliest forms of hospitality, as have already been discussed in this paper. Moreover, ensuring the happiness of others by offering food and drink, shelter and entertainments was not only an obligation towards others. The hosts expected that, in turn, they would be the recipients of equal hospitality. The history of hospitality, then, was never completely altruistic; the possibility of future benefit to the host was never far below the surface. However, awards and rewards are always the long-term benefits, both tangible and intangible. To paraphrase Lashley and Morrison (2000), reciprocity is based on money exchange or, as is noted by Molz and Gibson (2007a), often compensates for a kindness. In fact, many authors have thought in similar ways. Referring to Santich (in Lashley et al. 2007: 51), ‘almost always, hospitality implied a reciprocal relationship, which imposed certain obligations on the guest’. The modest thinking in the processes of ‘giving hospitality’ is what people pay for in commercial settings, of course. Hotels are commercial entities, but they aim to go beyond the commercial aspect. That is where the social entertainments and events enter the scene, wherein employees have time and ‘see’ the guests; provide a personal touch to their service more than provision based entirely on commercial grounds.

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Logically, the hotel must earn money from hospitality, and this might manifest itself in arranged public areas as hotels represent. These social spaces stimulate hospitality cultural co-constructions. Employees in hotels with a hospitality focus want to apply for jobs in such establishments, want to work within a social 'richness' dealing with human beings, because they themselves have an extrovert and hospitable mind and personality. This is important in order for the hospitality industry to receive more insights into, and knowledge of, these subjects, as well as to support future planning. Such is the philosophy that drives this research study and has influenced the research design.

Between processes of human practices in the field of hospitality, hotels arrange special activities not only for their residents, but also for local residents and local visitors. Hotels may present a local culinary experience, as mentioned earlier, or they may want to host a dinner evening with special entertainment, actual social themes and trendy performances and activities (Heide et al 2007; 2009; Hemmington 2007; Laerdal 2012), utilising the hotel location, secluded areas or designed, suitable spaces.

These types of activities in hotels are different from the loyalty programmes that they normally direct towards their business customers. This might, therefore, include some people and exclude others (Lugosi 2006), which forces new establishments of social spaces to attract the 'right' people. In a multi-cultural place such as a hotel, where new guests flow in and out of designed spaces, it is interesting to explore how the movements and dwellings of people might influence hospitality culture. This is useful to know because the proliferation or explosion of urban lifestyles witnessed in recent years has focused the attention of hotel developers on cities and has fuelled the cultural competition between urban arenas, with the aim of attracting more travelling visitors in general, but also to perform as appealing destinations for whole regions. The regeneration, renewal and revitalisation of urban arenas are aspects on which hospitality culture has a bearing.

In this way, hotels and their hospitality venues are ranked as desirable or undesirable based on the lifestyle designs and scenarios that are, to borrow a term from Lugosi, (2006) performed and consumed in co-production, and where employees and guests jointly create the cultural hospitality. In general, hospitality is perceived by most people, as what hotels *do*, providing hospitality for a variety of different people, whose 'worlds' are likely to be quite far apart. However, the people who like to stay here might find some common ground; they find they relate to others with similar experiences, for example, and share

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their interests and world-views more relaxed through social living in hotels. Since this investigation concerns the co-construction and the performance of hospitality culture, only individuals (members of the hotel society) who contact each other can be observed, as to bring forward what the interactions co-construct of meanings herein.

In hotels, and through the concept of hospitality, people look forward to the degree of tolerance and acceptance of differences both broader and more ‘tangible’ than elsewhere, with respect to public spaces. The history of the development of hospitality culture is linked to the hospitality industry itself, and the hotels provide a wide range of diverse levels of hospitality, as their unique hotel product. Bell (2007c, 2011) and Lugosi (2014) took a different approach when determining the unique nature of hospitality from a social perspective. However, to explore the particularities that shape the co-construction in this culture, and to gain a wider understanding of the social realm in hotels, it is suggested that, first and foremost, “hospitality is essentially a relationship based on host and guest” (Lashley et al 2000b: 136).

The information available every day in terms of having the choice to select activities in which to participate, supports the guests and connects them with the hospitality product. According to Lockwood and Medlik (2001), most establishments that provide services, including hospitality services, offer *intangibles*. However, *intangibles* are difficult to describe, and are often characterised by such terms as *feel*, *comfort*, *experience*, *look*, *satisfaction*. Lockwood and Medlik discuss this concept further, arguing that, in each case, these terms are very personal and are defined by the guests based upon their perceptions, attitudes and beliefs. They state that it is the intangibles that will drive guests’ behaviour (*customer*) and motivation in the future as they seek to obtain relaxation in their life (*satisfaction*) and value from all the experiences related to their consumption (*purchase*). They complete their arguments by affirming the establishments (*firms*) that can do this with the greatest amount of integrity, reliability, consistency and honesty.

It is such establishments that will be the long-term winners of tomorrow’s hospitality guests (*customer*) (Lockwood & Medlik 2001). What is evident from the literature is that hospitality associations place great emphasis on the personal nature of the host-guest relationship. This section will end with the alternative perspective as reflected in Brotherton’s ‘definition’ of hospitality:

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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' (Brotherton in Lashley et al 2007a: 52).

The definition is clear about the dynamic process of hospitality and the 'wellness subject', meaning caring and treatment, which is also designed to provide a good experience. However, it is not only received one-way, but is also mutually beneficial for the worker and the receiver (Lugosi 2003). Because hospitality is offered to please the guests – even while they pay for the service or hospitality provided – different kinds of hospitality involve a variety of guest 'types'. The idea is that hotels, which focus on hospitality culture, might construct places for their guests and visitors for the purpose of their personal involvement with, and engagement in, the production of activities in situ. In this research study, culture relates to the individual 'guest and host' relationships in terms of the encounter between the guest and the employee in a cultural location (social setting, such as in a hotel).

It is all about interaction and collaboration, where different cultures offer different worldviews when guests come into contact with one another. Contributing to the growing agenda within tourism and hospitality inquiry that is concerned with the relationships between 'host and guest' encounters and confrontations, this investigation conceptualises hospitality culture as a social construct that is available to a wide audience from multiple backgrounds. Culture is also understood as a socio-cultural relationship between hosts and guests and, furthermore, is seen as the way in which society at a particular place is constructed. From another aspect, culture as process of experience is imperative to tourism in the broadest sense. Visitors, who attracted to diverse cultures, want to experience these as exciting experiences and want to be able to learn from, watch and gaze, and if possible, participate in them. Hotels, as public arenas for social interactions and cultural encounters, represent a growing part of the modern social life of today. Meeting the expectations of the guests is still the essence of hospitality culture. New processes to reach this goal are dynamic in nature, linking the social and cultural perspectives in diverse cultural locations.

Drawing on the work of Lugosi (2014b), and using hospitality as a focal point, permits us to consider how themes surrounding the co-construction of hospitality culture, such as embodied performances, relationships, interactions, the creation of intimate space, power and inclusion/exclusion, eating and drinking together, come together, intersect and overlap.

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Consequently, the co-construction is a process that is never completed but is one that continues every day and beyond. Because of the setting and the frequent guests and visitors flowing in and out of a hotel, the co-construction will restart and new people will engage in the social conversations and activities or initiate new and shared actions. According to Hofstede, culture is not consisting of individuals; they are wholes (1994, Hofstede & Hofstede 2005; Triandis 1993). Culture, society and hospitality are all concerned with people and the everyday/daily life in hotels. They centre on the way people socialise and why, whether they make contact or not, how they communicate and exchange cultural meanings, the ways in which they network and establish relationships, how they do business as well as on the provision of different levels of service and/or the fulfilment of the expectations, experiences and personal interests of the guest - in this setting.

The broad perspective to articulate and communicate performance in this research must be written about with precision and in detail concerning how it works, or more particularly, how it emerges and surfaces in interactions and individual contacts, in between the groups of the hotel society, present in events and sociological imagination, performance materialises as a significant component and strong metaphor. The performance, then, how people deliver their messages or enter the stage towards their audiences, depends on the societies that engage and involve themselves in the scrupulous social situations, in time.

Goffman (1959) focused his gaze on the interaction order. He did this by studying how people act, interact, and form relationships. He sought to understand how they accomplish meaning in their lives. His precise interests were in how people construct their self-representations and carry them off in front of others, and, in that way, with the intention of people achieving the best impression of themselves in the view of others. Goffman's view of the self was based on its empirical manifestations and, as such, appealed to social life in public. Goffman's perspective has also been described as the theatre of performances, not in people's heads but in their public acts and, thus, is related to interactions of public behaviour that are helpful in these hotel investigations. According to Tumbat and Belk (2013), performance has been used in two main ways in various fields of social science, and refers to symbolic activities such as rituals or theatrical activities that are enacted or performed as intentional expressive productions that are separate from the ordinary activities that are addressed to an audience. The second part in the usage of performance relates to Goffman's (1961) symbolic interactions perspective with a focus on the

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performativity. As Goffman (1959) further suggests, human intentionality, culture, and social reality are fundamentally articulated in the world through performative activities. Common values, or at least working agreements/commitments about social identity and purpose, are established between people through complex and sensitive expressive 'manoeuvres' that again create an atmosphere of trust and a sense of mutual potentials. Individuals learn to expect and await, and form each other.

Turner (1987), for instance, suggests that we take a broad view of performance to include such diverse situations as ritual performance, the presentation of self in everyday life (Goffman 1959), as well as performances related to personal achievement, interactive quality, and risk elements (which can be context related of course). Failure in performance is always an issue and to understand how performance is sometimes carried out, it can be learned, rehearsed but also practiced together. Accordingly, much depends on the performative competence of the actors, and as Geertz (1986) emphasized, such performances are about 'making experiences [and] authoring selves'.

Hotels are excellent examples of places for a variety of guests, as they provide their products to different guest segments, perform and deliver their services, provide surprises and create imaginations. Because of this, hotels will allow and make it possible for the researcher to meet a range of participants who will contribute to this research study. Issues like these are negotiated with hotel key persons in advance. Empirical analysis will highlight and clarify the complexity of social relations found in hotels, and the participants will clarify significant influences that occur within this complex liaison. This research draws on a theoretical framework based on three concepts as the social focus. This is presented in Table 1 below.

Concepts	<i>Theoretical 'building blocks'</i>	<i>'Covering the field'</i>	<i>Scholars and References</i>	<i>'What is it'</i>
<b>Co-Construction Performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Everyday life</li> <li>•Co-creation</li> <li>•Co-production</li> <li>•Host/guests contacts</li> <li>•Activities <i>per situ</i></li> <li>•Ephemeral encounters</li> <li>•Flexible society</li> <li>•Lifestyles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* People living in hotels</li> <li>* Reciprocities and social relations</li> <li>* People in the 'real' world</li> <li>* Social pattern and Performance</li> <li>* Social Situations</li> </ul>	<p>B. Anderson 2009 D. Bell 2007a 2011 W. Griswold 1994 C. Lashley et al. 2007b P. Lugosi 2008 2014 J. A. Maxwell 2005 E. Goffman 1959</p>	<p><i>Social behaviour in <b>public areas</b> where people enjoy themselves in a <b>friendly co-existence</b>. Ephemeral encounters and <b>interactions</b> with strangers where <b>performance occur</b> and <b>audience partake</b> activities in designed spaces and emotional atmosphere.</i></p> <p><i>The diverse environment enables people to leave or join social groups, providing <b>unknown social structures</b>.</i></p> <p><i>Tolerant and inclusive</i></p>
<b>Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Society</li> <li>•Social interactions</li> <li>•Connect oneself to the world</li> <li>•'Footprints' and</li> <li>•'Identity'</li> <li>•Fellowship</li> <li>•Attach meaning</li> <li>•Traditional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Spaces that occupy the social norms we understand</li> <li>* Cultural practices</li> <li>* Cultural complexity</li> <li>* Everyday life</li> <li>* Sub-cultures and 'cultivation'</li> </ul>	<p>C. Delaney 2011 T.H. Eriksen 2003 C. Geertz 2000 [1973] D. MacCannell 1976 M. Augé 1995 H.C. Triandis 1994 E. Telfer 2000 S. Zukin 1995 A. Giddens 1990 S. Low 2017</p>	<p><i>Hotels are '<b>civilised</b>' in terms of the process of hospitality, because of what happens with the people as a result of the giving and receiving of hospitality.</i></p> <p><i>People are <b>building culture</b> through their <b>interactions</b> and dwellings. They fit in and the 'other' becomes an individual. Hospitality culture as <b>everyday life</b>.</i></p>

Table 1 - Core research area extracted from literature review

Source: Author

## 2.8. Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the theoretical framework for the research study of social hospitality and has presented the relationship between the various dimensions and the concepts characterising recent study (Lashley & Morrison 2007). The researcher has argued the importance of their current use as such, and as active players (Goffman 1959), and service bringers and actors (Delaney 2011). The three concepts the study explores, *culture*, *co-construction* and *performance*, are all social dynamic structures that evolve over time and are contingent upon particular social situations, cultural traditions, exposed metaphors, and social perspectives in space and through hospitality skills, personal behaviours and ephemeral encounters. The foci have reflected an unexamined dimension of social hospitality and challenge the ‘frontiers’ of the subject from academic debate (Lynch et al 2011), especially in novel settings and cultural locations, that is to say, in the social life of hotels. The research focus has been presented in Figure 2, and includes the three concepts that are essential in hospitality in this context.

Culture has been thoroughly discussed from the beginning of its meaning to its influences within hospitality and reciprocity, in the nature of how participants engage and attend in their ‘work’ with hospitality culture. Social interactions are negotiated through merging hospitality culture and performances among participants, and Table 1 illustrates the links between the different ontological ideas and ‘theoretical approaches’ (Flick 2007: 41) - namely, how they inform in this research field. Consequently, the literature review, as a useful background for the data analysis, will also underpin the results. As will be presented and debated in Chapter Three that follows, the research process is outlined and the appropriate methodology, which is intimately connected with hospitality and culture, will be further situated. Thereafter, the research study, along with the relevant epistemological and ontological issues, will be presented. This will involve the choice of methods that have been employed, and provide detailed information of the hotel sampling, the criteria for their selection and the empirical research. Understanding the sociocultural challenges that influence the co-construction of hospitality culture will fill a gap where research has been limited. The methodology adopted will include a detailed structure of the analysis of the fieldwork undertaken to date, and the methods of how it has been investigated are further discussed in Chapter Three.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research design that has been adopted in order to investigate the co-construction and performance of hospitality culture. The research design seeks to make sense of, and establish, the social meaning of behaviour that is common in the encounters, interactions, and activities involved in social construction of meeting familiar, unknown and diverse people (groups and individuals), in public spaces as designed areas in hotels. The principal focus of culture places the research within an anthropological framework, due to the fact that anthropology is concerned with understanding the world through the social and cultural structures that individuals use to organise, guide and give meaning to their lives: structures such as work, performance, interactions, relationships, ritual and trust (Strauss 1987; Phillimore & Goodson 2004a; Palmer et al 2007; Wolcott 2009; Blaikie 2010).

In section 3.2, the theoretical considerations involving ‘human relations’ rather than ‘human engineering’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Spradley 1980), as well as the positioning of the research in this context, are addressed. The section discusses the philosophical paradigm, and the epistemological and ontological views and perspectives. This will inform the reader of the choice of methods that have been employed as well as of my research questions that concern: the form and nature of reality; the production of knowledge; and the means by which the knowledge is searched for and collected in the current setting (Phillimore & Goodson eds. 2004a). Moreover, detailed information of the hotel sampling, the criteria for their selection (Botterill 2000), and the initial research will also be presented. As previously mentioned in the introductory chapter, my research paradigm and research approach are empirically embedded and the way these have been conducted will be justified in this chapter.

The discussion about culture and its many senses has been theoretical, but the way in which one thinks about it has an effect on one’s personal life. While travelling to or visiting various destinations, the majority of people often encounter people very different from themselves. People who come from different places tend to have different values,

different styles of interacting when contacting other individuals, and different clothing, as well as alternative tastes in food and music. How does the average human interpret such differences? This is a reflection that is applicable to the current investigation where different cultures have become synonymous with hotels worldwide. The hotels are presented as case studies as well as the sequences followed in the fieldwork. My research study approach embraces what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) refer to as qualitative research perspectives and/or methods connected to cultural and interpretive studies that take up these complex paradigm discourse in this volume. As such, they are the methods to be deployed in this research. Additionally, the ontological and epistemological foundations of my research study contribute to the growing number of inquiries that challenge the positivist paradigm in addition to the management perspectives that often dominate the investigation agenda, particularly in the field of hospitality and tourism (Tribe 2009; Lashley 2000; Lynch 2005a; Miles 2001). The ethical considerations and guidelines will follow before a summary closes the chapter.

### **3.2 Methodological position**

In terms of the comprehension of epistemological and ontological perspectives, the first term concerns ‘knowing’ and knowledge, while the latter concerns ‘being’, as the understanding of philosophical wisdom as defined by Tribe (2009). Epistemology is the nature of knowledge, its scope and the assessment of knowledge claims. It is a theory of knowledge which addresses central questions, such as: who can be a knower, what can be known, what constitutes and validates knowledge, and what the relationship is, or should be, between knowing and being – such matters lie between epistemology and ontology.

As a major epistemological question asked in all domains of scientific study, Botterill (in Lashley & Morrison 2000a: 104) wonders: “How can we know hospitality?” Scientific truth is a challenge when it comes to understanding what is true in society. Based on *a priori* knowledge—or simply society’s customs and practices over a historical period, the way forward in this research study is to base knowledge upon observations *per se*, from intrinsically lived experiences and to utilise an explicit empirical data base as my foundation (LeCompte & Schencul 1999), so as to remember that knowledge, as well being context-related, operates and is situated in the present. In other words, social living or modes of living in social situations are linked to subtle rules and social norms of

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behaviours. In this study, it also includes etiquette. As Dikeç (2002) puts it, "... hospitality is a gesture of engagements and is mutually constitutive of each other" (2002: 236). It is related to host and guest, and thus, relational and shifting. To understand the practice of hospitality, there is a need to pay attention to its industrial significance where many of the research challenges occur and, equally, shape the importance of hospitality's relationship to humans - to culture and society. Moreover, it is important to reflect further upon where the activities, happenings and social interactions are located and what it is that activates and constructs these social activities - in hotels.

The two paradigms are viewed as quantitative and qualitative, the former dealing with numbers such as frequencies and percentages, the latter with experiences and meaning. To understand the meaning of human experiences, Ragin (1994) reports that these can be best represented or described with words, rather than numbers. However, both research orientations and strategies involve a systematic interplay between theory and evidence (Van Maanen 1974; Ragin 1994; Wolcott 2009). These then are appropriate approaches to the research, and are relevant to the research problem and questions. Social researchers engage in a dialogue of ideas ('theory') and evidence ('data') when they construct representations of social life, even though the nature of this interplay can differ substantially from one research strategy to the next.

In a world where the aim is to know the nature of reality, and to understand this reality through humans' behaviour, I recognise such behaviour through human relationships and through social encounters in this hospitality context. Such is the process of the co-constructed performances of hospitality culture that draw on the work of Jacoby & Ochs (1995) and human relationships (Giddens 1990), and as well as on social and cultural processes (Delaney 2011; Leach 1976). Related to the mixing and matching elements from different research perspectives, Phillimore and Goodson (2004a) observed the influences from adopted methods, the way data were collected and analysed, and how the participants' voices (including the researcher) were accounted for as a structural way of introducing new and more creative ways of conducting qualitative research.

So, epistemology is concerned with how the researcher comes to know the world, which again involves a relationship between the researcher and what is researched (Creswell & Clark 2007). At this point the challenges of understanding ontology and epistemology

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begin to emerge. In line with this thinking, and applying it to current research study of hospitality culture, the aim is to push the implicit research boundaries away from the scientific positivistic paradigm and business approaches in hospitality, thereby revealing the potential within this research to explore new perspectives of hospitality. Although, study of hospitality is not bound by here, long studies within social anthropology and humanities have empirically been done. Following these fundamental arguments of “...what we have gone looking for and how we have gone looking for it” brings us to the basics of this research, to *constructing* rather than discovering the social concept of interest (Phillimore & Goodson 2004a: 187). So how can *constructionism* be understood? For Crotty (2004: 42), constructionism is related to the making of meaning, and he asserts:

... [I] it is the view that all knowledge, and, therefore, meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.

And in the constructionist view, as the word suggests, meaning is not discovered but constructed. Meaning, therefore, emerges when humans consciously engage with each other. What constructionism claims, is that human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Thus, no researcher is capable of objective, value-free research (Humberstone 2004), and there is no single truth to be obtained, since humans construct meaning around ‘something’ with which to work in the world, and within the social world that individuals are essentially part of. Ontologically, the inside (emic) fit of significant qualitative interpretations is often richer and more appropriate where the researcher generates ‘open-ended’ and dependent suggestions of being and meaning, rather than yielding totalised, ‘clean and tidy, non-complex classifications of lived reality’ (Phillimore & Goodson 2004a: 73).

Ontology therefore, represents the area of philosophy that deals with the nature of being, or what exists. It is the *area* of philosophy that asks what reality is and what the fundamental categories of reality are. Qualitative researchers are perhaps more concerned with what is ‘actual’ rather than judging what is ‘typical’ in their analysis, and ‘findings’. This is the case with this study as the hospitality culture in the co-constructed processes also involves the researcher and the researched in a meaning making form of knowledge. The philosophical stance adopted in this research study, hence, is in line with multiple realities where knowledge is constructed. The participants are all thoroughly attached to the cultural

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world, namely, that of studying. As a consequence, only a partial and positioned (single) view of it can be gained (Crang 1997).

However, I will highlight several of the developments in the inquiry paradigms and associated methods that both have emerged, and continue to emerge, within the current realm and landscape of hospitality. In order to do this, and due to the presentation and discussion of the concepts of hospitality in Chapter One, I briefly draw on the work of Molz and Gibson (2007b), and the qualitative researchers that have widened the understanding of my research paradigm from this academic source. For many of the researchers that have contributed here, hospitality has long been a focus of anthropological investigation. This has often framed hospitality as a way of negotiating kinship, friendship and ephemeral relationships with references to Selwyn (2000) and through metaphors and paradigms of hospitality from historical fields and shifting social and cultural meanings of hospitality, as well as consumer behaviour and management aspects. In the UK and other Western societies, "...hospitality is preponderantly a private form of behaviour, exercised as a matter of personal preference within a limited circle of friendship and connection" (Heal 1990: 1). However, substantial changes have occurred in the landscape of social scientific inquiry. Behaviour and social activities in hospitality aspects have surfaced and emerged through new forms of living and socialising. Hotels in this context play an important role here and together with many others social public arenas and "socio-spatial order or practice" (Low 2017: 18), are everyday experiences in Western cultures.

On the matter of legitimacy, Denzin & Lincoln (2005) observe that readers familiar with the literature on methods and theory reflect an interest in ontologies and epistemologies that differ sharply from conventional social science. A growing number of new professionals from graduate schools, universities and the like are asking serious questions and searching for guidance to gain insights into qualitative studies and dissertations. The number of "qualitative text, research papers and workshops, and training materials have exploded" (Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 97). Indeed, it would be hard to miss the "distinct turn of the social sciences towards more interpretive, postmodern and critical practices and theorising" (1994: 97). This non-positivist orientation has created a context, and it is obvious from my recent literature review that the number of new practitioners of new paradigm inquiry is growing continually. Denzin & Lincoln go on to argue that the hegemony among postmodern paradigms is clear, stating that Clifford Geertz's (1986)

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prediction regarding the blurring of genres in research approaches, is rapidly being fulfilled.

Following the development of the *commercial* forms of hospitality provided by the travel and tourism industry previously mentioned in Chapter One, all scholars are related to investigations of hospitality through social lens and cultural reflections of how individuals make sense of the world around them. Thus, theorists previously thought to be in *irreconcilable* conflict (for example, point of views that are incompatible), are now able to support and inform one another's arguments. This is where this research study fits in, as examples of human interactions in commercial hospitality locations. In the end, new emerging similarities in interpretive power and focus have already been discovered, such as Lashley & Morrison (2000), Lynch (2005), Lashley et al (2007), and Lugosi (2003; 2006; 2009; 2011; 2014a; 2014b). Lugosi introduces his understanding of human relations, and is arguing alongside and through notions of several of the latest emerging concepts of *social* hospitality, useful to draw upon in current work.

A number of research perspectives have been presented by various scholars, such as Goodson & Phillimore (2004), Botterill (2000), Burns (1999), Bell (2007b; 2007c; 2011), Chon & Sparrow (2001), Cameron et al (1999), Cameron (2004), and have been presented and discussed earlier in this thesis (Chapter One). Therefore, this research study is not concerned with finding a *unique* reality. Constructionism, as mentioned above, is a paradigm or research strategy I have adapted in order to use the terms constructionist and constructionism<sup>4</sup>, which are employed here while discussing the 'social' end (not psychological forms) of the continuum. *Constructionism* (often referred to as *constructivism*) asserts that there are multiple constructed realities, which have been produced, through the shared investigation, by researchers and participants of social phenomena or social structures and their meanings. As the word suggests, the meaning is not that human beings find or discover knowledge so much as humans construct it.

As Crotty emphasises in his definition of constructionism:

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<sup>4</sup> A number of authors make a distinction between *social constructionism* (the collective construction of knowledge) and *constructivism* (the individual process in which the subject and object build knowledge) (Patton 2002; Crotty 2004; Neuman 2011). As for the purpose of this research, the term *constructionism* is preferred as it is considered wider, encompassing both constructivism and social constructionism.

It is the view that all knowledge, and, therefore, all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (2004: 42).

Constructionism, in the way it is understood and used here, is based upon social activities that belong to human life in public spaces (where people come together and interact), and what are normally referred to as social situations in hotels. According to Crotty's description of constructionism (2004), individuals do not create meanings unconsciously, but instead construct meanings. The key aim of Chapter Three is to present and justify my research paradigm and my approach to it. One way to choose how to deploy approaches to the social world can be done by the use of gathering empirical evidence from what people experience as real and meaningful. Such evidence is empirically constructed, and is the outcome of a constant process of actions and interpretations that take place in particular locations and times. Thus, the arena is set for the qualitative methods to generate understanding and deeper insight into the meaning and complexity of hospitality culture, how it is co-constructed, as well as how this concept of hospitality is formed. With this in mind, the document now turns to the *social construction* of the social world in this context.

### **3.3 Social constructionism**

Social constructionism epistemologies aim to 'overcome' representational epistemologies in a variety of ways (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). This is a mental representation, meaning the domain of social reality. For Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), and his Phenomenology - *The world is nothing but 'world-as-meaning'*, which leaves only sensible qualities to make up our world. As both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty repeatedly state, the world is 'always already there'. Heidegger confronts the philosophical problems of language and begins to unfold its meaning with his famous phrase 'Language is the House of Being'. The continuation of this argument is that 'things' are in themselves 'meaningless', but we need them, as our 'partners in the world', to generate meaning and to make sense of experienced reality; for example, a chair that has been given this name and, over time, becomes synonymous with the 'thing' chair. In this regard, objectivity and subjectivity need to be brought together and held together 'indissolubly' (inseparably). This is precisely what constructionism does. As researchers, the primary goal is to link the empirical and the theoretical — to use theory in order to make sense of findings and to use findings to

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construct a robust or refined theory (Neuman 2003; Ragin 1994). In this research, however, the term constructionism has been useful as the meaning-making activity due to the fact that constructionism emphasises and embraces what culture “does”. Crotty states that it shapes the way in which we see things – “even the way in which we feel things!” (2004: 58).

The predominant approach of existing methods and tools has been increasingly challenged for a number of reasons. Firstly, the quality and service aspects in hospitality delivery in hotels, and the analysis in the early phases of hospitality management ‘processes’ are a well-known ‘problem area’. Economic issues and revenue perspectives (e.g. RevPar – Revenue per available room) are important tasks and responsibilities to be aware of and to overcome, although they should also be recognised as beneficial components in the hospitality industry. However, it does not take into account the human aspects involved in the creation and shaping of hospitality culture, and it is these, which are of concern here. Thus, in recording the social settings in which people lived their lives, it was important to me not to lose sight of the need to remain objective throughout the different periods of investigation. My point, therefore, is that my own passion for gaining insight in order to both understand and consider established knowledge in the field of hospitality in *relationship* with the multicultural society relevant in hotels, the human beings represented by host/guest in hotels that might *reveilles* “... to fully comprehend the real essence and magnitude of the concept” (Pantelidis Editorial introduction 2014: 1). A constructionist approach to focussing on how an aspect of the social world is put together by participants, consequently, this became significant in this thesis.

Several methods for controlling hospitality development processes stressed the importance of input of accurate information into that process (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). The success of natural science in explaining and predicting phenomena has led to many attempts to replicate the approach of natural science in the field of social science. The social sciences’ goal is to understand people, and their meaning of actions and their activities in social situations, and products of such actions, such as expressions, theories and concepts, works of art, physical materials, and institutions or groups in society (legal and organisational). However, many opinions have voiced that there are fundamental differences between the physical nature and human society. Hence, research dealing with human beings, their activities and relationships, behaviours and encounters reflected the social and cultural

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perspectives, from different theoretical approaches, using appropriate methods and tools to come in contact. It has also been said (Silverman 1997; Lugosi 2008) that to understand an action is to know what brings it to expression – the underlying intention and the practitioners' notions, values, and emotions – or the social *rules* of society that lie behind activities of this sort. However, rather than treating this as a weakness, Patton (2002) suggested that being part of the social processes provides useful insights into the forces that help to produce them.

As noted earlier, the social world can only be grasped from the viewpoint of those who are in it. Ultimately, numbers will fail to address the meanings people attach to their individual experiences. Thus, quantitative methods would generate frames that would not allow the perspective of this investigation to emerge. As the current academic debate sees hospitality as a social phenomenon (Lynch et al 2011), it is clear from the structure of this research study that the prominent questions in the literature review concern the relationship between culture and hospitality and the social particularities in co-construction. These emerge through interactions and social activities and, thus, need a sociological perspective. The methods selected will, therefore, move away from generalisations and become context-specific. By researching the co-construction of hospitality culture, as noted above, the adoption of a social constructionist research approach using qualitative methodology is required (Denzin & Lincoln 1998, Phillimore & Goodson 2004a, Guba & Lincoln 2005 [1998], Yin 2013 [1994]).

In this research environment, the relationship between the researcher (me) and the actual study of research (public areas in hotels) needs to be closely observed and complimented by employing semi-structured interviews that open up conversations and informal dialogues. Thus, the research will rely on exploratory, descriptive or explanatory research strategies (Botterill & Platenkamp 2012, Burns 1999, Kvale 1983, Holliday 2002). The questions were designed to understand the influences on hospitality culture, how it is co-constructed in a social context, and how it is perceived and performed by individuals as a meaningful way of dealing with daily life in hotels. It was through the observations and recording of the human interactions that an adoption of an ontological paradigm was signified as the understanding of human meanings.

However, most of the knowledge produced might also enhance or broaden the understanding and meaning of what really happens and goes on in the field of hotels. Such locations represented specific social settings within which individuals interacted with themselves and with others (MacCannell 1999, Selwyn 1996; 2000, Lugosi 2006, Cole 2005).

### **3.4 Interpretive social science**

Interpretive social science is related to *Hermeneutics* and a theory of meaning, which derives from Greek mythology (*hermeneueien*). Hermeneutics literally means making the obscure plain, to put it with Blaikie (2010), and serves to *clarify* and to *interpret* (from religious and juridical) text (Blaikie 2010). Føllesdal and Walløe (2000) define hermeneutics as “the study of what understanding is and how we should go about ... achiev[ing] understanding”. In other words, this must be understood as bringing the messages from the messenger to the people in an understandable everyday language. Hence, I draw on a number of useful arguments with which to take this study further and aid systematic and logical approaches to empirical evidence. Such approaches will drive the analysis in this study towards a coherent outcome. Based on an interpretive approach, scholars and researchers often relate to qualitative research because of the techniques used in this kind of inquiry, such as participant observation and field research. This again means that the techniques require researchers to dedicate many hours in direct personal contact with the people they are studying (Neuman 2011). In general lines, the interpretivist paradigm distances itself from positivism by being aligned with a constructionist epistemology (Crotty 2004) to the point that constructionism and interpretivism are occasionally used as synonyms (Creswell & Clark 2007), and represent the same multiple truth, definitions which are employed here by the researcher. Communication is a vital part of the methods utilised in this research study, and this approach to social research emphasises meaningful social action and socially constructed meaning.

That said, when we are searching for the meaning of a text or speech act, it is not enough to consider the text or words alone. That is, in this research, the verbal expressions we use carry a certain meaning and are used in communication because they are part of a *language* (not like Norwegian or English). More importantly, it is the language and terminology of various people from different cultures, often happening in hotels, that offer the possibility

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of their making contact with each other – and which enables them to communicate and share the ‘social world’ within joint experiences. Another important perspective, argued by Denzin and Lincoln (1998; Guba and Lincoln 2005; Guba 1990), who I would like to draw on, is that they argue that it is not just words or actions that carry meaning. The materials of human activities, such as physical ‘products’ and the social environments, which possess what they call a ‘semantic dimension’, and they argue further that they are not simply physical objects, but have an intentional content, namely, that they were made for a deliberate purpose. In this research study, this intentional content reflects the design and the organisation of the socio-cultural environment, and impinges on the spontaneity and interactions between people. The goal is to grasp a deeper understanding of how shared meaning and activity co-construct the hospitality culture in hotels. Social constructionism believes that in order to understand the world of social meaning, one must interpret it (Geertz 1973). Such a belief had significance in the current research study. Indeed, as stated earlier, Geertz’s (1973) concept of culture is essential and he asserts: “... it is a *program* (referring to what computer engineers call ‘program’), provided for the governing of behaviour” (1973: 44). Culture than, is best seen as the source rather than the result of human thought and behaviour. Geertz call this “a set of control mechanisms-plans, recipes, rules, instructions”, and in this view of the role of culture, human thought emerges as “basically both social and public”. It is what we do together, how we behave towards each other as meaningful social construction in these settings of investigation.

In hotels, subjective specific meaning might also depend on the cultural meaning system that the social actors share, the social co-construction in which it is embedded, as well as the particular social situation. The research has used an anthropological understanding of culture within a qualitative methodology, and draws on some of the principles of anthropological research, that looks for meaning. Interpretivists’ research seeks people’s account of how they make sense of the world and the structures and processes within it. Thus, this research approach is concerned with meanings and interpretations. It attempted to explore and has analysed the sense of how their social world both influences, and is influenced by, that of others, in co-constructing hospitality culture in hotels. The following sequences, this section present the methods employed in this research study, which contains of four different steps.

### *Four basic sequences*

In this section, the track of the fieldwork included the four steps:

#### First step

The first step started with an initial assessment of the two hotel sites, which involved mapping the public areas in the hotels to get accustomed with the spaces and research spots suitable for observations, the opportunities and the logistics related to the hotels' flow of people, services, and hospitality going on, all at once. This was important so as to become more familiar with the research setting and to assess the suitability of the methods in these types of public settings.

#### Second step

Photographs were used as evidence and to 'capture visually' the interior environment as a record of the particular designs. This will assist with interpretation of the space of the hotels, and support the hospitality culture in the way it is organised and arranged. It will also provide clear pictures of comfort zones and social environments, where people might sit down for a longer time.

#### Third step

This accounts for the participant, overt, observations on site in the hotels, and in this way it was possible to observe the movement of people (all participants available at that time), and also participate by writing field notes and personal memories of what happens. This includes analysing the flow of people into designed hotel landscapes, 'the division of space as distinct functional zones' (Riewoldt 1998: Editorial Introduction). Participant observations also include being present and watching, listening and reflecting in social encounters.

#### Fourth step

Here the research study includes conversations and open-ended interviews conducted with members of the hotel management, PHSA administrator, and hotels employees who have extensive knowledge and experience of interacting with guests. Some of them key members, such as general managers and operational managers, who performed high level of engagement in the investigation of hospitality culture and appreciated to talk and reflect about it in my presence (see page 101, Table 3).

The fourth step also included interviews with random selection of key persons at each hotel. These participants all work within the co-construction of hospitality products and are part of hotel activities included in hospitality culture. They also work in the public areas in which they meet, serve and talk with guests and visitors every day.

This research study was designed around four independent methods of data collection. Here the rich amount of information enabled an in-depth analysis to be carried out than would have been the situation with fewer methods employed in this part of the research study. The following section 3.5 is dealing with addressing the methods in more details, discussion of the methods and leading to 3.6 and their implementations.

### **3.5 Addressing the methods**

#### *Introduction*

This research investigates two hotels on the southeast coast of England: one in Eastbourne, and one in Brighton. The research study takes into account two rather different hospitality establishments. However, each presented the same research challenges of investigation. According to Yin (2013 [1994]), case studies, in general, are the preferred strategy to investigate 'how' or 'why' questions. This is especially true if the researcher has little control over venues, when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon or a social situation within some real-life context, and when it takes the form of an exploratory case study. Case studies, in terms of their potential for understanding cultural meaning, have been adopted as appropriate, and are presented in more detail in the next section.

#### *Case studies*

The primary decision regarding the case studies as one method utilised in this research, was shaped by the connections to place-related studies within a limited area in scope and time. In case studies, it is necessary to follow strict criteria for the selection of samples. Hotels are ideal for observing and experiencing social culture in public areas, where the flow of people is dynamic and constantly shifting. The intimate and friendly nature of the industry naturally suggests that the closer the employees can get to the guests, the better they can provide the service or support the hotel guests wants or needs, and, at the same

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time, co-construct the hospitality culture. This has a strong bearing on employees and their interactions with guests, on their work performances, as well as on the flow of behaviour, or more exactly, social action - and supports the belief that cultural forms find articulations.

Thus, case studies have been an interesting choice of strategy here, and are employed in combination with Giddens' (2001) thinking of emphasising social bonding in the big picture of society. The reality of society and what everyday life means to individuals in cultural locations and public areas might be revealed through participants' activities as well as through the individual processes that perpetuate a sense of performance and extend the sense of society culture. Thus, the study aims to understand what the hospitality culture does, and therefore the desire to explore and analyse how it is co-constructed - as previously mentioned in the introduction chapter. Social lives as such, and nowadays-in hotels, are in line with Mead (1934) and with previous research (Denzin & Lincoln 1998; Denzin 1989a, 1989b; Mars & Nicod, 1984; Lugosi, 2014b). What was found, they argued the variants of individual interactions and performances that occurred, and which had to be observed to be able to be understood, and its meaning in the *culture* took form or emerged. The two hotel cases are supporting each other and are appropriate examples of places that provide their hospitality 'products' to a variety of guests. Both hotels do so by providing hospitality to different consumer segments from local, national and international levels. This allowed the researcher to meet a range of participants and to study the co-construction of hospitality culture in public areas as intended spaces, in order to understand more deeply its meaning within this context.

How social interactions were constructed in terms of the common understanding and accepted levels of being a guest and a member of the hotel society, were encouraged by the service performances, the common sharing of actions, 'words' and daily greetings that took place in each hotels. At the same time, contacts between guests and other guests occurred impulsive and strictly situational (Delaney 2011; Cuthill 2007), whereas the interactions with employees and guests seemed to carry a purpose, such as a beneficial subject, useful information or a friendly message. Simultaneously, the employees revealed their roles as 'social workers', which addressed the emotional and innate skills that are often part of the nature of service work and hospitality engagement, and in line with the theory (Hochschild, 2003, Hall 1997).

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In designing the research, it was particularly important to be mindful of the sensitive nature of these roles, including my own. It was also important that the participants felt comfortable with their time in contact with the researcher. I allowed them the opportunity to 'jump in and out' (Cockburn-Wooten et al 2014 [1988]) of the semi-structured interviews and they spoke impulsively about their hospitality work and the social-cultural dimensions of hospitality (Lugosi 2009: 409), as suggested by Cockburn-Wooten & Brewis (2014: 116).

The informal communications and interviews were based upon a set of themes from the review stages and initial analysis, and it was natural that the same questions were not asked, not with the participants, nor at each hotel. The reason for this was that each situation was different from the other and, as such, the dialogues and interviews were conducted along the line of conversations. The intention was to create a comfort zone for participants and to open up friendly and honest conversations in order to gain access to deeper feelings and empathetic participation. Current case studies demonstrated how the social context and the relationships with specific participants determined overtness and covertness in my research. This is presented next.

### *Overt research and Covert research*

According to Lugosi (2006: 541) "... covert research and the use of covert methods have always been contentious issues among social scientists". It is argued here that covert methods can offer researchers access to information that is otherwise denied to them. The purpose for me as the researcher to mention their use, or to utilise the methods in the first place, is that it is more useful to consider overt and covert methods throughout the study and to explore how the nature and character of the fieldwork context determined overtness or covertness in my research field. This turned out to be very much related to the relationships between my participants and myself as the researcher. I was given the permission from the management to employ a reflexive process, behave according to what became natural in social situations and give informal information to those who asked, and change the questions and their sequence, depending on the situation (Hammersley & Atkinson eds. 1995).

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An *overt research* locus was adopted in the research (with respect to potential interviews with members of the hotel management later in the process). Thus, the presence and purpose of the researcher/research were known by the employees (front staff/receptionists), with the management's permission whenever reasonable and practical. For example, when the most hectic period of work was over (booking time and checking out busses of tourists and guests, or during special arrangements, sports venues and big events, particularly at Hilton). The interviews with employees took the form of engagement in conversations through informal and casual (spontaneous) approaches. The research was undertaken in the morning, afternoon and evening, during the week and at weekends. It became important to observe and encounter many different participants and a variety of guests and consumer segments in order to obtain rich data (Geertz 1973). For example, during checking in and checking out, the researcher had the opportunity to observe the activities and how the hotel employees welcomed their guests. In the evenings and at weekends, social situations are more likely to be casual and relaxed, and these situations were more suitable for the researcher to join in with as the most appropriate times in which to engage in conversations (informal dialogues) with guests, visitors and all members of staff, apparently.

*Covert research* is used only in the observational section, as presented earlier. Permission was given by agreement with the general managers and responsible members of the management of each hotel, as previously mentioned. Such research should not be undertaken routinely and was justified only when important issues were being addressed and necessary to understand. Furthermore, it was important for me as the researcher, to bear in mind if information could not be obtained in other ways (SaSM University of Brighton's ethical guidelines). The covert research for this study did not delve into private lives, as such. It concerned the public areas in the hotels, where people are *coming and going*. Likewise, the researcher also came and went around in these open environments, or designed spaces for specific activities made for interactions and communications. The researcher has been given permission to visit and also to sit down in wherever it was deemed suitable to her research study. The privacy of participants, even in public settings, such as when guests sit alone reading, eating or appear occupied, were fully respected. Social and cultural issues that delved into delicate matters and personal subjects were not related to co-construction of hospitality culture in this research. So the researcher has relied on behaviours (including herself), as conducted on a covert, participatory basis wherein the researcher observed guests and visitors and acted as a guests myself, noted

down comments that were made by them as observing guests as they moved from the reception and lobby areas into more relaxed zones to sit down for a while. The raw data from own field notes (such as small conversations it was possible to listen to, direct quotations from interviews, observation notes, photos and so on) are illustrated in the analysis of how interpretations arose. Some passages did not have the coding included, but following the conceptual framework, and were representative of the patterns and themes that I found in the data, suggested as an useful way to proceed by Strauss (1987).

The reflexive process (presented in 1.4 page 25) thus required the researcher to be an active listener and to respond to both the answers and the behaviour of the interviewee, being aware of the bias that new open ‘questions’ would introduce. Adopting this kind of approach means considering the participant’ subjective consciousness, emphasizing the role of meanings, reflexive knowledge, and words (voice) and as such shaping one’s own experience (Suárez-Ortega 2012, Denzin 1998; Burke 1973). The hotel type and its location played a vital role in the selection of the ‘right’ example, and I found myself ‘comfortable’ in the two selected hotels for the purpose of this investigation. The criteria for the sampling are where we turn to now.

### *Criteria and sampling*

It was decided that the research plan would concentrate on the ‘seaside’ hotels in the southeast part of England, and the open public areas and easy access that are characteristic of this part of the country. The criteria for selection are:

- Accessible location, all year round for frequent investigation (follow-up research).
- Full service hotels with public facilities that foster people coming together for different events. Hotels that is likely to focus on hospitality spaces with constructed places for social interactions, such as lounges, open bar/reception areas or similar public spaces for informal encounters.
- Hotels with a sufficient number of guests and sufficient flow of people that will allow the researcher to meet a wide range of participants. Through the many public spaces, the hotels provide, the flow of people will move in many directions and give access in order to observe diverse interactions, activities and ‘play’.
- Hotels with a wide range of service provisions and suitable programmes for all kinds of guests, including local residents.

- Hotels with staff trained to perform a high level of hospitality that goes well with good quality, hospitality service appropriate to a high-level establishment and the service they actually provide, to fulfil the guests' expectations / need.

### *Selection of hotels*

As the researcher, I have purposely selected the two case studies based on the previous criteria. The intention with purposive sampling is to be able to carry out intensive observations in various areas in the hotels, where it is natural to sit down and conduct conversations and social activities together with known and unknown others. Qualitative and interpretive processes are ongoing with developments in research focus, communications and interview questions, and even methods used as one proceeds with fieldwork (England 1994). Through purposive sampling it is possible to select participants by using a deliberate approach (Lapan & Quartaroli 2009). As such, it was important that the sample was carefully conceptualised as it represented a particular population (2009: 45) – namely, the hospitality society in each hotel. This enabled the researcher to employ the different methods to different participants related to whom they represented as a member of this society, and the possible answers they gave to the research questions (Spradley 1980, Strauss 1987).

The purpose of the hotel selection also reflected the diverse populations of people, what they knew and thought, and in which way the two case studies required the information-rich sources. As this investigation is a limited doctoral work, observing social situations, such as everyday life in hotels, and knowledge about co-constructed performances of culture through hospitality - the contacts between and among employees and between and among the guests and visitors - also considered the time requirements of each type of research sequence (Van Maanen 1974, 1988, Flick 2007, Wolcott 2009).

As mentioned earlier, Hydro Hotel is the first hotel to access and inaugurate fieldwork and to work within the field to meet the full circle of empirical gathering and analysis. The experiences from the initial work were, therefore, implemented as both hotels were investigated parallel to each other and during all four seasons. The empirical findings in Hydro Hotel and Hilton Hotel are discussed and analysed conjointly. In spite of the participation in, and the recording of the social settings in which people live their

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sociocultural lives, is a key element within ethnographical principles, and it is of significant importance not to lose sight of the need to remain objective throughout the period of more than three years of investigation. The multiple methods employed here (Denzin 2001), are necessary to bear in mind when analysing the data triangulation of reliable information, and, as such, are discussed later in this chapter (Hammersley & Atkinson eds. 1995). Additionally, the two hotels selected in the research study require more explanation in order to justify the selection. The two hotels are presented in the following diagram in Table 2:

<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>No of rooms</b>	<b>Quality rating (AA classification)</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Founded</b>
<i>I</i>	Hydro Hotel	83	High quality	Stand alone 1895	Company Shareholder	1895
<i>II</i>	Hilton Hotel	346	High quality	Hilton Worldwide Chain/brand	Franchises Management agreement	1919

**Table 2 - The main *real* characteristics of the two hotels**

Both Hydro Hotel and Hilton Hotel offer a high level of hospitality and the information illustrated above shows that their characteristics both in size and in ownership are the most significant components. In this respect, it is distinguished from a classification based upon the hotels' status (Mars & Nicod 1984). This means the thesis is not investigating economical and financial issues (sensitive to the management), and none position of hotel status are compared or discussed. Table 2 counts as information of facts in this research context, and show two different hotels with diverse room numbers and ownership, but with hospitality as their core *product*.

### *Decision on initial site assessment*

This section will briefly explain the choice of hotel for the initial site assessment and account for its position in line with the criteria of hotel selection. Hydro Hotel has been visited for this purpose and, after some observations, the researcher wanted to select this hotel as the initial assessment site. Clearly, the researcher would be able, if necessary, to

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observe and communicate with both guests and hotel employees in this cultural location. The Hydro Hotel proved to be a relaxed hotel environment and friendly communication with both guests and employees seeming to be a part of everyday life. The employees appeared to be instructed to provide an open and uncomplicated setting where individual contacts and conversations are free and easy. Food is served anywhere in the public area, and guests are dealt with carefully and helpfully. This is a suitable place to observe general interactions and empirical hospitality culture — in particular, culture through practice and how interactions emerge. The initial assessment revealed significant empirical material and the methods that were employed worked satisfactorily and continue to be employed in the on-going research study.

### *Process of access to hotels*

I have used various strategies to maximise access to the field of research: personal visits, telephone calls, emails and postal letters. The communication process started in early March 2013 and was completed, with all hotels on board, by late May 2013. Initially, I visited all the hotels on the seaside road and, thus, was able to establish research permission rights from the best contacts. Not all hotels felt it was appropriate to participate in my research at that moment. However, those who seemed interested, I followed up with an email, introducing myself to the appropriate person: The General Manager and Personnel & Health Administrator in the Hydro Hotel, and the Operational Manager and, later in the process, the General Manager in the Hilton Metropole Hotel. This was conducted with the purpose of gaining access to a meeting, in which I presented and discussed my research, and explained my interest in focussing on their hotel. This is an important task when entering the research field, and personal visits count for more than emails. An example of the letter to each hotel is provided in Appendix A.

Additionally, the early visit to each hotel provided me with detailed information and has provided me with supportive relationships with the main contact people. I gained access to both hotels, and briefed them on how I intended to carry out my fieldwork on their premises, and they are now committed to my research study. I agreed with the management in both hotels to contact them when my empirical data collection was ready to be carried out in the four basic sequences. As a consequence of this, I gave verbal assurance to collaborate with the management of each hotel, and to share empirical data in

personnel and operational meetings, when appropriate. This was a well-planned process that has turned out to be valuable for the researcher and beneficial to the hospitality consciousness among the participants.

*Participants*

The participants were guests, visitors, employees, corporate customers/partners, agencies/event leaders and members of the hotel managements. The guests represented the participants who stayed in the hotel, some on a permanent basis. The visitors referred to participants who visit the hotel on a daily basis, but did not stay overnight. They were often local residents using the hotel on a regular basis, and tourists. The next groups (employees and corporate customers/partners) were interviewed during their encounters and interactions in the public areas of each hotel. The last groups (agencies, event leaders and members of the hotel managements) were also interviewed and communicated with during the fieldwork sessions. These interviews and informal conversations were carried out, as suits, in between work and their own observation of what was going on, and when their assistance might be helpful or needed.

<b>Interviews and informal conversations at Hydro and Hilton</b>		
<b>Participants</b>		<b>Number of people</b>
M	Manager	3
OM	Operational manager	1
DM	Duty Manager	3
G	Guest (hotel guests)	12
PG	Permanent guest	2
V	Visitor/day visitor	9
HW	Head waiter/waitress	3
PHSA	Personnel, health & safety administrator	1
C	Concierge	3
E	Employee	9
CC	Corporate customer/partner	4
A	Agency/Event leader	2
		<b>52</b>

**Table 3 - Organisation of participants in the research study**

Hydro Hotel n=25

Hilton Hotel n=27

The sociological perspective is a complex form of interactions, observations and situations (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014 [1994]). These activities were likely to happen all at once in the hotels, where different groups of people joined in and took part in diverse events. Thus, they were handled appropriately (not interrupting guests/employees too much, at the same time be aware of ethical aspects), while the research was carried out (Bryman 2008, Moore & Sanders 2006, Patton 2002), supported by detailed field notes, and that revolved around a routine that monitored the daily life of the hotel ‘community’ (see Malinowski 1984, Palmer 1999).

Following Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative interview studies, for instance, might choose the informants based on *a priori* research design, theoretical sampling and convenience design. Particular participants (in this research study, the term participant is used – not respondent or informant), from whom the information is collected (empirical findings), include the hotel management team, who were sought out in order to act as key participants. The methods involved a flexible, open-ended and opportunistic process (Jørgensen 1999, Spradley 1980, Coffey & Atkinson 1996, Crotty 2004). This has been done along with the track of the fieldwork included in the *Four basic sequences* presented on page 80. However, this research study was neither wholly participatory, nor wholly non-participatory. The way the methods are implemented is where we turning to now.

### **3.6 Implementing the methods**

As a consequence of the four steps of methods, the hotel management provided and supported the needs for the researcher being able in moving around as an ordinary guest during long hours of observation. I also presented myself to those participants who asked about me. Participant observation and/or openly communicating as guest, while taken field notes, and field research (in-depth) interviewing with key persons (verbatim expressions written down) were the most suitable techniques. These techniques revealed individual empirical material, along with personal considerations about their relations to the particular hotel, and their purpose of their visits. Maxwell (2005) claims that long-term participant observation provides more complete data about specific situations and events than any other method. Not only does it provide more and different kinds of ‘data’, but also more direct and less dependent information, in terms of outcome.

Thus, this research study fostered the understanding and, more importantly, formed meanings of hospitality culture through repeated observations and interviews, as well as through the continual presence of the researcher in the setting being studied. Hence, to develop a more profound understanding of the co-construction of hospitality in hotels, it was necessary to observe the *processes* of interactions, be present when activities took place and happened, observe the special places in the hotels where these actions and interactions occurred. Methods are tools or techniques or both, and they acquired their value according to how useful they were in assisting me, moving from evidence to conclusions.

Following the four basic sequences introduced previously (page 80), this section starts with the description of fieldwork and how the study has been carried out in the field, the field notes and the different types field research interview: informal conversations and semi-structured and open-ended interviews with members of the hotel management. This includes what is called ‘participants’ in the research study - the people observed, contacted and interviewed, communicated with and listened to, sometimes also as hotel guest. The section ends with the description of navigating the work in the working field and in the hotel context.

### *Participant observations*

The reason for continuing discussing participant observations, is for me a vital part of this investigation to understand and be able to ‘identify’ the goal of my research. Consequently, I was aware of my own reactions to the cultural settings in each hotel. This was useful due to me, being able to listen more than asking. The managers normally wanted to ‘tell a story’ about their working place, and rich information were the result, interviews and communications lasting up to two hours of semi-structured interviews, in these cases. According to the literature, the ‘participant observation’ begins with wide-focused descriptive observations (Spradley 1980). This continues until the end of the fieldwork process. However, in this process, the emphasis shifted, along with the analysis, from focused observations and cultural categories. This shift occurred in terms of themes and basic parts within the domains or categories that are related to my concepts, and wherein smaller units make up these domains (cover terms and included terms) in the cultural scene of observations (Spradley 1980). Each section thus influenced the other.

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Observation techniques are employed when the researcher observes social and cultural phenomena in their natural setting. However, the essential base of participant observation is the participation in, and observation of, everyday life, and participant observation seeks to uncover, make accessible and reveal the meanings people use to make sense of their daily life, and to observe how, or if, they do this in a meaningful way. Participant observation includes engagement with people in social settings of various forms. In this study, it comprised observations within the public domain in both hotels, such as the hotel receptions, lounges, bars, dining rooms/restaurants and other public comfort zones as designed spaces. All these public places where people expected to be 'observed' by strangers without feeling overly gazed upon or watched, were observed and encountered.

The participant approach to the research consisted of social situations where the researcher fitted in and where it was natural to exchange informal and unstructured conversations with guests too, and where to be flexible and responsive to the situation. Taking field notes were key part of this work. Thus, the possibilities to disturb and interrupt privacy were minimised and reduced, particularly where large groups of people were gathered (Denzin 1989a; Atkinson et al. 2001; Lugosi 2006, 2008), such as at weddings and memorial services, and on anniversaries, or at conference dinners. This research has also adapted a covert research position (Lugosi 2003, Palmer et al. 2010).

For example, it was related to the observation part of the empirical data gathering, to be able to search for the underlying themes revealed by open conversations as spontaneous approaches to participants, and where detail and depth are fundamental to the interpretive process. Such was necessary because, otherwise, the guests, if they were informed about what was going to happen, might change their behaviour and/or answering in a manner they thought more proper to the researcher, and in so doing invalidate the research. Therefore, this type of information could not be obtained in other ways.

However, there is always a need to address ethical concerns that surround it, and qualitative methods and techniques might also provide alternative views (Denzin 1989b). Drawing on anthropological and sociological methods it is clear therefore, the characteristics and implications of a particular method cannot be ignored, whether these are merely practical or ethical in nature. As regards this research study, further ethical considerations are discussed in section 3.7 in this chapter.

During the ‘participant part’ - the way the researcher approached the guests and joined in with conversations with other guests - followed a natural way of behaviour, sometimes invited to join in, by guests. Social situations allowed the researcher to communicate with and speak to the guests and individuals that I would be interested in knowing more about, why they had chosen that or this hotel. So, I carefully sat down and acted as naturally as possible. The managements also gave me permission to take photographs to assist with the overview of hotel design, cultural materials that set the social scenes, and how this was organised. Research approaches were adjusted and developed for these purposes and were always closely linked to the commitment that I already had with the management in each hotel.

An early *Participant Observation guide*, what to be aware of, is provided in Appendix A. A typical social domain when observing interactions and social behaviours in this research is presented in Figure 3 here, and further clarified in brief sequences that follow.



**Figure 3 – Participant Observations with focus on social situations**

***Locating a social situation***

Hotels

What is going on in the public place? Where do guests sit down? How do they move around? What kind of space attracts the flow of guests? Are there social situations elsewhere in the hotel, suitable for participant observation?

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### Guests /employees

How do social activities take place? Who is talking to whom? Do they speak loudly? What kinds of people are present? How are they dressed? What behaviour is dominating the social situation, what manners? Is there flow of people in definite time?

### Interactions/communications

What are people doing and who are doing what? What kind of pattern does the social activities seem to follow, who joins in the 'event' if at all? Are there clusters of social situations – many activities at the same time?

### ***Cultural inferences***

What do people say to each other, is it possible to be 'listening' and at the same time feeling 'comfortable' or 'intrusive'? How do they act and what artefact do they use to describe and tell their 'stories'? Here I was interested to understand the activities the group of guests shared and the pattern of culture they had in common, their body language, gestures as meaningful signals, and tangible differences.

### ***The hotel welcome***

The research observed how people who enter the hotel were greeted and acknowledged by the employees. For example, when are people greeted? Those friendly small nuances distinguishing between 'too much and total ignorance' turned out to be very important to guests. This was also related to how the 'hospitality' that were communicated and received, either spontaneous stays, ephemeral encounters, acquainted reunion, and regular visits.

Such became one strand to observe ordinary people visiting the hotel, and guests who were booking for some nights or other public hotel activities guests liked to join. The social situations that I wanted to observe were always in the public hotel areas, such as the reception area, the lobby, bar and relax-zones, where people sat down and it seemed they enjoy themselves, often together with other guests. Corridors and guest rooms were not included in the research study.

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These guidelines were followed in social situations. Information acquired here became empirical data. Based on fieldwork, and being in the field where the observations and interviews took place, are presented as types of field research interviews employed in the next section.

### *Field research interview*

Interactions, that take the form of performances, are influenced by other guests (the audience) and employed by individuals (the actors) to provide one another with impressions (Spradley 1980; Palmer et al. 2010), or to tell parts of one's life story in a sharing environment designed for these activities. The socialisation activities and the contacts between the varied employees, together, and also separated from, different guests and visitors, and further between the employees and guests are, thus, explored to show how these interactions contribute to the co-construction of hospitality culture. Participants are all actors as they participate in the co-construction of this culture in their individual ways.

The qualitative interview is a professional conversation (Kvale 1989), in which the researcher carefully listens to, hears and understands the meaning of what is really being said. Moreover, as a conversation with a purpose, the researcher guides the qualitative interview, but there is some variation in the degree to which the researcher directs the conversational agenda. With unstructured interviews (informal) appropriate in some social situations, the researcher has a topic for discussion, but few specific questions prepared, and with semi-structured interview the researcher has a topic for discussion and specific questions to guide the interview. Such questions are carried out with key persons, and are agreed upon. Long conversations between the key person and me as the researcher, were also tape recorded with permission. This would allow for the research to take a different direction than planned, based on the participants' priorities. Therefore, in this research study, all the variations were used to be able to come closer to the participants in order to hear their voices and gain a deeper meaning of the hotels' hospitality culture. There are also other aspects presented, such as the semi-structured interview, which:

... has a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions. Yet at the same time there is openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers and the stories told by subjects (Kvale 1989: 124).

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Kvale (1989) presents an engagement from the researcher's point of view that is labelled active interviewing. The meaning is to influence by stimulating and conducting the qualitative interviews in many ways, if they naturally fit, in order to explore my research field:

- ✓ introduce and explain the topic of the research
- ✓ use a flexible guide to alter the order of the questions and add new questions as the interview unfolds
- ✓ share background information and personal experiences
- ✓ use information from prior interviews to probe or reveal more deeply the practice that would not be possible to do otherwise

Kvale (1996) supports leading questions for clarification in qualitative interviewing; he argues that they can be employed to check the reliability of the interviewee's answers as well as verify the interviewer's interpretations. As a researcher, I have adopted this thinking and implemented the method in the current research study.

### *Fieldwork*

Fieldwork is a particular way of observing. It is the foundation of ethnography and represents the in-site research where empirical materials are collected from where the participants are located. However, *ethnographic principles* can also be utilised in different qualitative approaches such as by using principles and method tools that are adapted here, and, I will argue, the most suitable for this study. In this investigation, the fieldwork will take place in the open and public areas of the two hotels – areas I call public spaces designed for meeting with others, which were selected for this purpose. The fieldwork in this case relates to small societies or social groups of people in a type of social relation in everyday life where social behaviour and cultural activities are performed as a social way of being in hotels.

### *Accessing the world of Hydro Hotel*

The observations were carried out during summer and autumn 2014, spring 2015 and winter 2016, and took place in the main public areas. Although I was permitted to walk around and find the best spot from which to observe and write my field notes, the

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environmental landscape of the Hydro Hotel Eastbourne appeared very accessible, and it was easy to gain a good view of the flow of guests, visitors and employees. The observations and my participations were conducted in public areas and each session lasted proximately six to seven hours. My observation realm was mainly the main lounge, where social activities occurred frequently. In the Hydro Hotel, the main lounge is very well connected to other public spaces, such as the four niches designed as relaxation zones for reading, chess and bridge games, as well as for more private conversations and entertainment. For example, such as when transformed into cinema and film session areas in the afternoon, normally visible from the main lounge in this hotel. The open space the areas provide are where the employees carried out much of their daily work, managing their operations of numerous food servings and other refreshments, or simply providing help to guests, as well as making time for conversations and friendly attention.

This researcher had initial, exploratory meetings with the General Manager (M) agreed upon in the introduction letter, and further the Personnel, health & safety administrator (PHSA) respectively. It was important to the researcher to familiarise with the hotel strategy, and the hospitality culture how the responsible employees themselves briefly explained and enlightened about their understanding of hospitality culture and allowed for research. The organisational culture is in line with the research concepts as intertwined with the literature. The researcher to both M and PHSA briefly explained the investigation planned to be carried out at Hydro Hotel, separately, and also the processes in the research study, face-to-face, was introduced and agreed upon by all. I was after that introduced to the management team, such as Duty managers and responsible employees with extended responsibilities the researcher should contact if assistance and/or diverse support were needed. My approach to the hotel was precise in order to check relevant hotel documents, brochures and Internet information (e.g. the hotel web-site), and established good relation with the key persons in terms of access and assistance valuable to both parts.

For the first few days of the fieldwork, I used my time to seek out activities and special functions – where people gathered, contacted each other or performed common activities, meaning communicating and sharing time and experiences. The way I slowly moved around in the public area, from the main lounge, niche lounges and the conservatory leading out into the garden, made it possible for employees, as well as guests, to contact me if they wanted to do so. It was easy to come into contact with others in public areas

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such as these. Such activities are what some people like to do in a public space: speak to others without any obligation or particular reasons or motives other than just being friendly. The niches that I refer to are small public areas where guests and visitors are more secluded and segregated, and where reading and sometimes sleeping occurs, too. These are visible in photographs in the analysis of each hotel and presented and explained in the text to capture the design and the cultural material (artefacts and physical objects) supporting the public hotel context.

The photographs illuminate the organisation and design of the public areas as well as present technical and material objects, such as mood and stimulation of the senses with the help of fireplaces, flower arrangements, candle lights and comfortable interiors, and enable both the language and the individual behaviour to be interpreted. Moreover, these descriptions and photographs are to be seen as ‘tasters’ and snapshots of the social world, where people are invited to enjoy and feel relaxed and be looked after. This is mentioned here to support the ‘hospitality’ effect on individual experiences of the hotel; thus, the hospitality culture becomes a resource that can increase shared values and suit the needs of guests and visitors who frequently come to the Hydro. The aim of presenting these on-site descriptions is also to document, assist and give an overview of the total empirical content of this study.

Furthermore, these are meant to convey some of that special atmosphere and particularity embedded in each hotel, and as such, provide some background material as support to the analysis and interpretation that will follow. These descriptions are intended to provide the context for the quotations from the interviews that are carried out with guests and employees, and the conversations and activities that can be referred to when analysing and discussing the data (see early coding and analysis in Appendix C). Thus, the photographs operate, and must be understood, as socially, situational code within the cultural meaning it exists in and cannot be interpreted in isolation. According to Geertz (1973: 14), ‘...culture is a context, something within which the processes can be attributed and intelligibly described’. To analyse and unravel the meaning of co-constructing and performance of hospitality culture, the sense of implication and cultural significance are organised around the three sub-themes reflected in the three citations/passages that follow under each sub-theme, and are further illustrated in the analytical diagram that follows in the next section.

Ultimately, the analysis follows up on the three concepts discussed in the literature review: *Culture*, *Co-construction* and *Performance*, so as to analyse the different participants and largely differing motivations for visiting or staying at the Hydro. Thus, the overarching theme, *Second home/Extended family*, emerged from the empirical data gatherings as a rich description with three sub-themes: *Service as caring*, *Playtime* and *Inviting comfort*. Before turning to the analysis and interpretation of findings, presented through analytical diagrams for both hotels, Hilton Hotel needs a similar clarifying as the above outlined discussion.

### *Assessing the world of Hilton Hotel*

The observations and in-depth interviews in the Hilton Hotel were carried out during spring 2014, autumn, winter 2015, and summer 2016, and took place in the public areas such as the reception area and the main lounge, the Waterhouse Bar Lounge, and followed the daily routine of employees and different guests and corporate customers available at the time of each visit. I was allowed to move and walk around to observe and write my field notes; however, the environmental landscape of this hotel appeared to be more complex than the Hydro in terms of who visited the public space. The reception area is large and is described in more detail elsewhere in this chapter. Moreover, the interior and design of the hotel divide in a way *protect* the different public spaces by utilising walls and corridors as buffers to short business conversations and other social meetings in these areas. Guests and visitors sit down for a meal and conversation, often in relaxed situations, for example, with a light lunch and a cup of tea or drinks in the afternoons, which was the case in my experience.

The observations and my participations were conducted in public areas, and each session lasted proximately six to seven hours, except during overnight stays when evenings and early mornings were observed. In this case with Hilton Hotel, it was necessary to stay in the hotel occasionally to be able to observe and try to meet guests and particularly customers early in the morning before entering conferences. The emic approach I tried to address seeks to 'get to the heart of the matter' or beyond or inside the cultural process, and thus, most importantly, to look for interactions and social contact in Waterhouse Restaurant (where breakfast is normally served) and when people had time to talk.

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My observation realm was mainly the Waterhouse bar lounge and terrace, called the main lounge, social activities occurred frequently. The open space that this area provides is occupied with most of the operational work in the afternoons and evenings. The main lounge is an important place for many social situations, as previously mentioned, and it was possible to access as *a guest* to blend in, converse and speak to employees in between where the employees carried out their daily work, separated from the busy reception area. However, it was in the reception area that I observed interactions between guests and other guests, between employees and guests, and had small conversations with corporate partners and event agency and leaders (Hilton Hotel named special trained employees). Sometimes there were an opening to take contact with front staff that was dealing with events and conventions, *Conference Leaders* (hereafter called leaders in the research). They take on different roles related to the conference theme, I was told, whenever they were available during the daytime. Hilton Hotel is a hectic business hotel. However, during the day, several sessions of tranquillity arose, and the front staffs were as occupied with supplementary operations, for example, conferences and other sorts of provisions that the hotel delivers and provides to guests.

Hilton Metropole Hotel Brighton is a large business hotel with more diverse people, both in number, nationality (ethnic origins) and demographics, such as guests and daily visitors, corporate delegates, corporate customers and corporate partners, and event agency and leaders. The co-construction of hospitality culture in this case study is related to behaviour, encounter and social construction, in order to arrive at a better understanding of how the hotel society interacts, and as such, constructs a meaningful hospitality culture. It is through the emerging relationship between employees and hotel guests, or more precisely, social activities that cultural forms find articulation (Geertz 1973), and this is communicated here.

The interviews with members of the management and employees (mainly frontline staff in different roles) provide the empirical data with a rich description of their hospitality priorities. The themes that have emerged from the analysis stages, illustrate the characteristics in both hotels. The interviews with guests and corporate customers were conducted along the line of conversations and moments of hasty encounters with busy people. Given the volume of empirical data generated, it is, therefore, not possible to

include these in their entirety. Thus, I have drawn together a selection of conversational citations and passages to illustrate the key themes, which are set out in the Hilton diagram.

Regarding the analysis of interviews, conversations and observations, I followed similar steps in Chapter Four as in Chapter Five. To organise the data, related categories were coded and the overarching theme and sub-themes, which emerged from the data analysis, are presented in the analytical diagram as displayed in Chapter Four (Hydro) and Chapter Five (Hilton). The participants that communicated and contacted employees were to be observed in the reception area and the surrounding public areas, while conversations seemed to occur in the Waterhouse bar area, when guests were waiting or in-between diverse tasks.

This is due to the fact that there are private corners available throughout the day, which are more convenient places in which to sit down and wait, relax or just watch other people in social situations. Before entering the fieldwork, the observations and interviews presenting, the ethical challenges and dilemmas will be addressed.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Qualitative research is concerned with ethical dilemmas from a range of perspectives. Ethical approval for this study was sought and obtained from the University of Brighton's Faculty of Social Science Research Ethics, May 2014. This research study is taking place in Eastbourne and Brighton, and during this process, the hotels' permission to access the research areas were obtained from the management of both. Relevant aspects in this research study are therefore highlighted below.

#### *Integrity*

The investigation is located within a social anthropological framework, drawing on ethnographic principles and methods, and this raises some ethical issues that need to be considered. Hence, this investigation will follow the ethical guidelines of the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA). Philosophical studies conceptualise hospitality as an ethical practice that involves welcoming, inclusion, sheltering and reciprocity (Molz & Gibson 2007; Lugosi 2006, 2009; Lynch et al. 2011). Therefore, ethics must be closely applied to the realities of the research context, the research setting and research problem or

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focus. Requesting permission to collect empirical information in a specific field, gaining informed consent from participants, assuring confidentiality and raising awareness of the ownership of 'data' are the main aspects in this context (Flick 2007). This culture and hospitality study, with its ethical considerations, is concerned with cultural and interaction obstacles, and involves processes of self-presentation and identity construction as well as personal and emotional fieldwork in order to facilitate good fieldwork relations (Lofland & Lofland 1995; Coffey 1999). The investigation also respected the research environment and the private zones of the informants. These issues will now be further discussed.

### *Preparation*

Ethical concerns have arisen from the adopted research methods; that is, participant observation, conversations, interviews and field notes. The nature of the informed consent varies and depends on the nature of the research study at a given stage, for example, covert research as employed in the observation sections mentioned previously. In other sections of the research, elements were overt and, therefore, inform the consent that is sought mainly for employing semi-structured interviews with employees operating as 'front of the house' staff. The researcher did always respect the individuals involved in the research, and the right information about the research was given before agreements to participate: that is, fully informed voluntary consent (Penz 2006; Perry 2002). Indeed, confidentiality respected the anonymity of the participants and their rights to accept and refuse a range of involvements, for example, tape recording what they reveal. This was all of concern and a key part of the researcher's agenda in terms of guest contacts and employee conversations. At all times, the researcher was sensitive to what was going on, and was a participant observer in part of several, varied events that happened in the different public spaces simultaneously. Equally, care was considered in terms of how this was handled by the staff, who were sensitive as part of their hospitality work.

Based on the above, the hotel reception front-desk staff was informed of the arrival and departure of the researcher on each occasion. All questions asked were also phrased clearly and in simple terms. This was a conscious decision made in order to avoid any confusion between the participants and me as the researcher. The questions often developed into the form of a conversation. I listened to participants and wrote notes instead of using electronic equipment/tape recording. Only when the key persons, such as general managers and duty

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managers were interviewed, did I find it necessary to use tape recording so as to pay attention to them, listen and write notes, in the rich flow of information and ‘speech’ they provided me. The participants were informed beforehand about the purpose of the research and their ability (right) to withdraw at any time. Allowing information discussion to flow freely through uninterrupted conversation was particularly important in this research study. It is key to understanding and analysing the meaning of what was revealed, and became a part of the agreement with all face-to-face encounters with me in the research processes.

The empirical data gathering was collected in various forms: through participant observation, field notes, ethnographic conversations, diverse types of interview, hotel brochures and web-based information available from each hotel (also by taking photographs in order to support the tangible hospitality, namely, what the guests saw and experienced). These ‘data’ were responsibly stored in a password-protected computer and all other field data were securely stored and accessible only to me as the researcher.

Important to keep in mind was that ethnographic data or empirical data gathering by utilising ethnographic principles are not destroyed, since it is the evidence upon which the analysis rests.

It is the bridge between observation and analysis within both hotel cases. In addition, it provides the foundation for further work and may be frequently reinterpreted and reflected upon in the light of future research findings (Coffey 1999; Bryman 2008; Spradley 2006 [1980]; Patton 2002; Palmer 2005). In line with the ethical and methodological principles of ethnographic research, the empirical information will not be discarded. The research data will be kept protected for as long as needed in the research study (Wadel 1991).

### *Personal involvement*

The field notes – in line with the ethical guidelines of the ASA – together with other forms of personal data are predominantly private and without legal exceptions. This is how confidentiality and the anonymity of subjects are ensured (ASA Ethical Guidelines 2014). I tried to be mindful, discreet and listen to other people’s opinions, without interrupting them or being overconfident, and stay unobtrusive and not affect the guests’ experience in any way. The qualitative ‘data’ are not so much about behaviour as they are about *actions*. Following Miles et al (2014) actions carry with them intentions and meanings and lead to

consequences. Some actions might be straightforward, while others require the researcher to see them, and will occur in specific situations within a social context and deeply influence how both the insider and the researcher, as an outsider, interpret them. Therefore, the complexities of the qualitative empirical data require much care and self-awareness on the part of the researcher.

### *Photography*

The use of photography is related to mapping material culture of public places, within this research context. Thus, it entailed capturing the architecture and the design of places and included interior views and furniture, as appropriate. Where applicable, 'Photoshop' techniques will be used to mask faces to protect individuals' confidentiality and anonymity (ASA Ethical Guidelines 2014). Permission to photograph was given to me as the researcher by the hotel management. The field journal comprises private data; likewise, the photography used to capture just the design and physical organisation of the hotels is private. In the light of this discussion it is now time to move on to the analysis and interpretation of the fieldwork, which is presented in the following two chapters. Each chapter are concerned with analysing each hotel, the setting and cultural scene and the analytical diagrams, for Hydro and Hilton respectively. Through the data source triangulation, slices of data are accessed, interpreted and likely to be understood. This needs more explanations.

### *Data source triangulation*

According to Strauss (1987), triangulation of data is critical:

Different kinds of data give the analyst different views or vantage points from which to understand a category and to develop its properties; these different views we have called *slices of data*. While the sociologist may use one technique of data collection primarily, theoretical sampling for saturation of a category allows a multi-faceted investigation, in which there are no limits to the techniques of data collection (1987: 65).

This research will employ the data source triangulation by gathering empirical data through participant observation, conversations and semi-interviews with participants involved in the study. According to Yin (2013 [1994]; Cockburn-Wooten et al 2014), the

main advantage of triangulation is the development of converging (joining) lines of inquiry. Miles & Huberman (1984, 1994) express this as ‘self-consciously setting out to collect and double check findings’. It is easy to understand that triangulation has been strongly recommended in textbooks on case study research methods and is, therefore, employed in this study (Yin 2013 [1994], Creswell 2013, Cohen 1984, Burgess 1984):

### Definition of triangulation

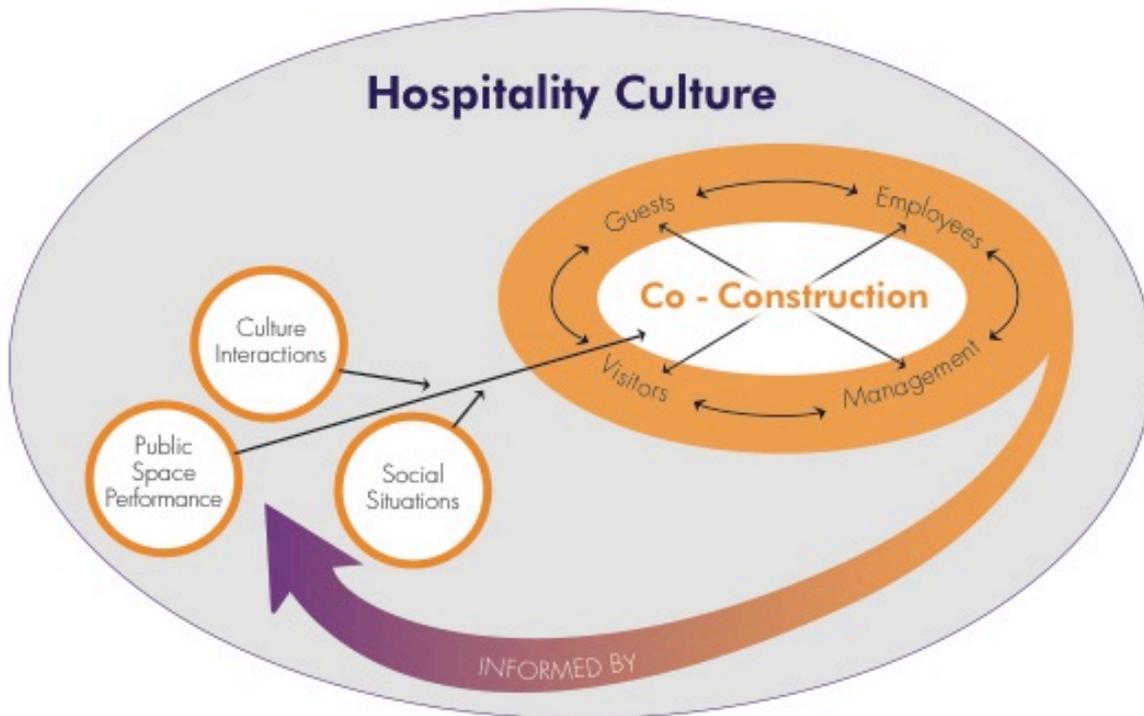
Triangulation includes researchers taking different perspectives on an issue under study or more generally in answering research questions. These perspectives can be substantiated by using several methods and/or in several theoretical approaches. Both are, or should be, linked. Furthermore, it refers to combining different sorts of data against the background of the theoretical perspectives that are applied to the data. As far as possible, these perspectives should be treated and applied on an equal footing and in an equally consequent way. At the same time, triangulation (of different methods and data sorts) should allow a principle surplus of knowledge. For example, triangulation should produce knowledge at different levels, which means they go beyond the knowledge made possible by one approach and thus contribute to promoting quality in research (Flick 2007: 41).

Social processes evolving through human interactions might follow certain norms of the hospitality culture in which they take place. The way the hotel employees within the designed public spaces might ‘invite’ or stimulate guests to interact will either contribute to the dynamics of hospitality culture or not, because some people are not interested in being involved with ‘strange guests’. The employees and the hotel guests are each aware, or conscious to some degree, of their own and each other’s roles in the social encounter and, so they bring to the encounter some mutual elements of understanding and meaning, if and when they interact with ‘others’. How to observe these elements of meaning and to engage with them as a researcher is related to be in the place where cultural interactions are a part of the social world. This will also include anthropological knowledge that informs the researcher’s (my) analysis, and the cultural and social individualities within and beyond the genuine field of observation. As noted by Flick (2007), the aims of triangulation in discussions in qualitative research have attracted most attention with the conceptualisation by Denzin (1989b). Originally, Denzin sees triangulation generally as “... the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena” (1989b: 297). Therefore, the use of triangulation or multiple methods is a plan of action, which is adapted and employed here, since the concept of hospitality culture needs to be combined with interpretive methods (Denzin 2001, Kwok 2013) appropriate to different work and

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

responsibilities in hotel hospitality work. This is done in order to be able to reveal the culture I am looking for in this research study.

Hence, it is important to listen to the participants in this context. The interviews concern the hospitality culture that they co-construct with their associated employees, the various people that constitute the guests – the local guests, the national and from different parts of the world. Personal emphatically behaviours (also the researcher's behaviour) stimulated to answer questions and continue to conversations and brief dialogues with each other are only as parts of individual stories, not their whole story of how to understand or how they interpret the meaning. These interviews and communications are *conversational hermeneutics* in this context, which forms the whole *story* through the interpretive analysis in this research study. Anthony Giddens (1991) in his presentation of “double hermeneutics” – meaning double interpretation. For Giddens meaning in the modern world is stripped of *understanding*, and supplied from within the external stories of routinised existence. In its core this means that social scientists interpret “objects” that interpret themselves. Humans also interpret the nature, but the nature does not interpret itself. Atoms are not able to find out what scientists tell about them, or due to new knowledge, change their performances accordingly. However, humans can do this, Giddens writes (1991). In my research context, such analysis means that one must reflect upon the different interpretations the participants hold and how these influence themselves and their roles as co-constructors and members of the hotel hospitality society. Individuals continue to build personal identities on the basis of accessible knowledge to them. Personal roles are a good example of interactions as an aspect of meaningful metaphors useful in this analysis.

**Figure 4 - The research focus and important context informing the study**

The Figure 4 illustrates a web of interactions in the co-construction processes. This is data-source triangulation that involves participants such as guests and visitors, employees and members of the management, corporate customers and partners and agency as well as public audience (in particular social situations. As such, all represent the participants relating to the same ‘phenomenon’ but deriving from different phases of fieldwork, different points of respondent validation, and accounts of different participants (including me as the researcher) (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Flick 2007).

The combination of techniques, such as participant observations, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews and written text from hotel website and brochures/documents, uncover different sorts of data about the co-construction of hospitality culture in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of the analysis. In this way the research is informed by cultural interactions, performances and social situations of how co-construction is explored and analysed, between knowledge and practices theoretically. That is why Hammersley and Atkinson call their approach ‘reflexive triangulation’ (1995) and found applicable in current investigation.

### *Navigating the field*

The themes developed for the interview processes and the observations have been presented in Chapter Two as a framework to adapt, and adopt and to be developed in relation to empirical data gathering and interpretative analysis. The broad concepts are, firstly, co-construction, which makes sense here as an informal hospitality that comes into being through individual actions and interactions between employees and guests. Secondly, culture and cultural analysis uncover the norms and pattern of practices repeated in hotel-based daily lives, also termed here as cultural practices in hotels. Combining participant observation, informal conversations and semi-structured, and sometimes open-ended, interviews with the 'story' of the hotel and the photography of public spaces, involved many different actors. It allowed for the making sense of the rich data by utilising verbal and non-verbal, observable and non-observable levels of meaning (Wadel 1991, Crotty 2005, Flick 2007, Neuman 2011).

How the public areas are constructed and organised in the hotels influences the way in which relationships between people are negotiated. It is a valuable exercise here to support the written text with photographs to illustrate the public areas and spaces where people take part in daily activities in the establishments. Performance, as one strong social category used in the study, explains the meaningful relationships that surfaced through communications and interviews, through initial contacts with 'strangers' and encounters with individuals, and with whom the employees have established relationships.

The implementation of the qualitative multi-method approach resulted in a vast range of empirical data that were systematically analysed, following a circular rather than linear model of qualitative research (Spradley 1980, Flick 2007). The themes link concepts to each other in terms of sequences, or sets of similar categories that are interwoven into theoretical statements and these form an integral part of data analysis (Ragin 1994, Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). As far as the hospitality culture is concerned, these empirical 'meanings' represent the interpretive perspectives through the language and visible characteristics communicated with all participants.

### 3.8 Interpretation as Analysis

Documents are man-made and socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Therefore, historical documents and hotel brochures can be seen as interpretations of the social life of this research. ‘Text’ then, such as spoken words and written invitations to social activities, can further be used in tandem with other methods of the empirical data gathering, in order to identify actions and social dynamics in the co-construction process. What has also been pointed out (Denzin & Lincoln 1989b) is that ‘meanings’ related to interactions between guests and employees have to be understood, since meanings cannot be measured or counted. Thus, there is always an interpretive or hermeneutic element in social science (Miles & Huberman 2014 [1994]; Denzin 1989a). To justify the rich information and empirical data, the use of condensation, extraction and coding needs more explanation. Coding is analysis, and to review a set of field notes, to dissect them meaningfully (Miles & Huberman 1994: 56), while at the same time keeping the relations between the parts intact, is all about scrupulous analysis. Codes are labels of assigning units of meaning, and are usually attached to words, phrases, sentences, and even whole paragraphs. This has been carried out in this study. Codes can be straightforward categories or can be more complex, such as in a metaphor (for example, with a double meaning or a hidden meaning). In this way, it is easier to relate to the research questions, and find and cluster the segments to particular concepts and constructions relevant for this research study and the research questions. The themes will then appear and are likely being repeated as a pattern. Words and metaphors, on the other hand, are meaningless out of context (Lofland 1971; Lofland & Lofland 1995). Only those words and metaphors that related to issues and/or activities in the context of the study are meaningful.

Therefore, the study looks beyond the activities, words and metaphors to reveal what these actions really mean to the participants and how the co-construction through interaction and social contact influences the hospitality culture. However, social research and interpretive materials are not just aimed at gathering material (Henning et al. 2004); it is the part of the research process (the analysis) where the quality of thinking becomes evident. Further, it has been argued that qualitative analysis is not about counting, but about fracturing (Henning et al. 2004), which, therefore, means scrutinising and cracking (breaking apart the hermeneutic elements) the empirical material collected in this investigation. This complexity (the current co-construction of hospitality culture) will hence be made

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

understandable to others, and, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, there are numerous analytical methods available for qualitative researchers:

...[a]nd none of these methods is superior to the other. Methods are tools, and they acquire their value according to how useful they are in assisting the researcher's move from evidence to conclusion (Henning et al. 2004: 118).

The goal of the interpretation is to reflect the complexity of human interaction by portraying this in the words of interviewees and through actual events (Maxwell 2005), and social situations. One way of processing the collected material was to transcribe the raw material, where all the interview transcripts were read in their entirety more than once in order to obtain a sense of the whole. All are read in detail and significant statements are coded descriptively (Henning et al. 2004). Then I looked at the descriptive codes or categories across all the interviews to see how they grouped, or clustered together, so as to identify ideas that did not seem to correspond.

With the subsequent insights gained, I return to a detailed examination before turning back once again to review the whole, moving from descriptive to analytic categories. In the final stages, the analytic categories could themselves be grouped to provide the key categories, which explicated the phenomenon. Thus, the process of reading and rereading allowed different aspects of the social and cultural constructions to reveal themselves. The researcher is not seen as separate from the participants, and because researchers are part of the reality they study, their neutrality is impossible (Geertz 1973; Patton 2002).

Through this and the developing thoughts, and insights gained through writing, which is itself a form of discovery (Van Maanen 1988), I engaged in a reiterative process, which Creswell (2013) refers to as the *analytic spiral*. Such a process occurs where the researcher circles from the parts to the whole to the parts and back again. Each time, the researcher gains a deeper understanding and, eventually, the parts are integrated with, and comprehended as, the whole. At the same time, this allowed me to check and recheck the material to ensure such interpretation is not explored in terms of ideas or themes which do not fit, or which contradict emerging explanations. However, some researchers have outlined step-by-step instructions of how to conduct qualitative research (Bryman 2008; Spradley 1980; Lofland 1971).

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The analytical diagrams presented and displayed in Chapter Four and Chapter Five have been helpful throughout the research process, especially during data analysis. Furthermore, if working with concepts such as those contained within this study, it has been beneficial to produce diagrams, which show the relationships. These are included in order to assist the readers in understanding the researcher's findings. According to LeCompt & Schensul (1999: 195), ...'when in doubt, draw a picture!' and the diagrams make sense. The value of qualitative data is to answer questions about why and how constructions are related and what meaning exists.

My research study has used an ongoing coding through interpretation and the hermeneutical understanding of meaning. Here, the spoken words, vocabularies and language are important to understand. These reflect on uttered human dealings and contacts, as expressions and 'shareability' in everyday interactions. How individuals speak to each other and how the social world is co-constructed when accounting for individual and social life, establish a factual 'picture' of hospitality culture in a hotel. The focus of current analysis has also been challenged and further formed; hence, 'all of the relevant data have been examined and irrelevant data have not been sneaked in' (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: 433). Before *Approach to Analysis* is presented next, I would like to quote Rudyard Kipling (1865 – 1936) from his letters of Travel (1892-1920):

*I keep six honest serving-men,  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are What and Why and When,  
And How and Where and Who.*

### 3.9 Approach to Analysis

This part begins with an introduction to Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), who broadened hermeneutics still further, by relating interpretation to historical objectification. ‘Understanding moves from outside, or from the edge of the outer manifestations of human action and productivity, to the exploration of their inner meaning’. In his last important essay, ‘The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Manifestations of Life’ (1910), Dilthey made clear that this move from outer to inner, from expression to what is expressed, is not based on empathy. Empathy, he claimed, involved directly identification with the ‘Other’. Furthermore, interpretation involved indirectness or placing human expressions in their historical context or, in this case, social situations that can only attain negotiated understanding or shared meanings. Thus, understanding is not a process of reconstructing the state of mind of the other, but is one of articulating what is expressed between the two people involved in the activities. The written text, the uttered speech, the art created and the actions performed are all expressions of meaning. Thus, understanding is central in the following analysis in research study. As Dilthey urged, treat human activity as meaningful and capable of communicating meaning, also meaning - i.e. what they think or feel or want - by gestures and actions. A proper study of mankind must emphasise, not obliterate, these features.

Since Dilthey, the discipline of hermeneutics has broadened to include all texts as well as multimedia. Dilthey is of central importance in the history of modern hermeneutics (according to Crotty 2003). However, following Crotty, he was not the first modern hermeneutists. Around the turn of the nineteenth century and in the early years of that century, it was Friedrich Ast (1778-1841) and Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who extended “... hermeneutics beyond the realm of biblical exegesis”, and the latter was eager to develop general hermeneutics that would illuminate all human understanding rather than simply offering principles and rules for interpreting particular texts. According to Crotty (2003), Schleiermacher can be seen as the founder of modern hermeneutics. Hans-George Gadamer’s hermeneutics is a development of the hermeneutics of his teacher, Heidegger. Gadamer asserted that methodical contemplation is opposite to experience and reflection, and that we can reach the truth only by understanding or mastering our experience.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

According to Gadamer (1989), our understanding is not fixed; but rather, it is changing and always indicating new perspectives. What is of the greatest importance is to unfold the nature of individual understanding. Gadamer pointed out that prejudice is an element of our understanding and is not *per se* without value (Gadamer 1989: 378-389).

Indeed, prejudices, in the sense of pre-judgements of what we want to understand, are unavoidable, because we stand in the tradition, he said, and the tradition is to exist in the medium of language. Thus, the language is at the core of understanding. Being alien to a particular tradition is a condition of our understanding. He said that we can never step outside of our tradition — all we can do is try to understand it. This further elaborates the idea of the *hermeneutic circle*. In sociology, hermeneutics is the interpretation and understanding of social events and activities through analysis of what they mean to the individual participants in the events and activities.

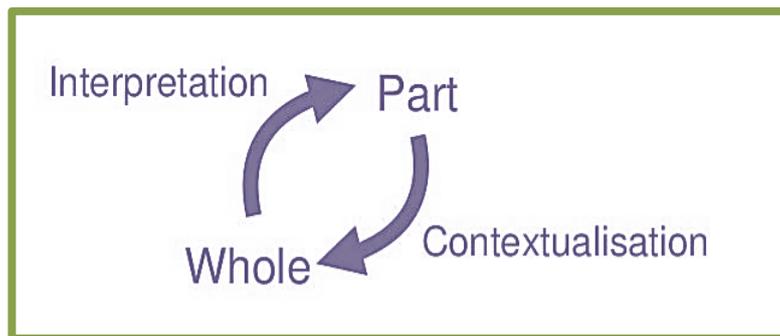
Thus, these research studies stress the importance of both context and form, both social situations and interactions, within any given social behaviour. Therefore, it is essential to embrace this method as a significant way of aiding the findings through analysis in the current investigation. The central principle of sociological hermeneutics is that it is only possible to know the meaning of an act or statement, or an activity or interaction for that matter, within the context of the discourse or worldview from which it originates. Context is critical to comprehension. This work to understand and interpret the social world led to the inspiration of Heidegger's hermeneutical circle. In other words, according to Dilthey (1910), the hermeneutic circle is so important because the part-whole relationship is pervasive in the human world. Individuals are members of organisations, which, in turn, are part of society, such as hotel hospitality society under study in this context.

So the 'hermeneutic circle' is an important aspect of Dilthey's *methodology*. It supports the understanding of complex wholes and their parts, where words and sentences are the most obvious example. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), opinion densification leads to abbreviation of the interviewee's statements and/or story, and into relevant *theme* formulations. Long sentences are compressed into the relevant aim of the research, and captured and displayed in the analytical diagram (page 120 for Hydro Hotel). This is where I have learned that the individual words itself cannot give meaning, unless the grasping of appropriate meaning is shared in what the whole sentence means. The coding took form as

*categorisation* that reduces and structures large amount of interview texts and helped me to structure my data consistently. Subsequently, the Figure 5 - amongst many other figures that illustrate hermeneutical circles able to adjust from Internet, and as a modest illustration of how the hermeneutical circle is understood in this research study. The *definition* that follows is extracted and removed from the text above, to demonstrate more *clarification* asserted here:

...a frequently referenced model that claims one's understanding of individual parts of a text is based on one's understanding of the whole text, while the understanding of the whole text is dependent on the understanding of each individual part

**Figure 5 - The hermeneutic circle** helpful in this research context



### **3.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter has explained and justified the choice of research methods applied to the current research study of the co-constructions and performances of hospitality culture. First, it looked into the philosophical positions, which informed the choice of data collection methods. The ontological stance was explained as was the relativist (understood with a worldview of realities as multiple) and my epistemological position as a social constructionism. The research consists of four basic sequences that are carried out in both the Hydro hotel and the Hilton hotel. The knowledge constructed in this research study is context-based and relates to the different hotel ontologies and hotel societies at that time. Therefore, it may not represent the meanings understood in all hotels, but may have some similar elements in hotel operations and hospitality understanding. It has followed the revised and adjusted path necessary in the hotel cases. However, it became clear in the early stages of my investigation that dealing with the exploring and analysing hospitality culture was much more than a structured hotel practice already established. Rather it has emphasised the human imperative as the hospitality societies, influencing the co-constructions and performances, which have been found in these hotel cases. Therefore, the need for personal undertaking and reflexivity, individual memories and my own hotel experiences are part of the engagement and understanding.

The chapter has provided the methodological position and the adopted ontological perspective, and has further discussed the different methods utilised to answer the research questions in a hotel context. The implementation of interpretive hermeneutical understanding in the analysis was also presented. The research includes detailed descriptions, as well as field notes as a personal diary, and draws on the anthropological approach utilising ethnographic principles to reveal the social understanding of culture through hospitality.

The next Chapters, Four and Five, are formed of qualitative interpretive analysis, which sets the three concepts and the analytical categories in a coherent system to be analysed within themes and subthemes. These are already mentioned in this Chapter Three, one for each hotel – Hydro Hotel, Eastbourne and Hilton Metropole Hotel in Brighton. Chapter Four and Chapter Five will now follow.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **4.0 FIELDWORK HYDRO HOTEL OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter establishes the field context for this case study – the Hydro Hotel in Eastbourne. It does so by introducing the location and the history of the hotel, followed by brief accounts on Hydro Hotel as an independent hotel. It discusses the started up point in 1895 as a *Wellness Country House*. The chapter then reflects on access and navigation of the field, and utilising pictorial elements to aid the feeling of moments and time in hotel public spaces. Finally, this chapter presents the fieldwork analysis, discusses the interplay between the co-construction, the performances of service delivery, encounters and social construction conducted in the setting of and on the cultural scene in hotel public spaces.

#### *Setting and cultural scene*

The setting, where the empirical data were collected is presented in current chapter, with the Hydro Hotel in Eastbourne. The main findings are presented in an analytical diagram emphasising the data gathered through the qualitative methods approach. The section will examine the main historical issues surrounding the Hydro Hotel together with relevant aspects of the primary research. Extensive information and responses of rich data were captured from observations and interviews in the way the different guests and visitors talked about the Hydro Hotel and how they appreciated and used this hotel. The employees discussed their work and the Hydro as a good place to be, and how they felt and contributed to the hospitality culture as employees.

The analysis and methods utilised are carried out through the observations, informal conversations, the semi-structured interviews with participants and the personal diary (the field notes), which is written in order to strengthen the research design (Maykut and Morehouse 1994; Henning et al 2004; Maxwell 2005). Thus, it provides both a framework and a focus for this section. At this point, a few comments are worth being made about the presentation of the findings, together with the display of the diagram for Hydro Hotel in the following.

*Findings*

The starting point of the analysis is the categorisation from overarching theme and the sub-themes presented in the analytical diagram:

Concepts	<i>Culture</i>	<i>Co-construction</i>	<i>Performance</i>
Overarching theme	Second home / extended family		
Sub themes	<p><b>Service as caring</b></p> <p>Caring relationship and friendship Cordial atmosphere and specialised employees</p>	<p><b>Play time</b></p> <p>Frequent games, croquet and relaxed afternoons Social Activities and Entertainments</p>	<p><b>Inviting comfort</b></p> <p>Attractive location and good logistics suitable for interactions Homely and traditional design and comfort</p>

**Table 4 - The Hydro analytical diagram**

The analysis follows up on the three concepts discussed in the literature review: *Culture*, *Co-construction* and *Performance*, so as to analyse the different participants and largely differing motivations for visiting or staying at the Hydro. Thus, the overarching theme, *Second home/Extended family*, emerged from the empirical data gatherings as a rich description with three sub-themes: *Service as caring*, *Playtime* and *Inviting comfort*. The analytical diagram above highlights the concepts, themes and sub-themes as illustrated.

These themes represent the excerpts from the findings included underneath each sub-theme, and support and justify the focus of these sub-themes. A theme is therefore a category, which, in line with the interpretivist paradigm that is adopted, reveals the latent meanings in observations of ‘what is going on’, conversations and ‘spontaneous talks’ between the researcher and guests and employees. Interviews and the interviewees’ responses provided significant material related to how they interpret and ascribe the meanings and feelings of interactions and activities as the hospitality culture at the Hydro Hotel. The analysis and findings will focus on the central themes of this thesis. Because they emerged throughout the fieldwork of data gathering and analysis stages, the themes discussed in Chapter Four not only illuminate the research questions but also contribute to

## CHAPTER FOUR: FIELDWORK HYDRO HOTEL

a theoretically informed understanding of hospitality culture. Therefore, the themes relate to aspects connected but not limited to the co-constructions, but rather also the performances of such culture. Another noteworthy comment relates to the verb tense used to present the findings. Both past and present tenses are used in these chapters. The former is used to recount participants' narratives, thereby emphasising the past in their lived experiences. The present is utilised in the analysis and interpretation of participants' actions and to compare findings with the literature. This is because the present brings the meanings of participants' accounts back to the time of the writing (Crotty 2004; O'Gorman & Gillespie 2010). Ultimately, it is important to note that quotations chosen to support the arguments through both chapters (four and five) are by no means exhaustive. They have been chosen because they are regarded as illustrative of the points being made. In this chapter four the Hydro Hotel and the single term Hydro are used simultaneously. The observations are to be presented in *italics*, to differentiate the field notes from the main body of the text.

### 4.2. Historical context

The Hydro was built as a country house in 1895. The building was smaller at that time and it was located, as it is today, 121 feet above sea level, on the south coast of England.



**Photograph 1:** Overview and lofty location of Hydro Hotel and garden in front of the Conservatory  
**Source:** Hydro Hotel website [www.hydrohotel.com](http://www.hydrohotel.com)

## CHAPTER FOUR: FIELDWORK HYDRO HOTEL

The location is noted here because of the picturesque site the hotel represents despite its urban position. The Hydro introduction in hotel brochures, leaflets on local history, and on the hotel website,<sup>5</sup> provides rich information. The Photograph 1 above illustrates its secluded attraction and the influence the architecture and garden design appear to contribute on guests and visitors. The written text from the main brochure also provides photographs in colour alongside the welcoming announcement presented here:

The hotel is renowned for its cuisine, unique décor and the traditional nature of its friendly yet professional service.

### **Hydro Hotel Eastbourne brochure 2014: 1<sup>6</sup>**

Indeed, signifying this ‘friendliness’ points to employees’ personal engagement of a place with an individual greeting of welcome, although still [yet] ‘professional’ when it comes to service. This *announcement* was a notice posted in the brochure text at Hydro Hotel. Specific characteristics of the Hydro are given in the methodological Chapter Three. Nonetheless, the hotel independency and ‘standalone’ or the public limited company (PLC) position of the hotel, are significant and mentioned here because it is associated nowadays (2014) with shareholders that also count as reliable and devoted guests at the Hydro. Shareholders also receive advantages and benefits of a discount, welfare benefits, as well as a discrete social security as an extended guests living in the hotel. Additionally, some shareholders also receive fringe benefits that are more personal and entailed to former position and operation of the hotel. This is important when looking into the research study from a social lens, but in respect, not dealt with in this study. There is also a shareholders’ discount scheme where Shareholders who have acquired at least 200 shares qualify for a special 10% shareholder discount on the following:

#### INVESTOR INFORMATION 2013



1. All overnight accommodation tariffs for the Hydro Hotel including Special Breaks (excluding Christmas and New Year, and Events such as Opera Dinners or Guest Speaker Luncheons).
2. Your dining bill in the Crystal Restaurant for Luncheon or Dinner.
3. Shareholders’ personal functions, for example Weddings and Anniversaries.
4. Food ordered from the Lounge/Conservatory menu with a minimum spend of Pund 10.00
5. Hair treatments in the Salon.
6. Beauty treatments provided by City Holistic at the Hydro Hotel.

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<sup>5</sup> Hydro Hotel website [www.hydrohotel.com](http://www.hydrohotel.com)

<sup>6</sup> From the welcoming greetings in Hydro Hotel special brochure. [www.hydrohotel.com](http://www.hydrohotel.com)

*Accessing and observing the Hydro*

The Hydro Hotel started up as a well-being centre for residents and visitors from the surrounding region, and became attractive resulting from its strategic location and professional spa- and well-being treatment facilities. The starting point of this was told by the general manager (M) and presented here:

This happened from the start back in 1895, when 5 gentlemen started to collect money to be able to buy the property in the first place. It was named Marine at that time and was originally a well-being centre with spa facilities and the treatment was designed to increase the sense of well-being, relaxation and pleasure.

**Interview M August 2014**

The Hydro Hotel provides 81 rooms today, but has continued from the start to offer beauty and spa treatments for guests and non-residents, tourists and holidaymakers. This hotel is not part of any hotel cooperation or partnership; rather, it is constituted of 450 shareholders, meaning a shareowner or controller. The ownership of the hotel is divided between six families who have been in possession of the majority of the shares and controlled the ownership of the Hydro for three generations to date. The significance of the above is illustrated through the association that is perhaps the most directly identifiable. As a shareholder in the leisure/business relationship with the Hydro Hotel, the investors do not look at their investment as such, but rather as an ownership, an asset they identify with and care for. Shareholders want 'their' hotel to look attractive both to themselves as daily user and certainly to others too, and the M stated (this is the new M form June 2016), in the first interview at Hydro Hotel:

...our shareholders always come here and like to speak to me. You know... they are concerned with the hotel and some do not like changes, ...you know, they love their favourite chair, and will wait for it if it is occupied when they arrive...and then just run over to grab it. It is important to them to tell me that they are shareholders, even if they have only one share...you know. They have ownership here and they come every day. They tell me that this is good value for money and [a] beautiful location.

**Interview with new M July 2016**

The statement above shows evidence to how guests and visitors (as shareholders) bond with the Hydro Hotel as a part of themselves. They are familiarised and have established a

## CHAPTER FOUR: FIELDWORK HYDRO HOTEL

sort of belonging to the hotel, as if it should be like a *second home* to them. Indeed, they *own* a share of the institution, and have an opinion about how to support and maintain the place. The hotel should stay the way they know it. They are not interested in material changes and like to continue their daily visits in the traditional surroundings that affected them in their first visit of it, seems to be of great value. Consequently, the Hydro Hotel therefore has developed a close relationship and become a part of its *owners* in a way that they feel attracted to the hotel and appreciate its *caring* friendliness. The location of the hotel is said to be especially convenient and with free access and parking by cars, which is experienced as a great advantage for retired people that live in Eastbourne and use the hotel everyday, evidenced here:

Yes, this hotel has a splendid location. We both enjoy it here, and the staffs know us, they know us by name. Group of friends meet regularly here... every Tuesdays in fact... it is so friendly here.

### **Observation and communication Guests June 2014**

Several local groups of people, couples and single friends interested in walking the sea front together, enjoying parks and clean seafront in the surrounded area, the South Downs Way and croquet games, morning coffee and afternoon tea the Hydro is preferred to particular elderly groups coming from all over the county and nearby places. Family ceremonies, weddings and celebrations of diverse kind are popular. Similarly, *words-of-mouth* is common commercials among Hydro's guests and visitors, as a small group of friends put it in an exploratory interview during fieldwork:

...We suggest it to all our friends, it is so relaxed here ...and we also bring our family instead of in our apartment at home... we eat and have good traditional food and drinks together, the space is generous. You know ...young and old family members ...we are all looking forward to these gatherings. The parking place is just around the corner. There is no other place like this in the nearest surroundings, you know... and look at the view... just wonderful.

### **Interview local residents June 2015**

Surely, frequent visitors and guests enjoy the Hydro, and some of the guests feel so close to the friendly environment that they allow themselves to comment on other guests' behaviour or negotiate with the employees in ways of bringing up the homely comfort and

## CHAPTER FOUR: FIELDWORK HYDRO HOTEL

escalating the cordial atmosphere. The following citation explains what was observed and noticed:

*Not many people sat down in the main Lounge area at this time. However, an elderly couple was sitting in the big chairs and I heard him say to his wife that the noise from the music kept him awake; he could not sleep. The duty manager who just walked by closed the doors from the main Lounge into the private wedding party room, and the sound from the music became lower. The couple in the Lounge smiled and nodded their heads as to thank the manager for his service towards them. This illuminates how equally aware the employees are for the guests. All of them are being looked after.*

### **Observations and field notes June 2014**

Statements from early conversations at the reception desk with guests show positive reactions, such as guests enjoying relaxing nights ‘in a hotel that seems to belong in a different era’, and repeatedly said that this hotel offers ‘a friendly and caring environment of a high-quality level’. The Hydro Hotel has provided relaxation and ‘been looking after guests’ for more than 100 years, celebrated in 2015 (Hydro Hotel 1895 – 2015). The Photograph 2 and 3 illustrates the hotel anniversary and easy access to the Hydro Hotel main entrance.



**Photograph 2:** Hydro Hotel 1895 – 2015- more than 100 years  
**Source:** Author’s collection Hydro Hotel Display Winter 2016

The Celebration illustrates above the Hydro Hotel’s development from early Wellness Country House to the shareholders *second home* and the way the hotel appears today. The Hydro Hotel displays the highlights through 120 years of serving the residents, guests and visitors, and with much attention to different events and special activities where the ‘hospitality society’ can gaze the people, who are photographed, and which also might include ‘themselves’. These reveals an including hotel attitude and represent a way of bonding, or even strengthen the already strong relationship the hotel has established with guests and its shareholders. As such the Hydro Hotel shows hospitality culture similar to what Telfer’s “skilful and attentive” way of work acting (2000: 44) in how to please the guests through such displays.

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**Photograph 3:** The main entrance of Hydro Hotel in Mount Road, Eastbourne. Free parking for guests and visitors is located along this road on both sides, and also behind the tree on the right side of the photography. Easy access is also available for wheelchair users from this side of the Hydro, bringing guests and visitors directly into the hotel main Lounge and Conservatory level with no steps and physical hindrances.

**Source:** Hydro Hotel website [www.hydrohotel.com](http://www.hydrohotel.com)

The Hydro Hotel also holds private parking places for guests and visitors located around the corner of the main entrance (explained as seen and accessed from the right side of Photograph 3).

### *Navigating the public field*

There are no restrictions about parking along the front side of the building. Guests mention this as attractive and the general logistics of the hotel as convenient. Furthermore, guests and visitors seem to move easily around in all public spaces and it was said to be experienced as both inviting and comfortable to them. Retired people visit the Hydro almost every day and arrive in cars, either to enjoy a meal or to sit down with family and friends or just relax in the main lounge for a while. Activities like playing outdoor games in the garden appeared to attract families and groups of guests. Considering these conditions, they count as daily activities to many guests and visitors. The hotel is fairly busy from early mornings with busses entering with guests from the region and many meetings with guests, easily overheard in planning weddings and public ceremonies. These happen in addition to ordinary guests services and normal hotel operations.

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The reception area is friendly in terms of *benevolent* smiling employees in guest and visitor encounters, and employees have time to *talk* and provide personal comments and kindly greetings. The Hydro Hotel also displays all the information needed for the people that arrive here to get to know, such as daily hotel programs, special arrangements of the month, entertainment of the day, and wellness and health facilities for both guests and daily visitors from areas in the proximity. What goes on in house, for example, from diverse meetings and business arrangements to the menu of the day, in general, is visible on the whiteboard, discretely placed on one of the sides of the staircase before entering the main lounge. The reception area, with the soft carpet leading up to the main lounge and secluded, relaxation public spaces are shown in Photograph 4, as a pictorial element of the *inviting comfort* the interior design represents, providing thick carpet, soft sounds, and discrete arrivals and departures.



**Photograph 4:** Reception area with stairs leading to the main lounge of Hydro Hotel

**Source:** Hydro Hotel website [www.hydrohotel.com](http://www.hydrohotel.com)

The hotel has several entrances, both from the hotel private parking place outside and from the garden at the front of the hotel, which also hold pathways for guests and visitors to approach the play and relaxation area from two different angles of the hotel.

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**Photographs 5 and 6** illustrate the niches surrounding the main lounge areas and relaxing zone at Hydro  
**Source:** Hydro Hotel website [www.hydrohotel.com](http://www.hydrohotel.com)

This is demanded for those guests in need of special care and support regarding the use of electronic equipment in and out of the hotel, such as wheelchairs and so on. However, through several observations employees seem to handle the kind of service required. Many work environments dealing with service such as in hotels do not focus on emotions as important elements in human work relations. This aid the understanding of the importance in smiling, being friendly and attentive in service work as such. The management or more precisely, the operational team and work force ‘brainstormed’ the daily operations, up dated special arrangement of the day and informed and motivated employees, because it was of significant value to be aware of each person’s position and responsibility during the daily routines, was told. The DM assert:

... one of the key elements of hospitality at Hydro is *the smile*. This is very important and must be at the fore front ... in all what we do and how we behave towards our guests ...whether we have ... no matter how we might feel or if we have a bad day and so. Our guests (G and PG) relay on us...

**Duty manager July 2014**

Being careful and helpful is an extensive part of working and serving guests and visitors at Hydro Hotel. The evidences are visible from observations throughout the days and late evenings.

*Emotional labour, mind and feelings*

In getting ‘close’ to the data, and observing significant impact on employees working routines, it was helpful for the researcher to identify themes in relation to the theory that have informed her understanding of hospitality understanding. The central focus has very much been linked to the service operations and management issues, without realising the important human elements that both employees and guests contribute to in this sense. As a means of identifying such themes and also patterns within the different methods of the qualitative data analysis, Arlie Russell Hochschild (2003 [1983])<sup>7</sup> argues in her research about airline attendants and ‘physical labour and mental work’, but refers to something more, which she defines as ‘emotional labour’ (2003: 7), and useful in this context too. This labour requires one to induce feeling to direct the proper state of mind in the sense of being cared for. Additionally, this kind of labour calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and might draw on a source of self that we honour as fundamental individuality, an innate empathy essential in current service work (Wright Mills 1956).<sup>8</sup>

Neither this nor the pride entailed in identifying oneself and being satisfied with the working place such as logistics and functional elements might be included as an important element in the employees’ service training (Heide et al. 2007, 2009; Mars & Nicod 1984). In Scandinavian countries, for example, it has been the traditional attitude among hotel leaders that the general managers functioned as the role model by *walking the talk* (Brownell 2003), meaning visible through their own example and following work-order procedures down the hierarchy and the hotel organisation to the employees. The manager’s ‘gut feelings’ has often been the leading attitude, rather than knowledge based employee’s contribution and the importance of the strongly human element herein.

From another aspect, the significant motivation that labour forces receive through own feelings in their daily work, if they are stimulated, trusted and valued as a team member, creates a strong working relationship with others, including a solid bonding with colleagues (Goss-Turner & Jones 2000; Palmer et al. 2010; Laerdal 2012).

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<sup>7</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild (2003) used the term *emotional labour* to mean the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore has *exchange value*.

<sup>8</sup> Wright Mills (1956) noted - “Sincerity” is detrimental to one’s job, until the rules of salesmanship and business become a “genuine” aspect of oneself. (*The power elite – power of ordinary men*)

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This is visible at the Hydro Hotel from observations of the way employees show benevolent behaviour, as in the sound of their voice when speaking to guests or colleagues, through their bodily expressions of being content, such as constantly smiling, nodding their heads and making eye contact, and making time for small conversations with guests when passing by in the public space. This clearly supports the social culture in the Hydro Hotel. As Hochschild (2003) added to Mill (1963), the notion is that a personality is not simply “sold”; people actively manage feelings in order to make their personalities fit for public-contact work (2003: 229) and focus on rules and affective deviant (Goffman 1961) like *unexpected* behaviours. However, these short passages from observations show evidence of social harmony and comfort:

*The guests are sitting for hours after having only coffee or they chat with the employees, who seem to know the guests well.*

Hello, how are you today, you seemed a bit unwell yesterday...

*The employees had more time now to speak to the guests and they went over to some guests that they obviously knew well and had a talk merely about private matters, smiling and engaging in the conversation that was going on, very familiar it seemed.*

**Observation, overheard comment and field note July 2014**

### *Friendly site*

The friendly environment feels safe and well taken care of. Behaviour like this was to be observed every day in fieldwork. This co-constructed relaxed mood and a culture easy to appreciate, it seems. They ‘have all the time in the world’ to help guests, serving them and talking to them. This is a particularity that has a strong position among the guests. It is easy to observe the responsive ambience, and it seems to be honest by the way the employees approach their guests. They give women compliments for their appearance and a kindly ‘dolt’ in the shoulders to some men, a social sign and behaviour we understand as how friends contact each other or feel comfortable together. Information was received through informal conversation and open-ended interviews with the M at the Hydro and thus, incorporated into the previous paragraphs.

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Thus, reiterating important information, the Hydro started in 1895 as a well-being centre with spa facilities. Moreover, the general focus at that time was healthy vacations for industrial workers, fresh air and coastal visits with a swim in healthy seawater (Swarbrooke & Horner 1999). It is the development of spas, which became major centres of fashion, social activities and gambling to their becoming places to live in as well as just visit. Such reflects the early seaside resorts in Britain. These resorts served largely regional markets, and for example, Margate and Brighton accommodated the needs of London. These identified key points have been important to recognise and understand how the Hydro has evolved over the last decade from a country house for locals into a full-time hotel with guests and visitors who take advantage of all facilities provided here.

This is a well-known phenomenon in the tourism literature and just mentioned here because hotels and accommodation also belong to the development that consequently followed. The Hydro was then a third of the size it is today. The spa-treatment was designed to increase the sense of well-being, offering relaxation and pleasure to visitors and guests of the country house.

In many ways, Hydro Hotel has become a hotel attractive to older people, as in retired local residents, national and international guests and visitors who enjoy the spacious and sociable place located so close to a peaceful seaside promenade and accessible to open nature with the South Downs at its doorstep. Hydro Hotel, Eastbourne<sup>9</sup> offers a large range of exciting events and cultural attractions to suit all ages that visit the hotel. Based on the use of photography they capture, at the time of the investigation, the architecture and the design of the hotel building and also include interior views and furniture.

The photographs, both displayed in the text and the researcher's own collection and others from Hydro Hotel website displayed below, support the theme and sub-themes whenever appropriate to situate the readers of the thesis, in the position of understanding the interpretative 'appropriateness'. Here I refer to the meaning communicating or expressing what it does – its relevance echoing Cooper (2016). In so doing, the photographs are being used as visual evidence of the hotel's physical structure, the architecture and exterior design along with comfortable public areas inside. This illustrates the Hydro and what

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<sup>9</sup> Hydro Hotel Eastbourne brochure page 13 provide welcoming information about the hotel, Eastbourne info and location map and directions that illustrate the Hydro through pictures in a proper manner. [www.hydrohotel.com](http://www.hydrohotel.com)

might support the construct of the hotel as a second home. Compared to a temporary home (often associated with transient or short-term living), a second home comprises feelings and domestic associations. The countryside of the Hydro appears to be a large mansion, and associated with family appeal of undisturbed, tranquil warmth. The urban closeness does not hamper the sense of being shielded and protected, as one might relate to a homely feeling.

### **4.3. Overarching theme – Second home / Extended Family**

Dieter Müller (2002, 2014) proclaims that his ‘second home’ research and dealing with a permanent population of a host community undertaken with respect to recent developments in southern Sweden reveals mostly second homebuyers (seasonal retirement migration), who are led by lifestyle considerations that bear a certain positive image of the countryside in their minds, which again entails a long-term commitment to the host community. Moreover, this includes an increasing involvement into local issues, such as local traditions, food, the homely and lived-in design, just as we might find in ‘our own homes’. This example is only provided here as a snapshot of various aspects associated with the second home. It is about consuming the countryside as a recreational resource and in that respect, is similar to the leisure aspect and relaxing hospitality culture. As such, it is reflected as lifestyle opportunities for retired residents, for example, by offering a better quality of life, diverse services and wellness facilities and body treatments, as depicted at the Hydro Hotel in the hotel brochures.

The images and the metaphors such as *second home and extended family* are replicated in the photographs and through the language that might link to the individuals’ thoughts of and understanding of how the hotel is perceived as meaningful in everyday life (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). This in itself is likely to increase a family feeling when visiting the Hydro. Verbal communication utilises several tools to convey meaning (Silverman 1997), and as indicated by Feldman (1995), metaphors are described as a literary way of sense making because they are used to carry another denotation and hence reveal cognitive structures. Thus, the photographs that are utilised here contain the figurative meaning of the words (the overarching theme), the pictorial elements as symbols, and being what the denotation

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represents (Furunes & Mykletun 2007), such as the social and cultural meaning of *second home/extended family* in this context.

In daily language, metaphors can be used to either decorate or degrade the situation. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors not only influence our everyday language, but also our mind-sets and actions; accordingly, metaphorical images comprise a way of thinking that reveals our world concepts. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out, metaphors can structure conceptual understanding, and they regard metaphors as ‘pervasive’ both in the thinking of language use and ‘ingrained’ into thoughts and action. They state that the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. Whilst metaphors assist in individuals’ creation of social reality and are commonly used to express nuances, they can also narrow the way people think through hiding something or reducing information.

Focused on the Hydro Hotel location and the shape of the sheltered and protected garden in front of the Hydro Hotel, guests, just as family members, can interact and invite each other to join in with activities together in pleasant environment. As a relaxed place for many retired visitors living in the proximity, the Hydro appears inviting and friendly, with easy access and car parking at the entrance. This is evident through the photographs 7, and 8 next.



**Photograph 7:** Hydro Hotel garden  
**Source:** Hydro Hotel website [www.hydrohotel.com](http://www.hydrohotel.com)

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The Hydro is designed as a collection of family houses linked together with an open conservatory, and with an entrance to the private garden with no disturbances from surrounding houses, or cars and distracting sounds. This is comfortable to many guests and visitors and it is likely to be associated with a large designed garden related to traditional homes. During conversations and interviews with guests and local residents, the following is an example of the Hydro appeal:

We have used Hydro for years. We know *what's on* in the hotel, because every time you come in there using the main entrance and have left the car straight outside the main door... yes... well you find a display at the left before you go up the stairs to the main lounge. It is all there, what is happening at the hotel from time to time, may be only one thing one day or several events. We are always looking there first and we always find something of interest.

**Interview guests/couples May 2015**

...then we normally like to sit down in the Conservatory, maybe waiting for other friends, it depends on the occasions. It is so bright and sunny in there... it depends, you know, what we are there for, but for example we go there on Sundays for breakfast, for 2 1/2 hour, the hotel do not bother, they know us, we don't even have to order, they know what we want. It is so lovely.

**Conversation with guests/couples June 2015**

Furthermore, middle aged and older people might hold an individual understanding of the hotel experiences that have changed over time and thus feel more attracted to the Hydro with its possibilities to enjoy outdoor events, social relationships and pleasant dialogues for different reasons when the climate allows. The Hydro Hotel is structured around a lofty, hilly location overlooking the shoreline with tranquil maritime activities such as sail boating, water-skiing and kayaking, a picturesque scene associated with calm and noiseless locations. Photographs 7 and 8 illustrate and help to define the architectural design and structure provided at the Hydro. The Conservatory at the Hydro provided in Photograph 8 below supports the eminent location for this purpose.



**Photograph 8:** From the Conservatory overlooking the ‘private’ garden.  
**Source:** Hydro Hotel website [www.hydrohotel.com](http://www.hydrohotel.com)

The establishment offers direct views over the sea, with the South Downs nearby. The popular promenade by the shoreline is on the one side and the town’s vivid life on the other. During summertime, the hotel mainly caters for tourists and regular visitors to the town’s numerous festivals and outdoor arrangements, both at sea and in the air, for example, Eastbourne’s International Airshow – *Airbourne*. The hotel’s restaurant is a place for guests, in general, to meet friends and relatives, and there are many public facilities beside those already mentioned, as well as a relaxing pool area at the end of the garden and at a lower level toward the sea, protected and illustrated in Photograph 9 in the following.



**Photograph 9:** From relaxing pool area at the end of the garden and at a lower level toward the sea  
**Source:** Hydro Hotel website [www.hydrohotel.com](http://www.hydrohotel.com)

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A working place such as Hydro Hotel seems to care for and welcome its staff, and stimulate the skills needed for hospitality work through training and internal co-constructions and service performances. As a vital part of achieving the hospitality culture, Hydro really focuses on being an ‘extended family’ and related to a ‘home away from home’, to use a well-known mantra or some would say ‘slogan’ from the hotel industry (HOME2 Suites by Hilton; SW Hotel Guide for Spain and Portugal; Bastion Hotel, Oslo, Norway; Storfjord hotel, Skodje, Norway; ‘Home away from Home’, Cancun, Mexico). Hotels worldwide have endeavoured to take a strong position within this segment.

This is the focus at Hydro Hotel, meaning being able to continue to create a welcoming working environment where employees support each other, and towards their guests and visitors, continue to behave and perform encounters naturally as part of their own job satisfaction. In this way, the Hydro contributes to the local community by ‘paying back’ (as noted by the M from an interview) to the society the hotel is part of, by supporting local projects, for example, charity and funding. Hydro Hotel arranging memorable evenings and events for local residents and hotel guests where the commercial elements are not the only ‘attraction’. In this respect, it appears that Hydro Hotel is a well-recognised establishment, particularly for retired people (people from all over England and from abroad living in this area), who speak highly of their ‘second home’ (Hydro was described as ‘our second home’ in the conversations with frequent residents).

Accordingly, this will be further articulated in the next section, in the analysis through more conversations, and interviews at Hydro Hotel. The overarching theme - *Second home/Extended family* has been presented through theory that have informed understanding of hospitality culture in this context and been provided here. The Hydro Hotel provides several programmes that suit elderly people, and to list some of them taken from the main hotel brochure it includes various events, cultural offers and tours as well as family activities at the Hydro, and repeated external visits.

The Hydro Hotel aims to appeal to as many people as possible.

**ETC February 2015**

The statement is evident in the lifestyle magazine: Everything That Counts (*ETC*), which presented Hydro Hotel and its *past, present and future* in their local Eastbourne issue (*ETC* 2015). The hotel main guest segment is adults, business dwellers and retired local residents

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from Eastbourne and the nearby regions. The Hydro has been a part of Eastbourne and trading as the same company for 120 years, and the M (General Manager and Executive Director up to Spring 2016) tells the magazine:

...we love being part of our guests' *extended family*, and look forward to continuing this great tradition.

**Interview ETC with M February 2015**

This is a message that focuses on the strong relationships between the employees and the hotel guests and visitors, and a well-known social phenomenon among all participants in this investigation. The informal atmosphere, as evidenced by regular visitors' comments from the study, has a welcoming appeal. Likewise, it is also considerably clearly observed as having a cordial atmosphere and intuitive empathy through daily interactions with guests and visitors, and through the social activities throughout the fieldworks. The Hydro is emphasised by local residents as a friendly place to visit, and all, verbally articulated when asked by the researcher that they felt welcome here, and understood as being a good friend of the house. Interviews with duty managers and communications with young apprentices, highlighted Hydro Hotel in providing an inclusive working environment, where employees are looked after and included in the hotel teamwork. Such considerations fit well with the historical commemorations of Hydro, and blend in with the seaside locations among many other hotels as one of a kind, a preferable place to stay to many guests and visitors. Thus, the overarching theme, *Second home/Extended family*, emerging from the empirical data gatherings has been analysed accordingly. The analysis now moves from the overarching theme; *Second home/ Extended family*, to the sub-themes **Service as caring**, **Play time** and **Inviting comfort** as displayed in the Analytical diagram in Chapter Three, and follow on next.

### 4.4. Sub-themes

The key sub-themes characterise the pattern in these social situations as, *Service as caring*, *Playtime*, and *Inviting comfort*, and are divided into three excerpts and passages discussed and analysed in this part of the analysis and interpretation. The hospitality culture of the Hydro Hotel is understood as the caring and welcoming encounters and behaviour among employees and the hotel guests and visitors. Friendly hotel staffs are better able to commit themselves to their work (Mars & Nicod 1984; Hochschild 2003; Lugosi 2008, 2009). This

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is important in terms of ownership in that the work represents “a little bit of me”, both in employees’ pride over what they do and also in terms of ownership among the hotel users.

The owners are shareholders and for some, the ownership is more important than the investment.

**Duty manager July 2014**

‘The extended family’, as the general manager stated as important above, is also meaningful to shareholders, since they are concerned and come as repeated guests to a hotel they own a part of and find easy to speak well of:

We really feel at home here; the staffs are so friendly and treat us well.

**Conversation local residents July 2014**

Also, the M holds personal views on hotel matters and many guests are shareholders as noticed earlier:

... oh yes, some guests are shareholders, but you know we have lots of guests from Eastbourne, local people and visitors come here for morning breakfast, lunch and to enjoy our salad bar, afternoon tea, or book in for elegant dinner in the evening in our Crystal Restaurant.

**Conversation M August 2014**

The following analysis is organised around the key themes and issues emerging from the observations, conversations and interviews with Hydro Hotel participants involved in the research. The analysis will help to situate the theoretical aspects of the thesis through the conceptual framework as the context of the research. This part examines the themes that have emerged from the analysis and findings and found as the most important related to hospitality culture. The initial discussions in relation to observation of everyday life and practices previously, and more conversations and interviews with employees and guests, guests together with other guests, and management, including duty managers and key staff members, account for the overall participants in Hydro Hotel. An important note about the use of metaphors needs to be made clear:

Metaphors, like *second home* and *extended family* have a double meaning, and are context related. The first terms represent *a home* the way it is discussed in Chapter Two and associated with belonging by those interviewed later in this chapter. It is expressed as a

safe and relaxed environment where one can come and go of free will important in life. Likewise, extended family explain how close the guests and employees feel, their relationship has developed into a friendship as if it belongs to the one related to a close family. Such as these metaphors are sense making and belong to a 'collective representation' (Eriksen 2001) of how the participants 'see' the social world experienced in this hotel. Not surprisingly, metaphors are characteristically used to illustrate the shared meaning that lies in the language, but have to be explored more accurately, as the meanings of a metaphor might differ, according to its context and social situation when it appears. The literal meaning is one way of understanding a metaphor, whilst the other is the metaphorical (López 2003), useful also when observing the social world with more explanatory resources. Thus, in this research, the social theorising is concerned with empirical meaning and content in particular social situations. As far as the hospitality culture is concerned, these empirical meanings represent the interpretive perspectives revealed through the language and visible characteristics communicated with all participants.

### *Service as caring*

The caring aspects in hospitality and service work have existed for a long time. The social process belongs to the host/guest relationships developed through the offer and provision of food, shelter and safety to travelling 'strangers', in fleeting time. The caring aspects are closely linked to helping and serving people who like to or have to pay to achieve this service. Thus, it is very much tied to hospitality in enterprises that deal with personal engagement and services meaningful to others. This perspective is interesting in this research study and has been explored and therefore reveals strong evidence that supports such understanding. The first sub-theme, *Service as caring*, has been analysed and organised into the two sub-theme sections as the key themes characterising the pattern revolved around the overarching theme above: *Caring relationship and friendship*, and *Cordial atmosphere* and *Specialised employees*, analysed next.

### **Caring relationship and friendship**

The guests are generally relaxed and comfortable at Hydro Hotel. The observations reveal how the employees serve the guests, clean up after they have left, and chat with them in a familiar manner, if it fits in with their own work schedule and other commitments. Such

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activities are not exceptional in Hydro Hotel. However, the uniqueness is embedded in the way the employees perform and deliver this service. The welcoming behaviours of familiarity and friendliness through the individual way employees speak to and contact guests, the personalised greetings using guests' names, indicating what they want, how they provide the preferred chairs or niches more private, and so on, in making the informal relationship easier to connect guests with employees and vice versa. The length of time the employees have worked at the Hydro varies from a few months to more than twenty years. Employees seem to know the hotel and the hotel practices well, and so they know their guests and visitors. Generally, the employees regularly approach their guests with a smile, exchange greetings, very often helping them. Frequent use of this hotel ends up with friendship between the guests and those who work here. One of the duty managers explains:

...We know our guests and if they don't show up, we feel concerned about their well-being, and often we give them a phone call to ask if everything is all right. That is how well we know them.

**Conversation DM July 2014**

The guest-staff relationship appears strong and robust here and communication takes place as a regular daily activity. It is clear that the employees consider the guests as close as we normally consider family members or close relatives and friends. They know who they are and they know their guests' hotel room telephone numbers as well as personal phone number, as demonstrated above. The language they use, the way they speak and the pitch in their voice demonstrate how close they feel they are, and how relaxed both employees and guests experience the interactions that take place, often every day and with different guests. This could signal frequent use of the hotel. The guests come very often or they stay for a longer period at the hotel. Observing daily contact and how it comes into being is clear from the encounters that this is not the first time they meet. The soft carpet provides discrete sounds that allow dialogues and communications to take place in different areas of the main lounge at the same time, without disturbing anyone.

This affects the calm and silent mood of everyday work to and from with different services, with the flow of people coming and going without distressing noise, and creates an inclusive atmosphere with those guests already sitting talking to each other or just relaxing. However, the short dialogues, more as greetings between employees and guests, are not soundless, but normal without being troubling, and in the friendly way normally

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related to well-being and a homely way of life. In the main lounge, guests can also order a light meal and have their tea served here or in the sheltered garden, located in front of the conservatory, facing the sea. Some guests sit for hours drinking coffee and talking with employees. They seem to know each other well:

**Employee:** Hello, how are you today? You seemed a bit unwell yesterday.

This statement shows the relationship between employee and a guest who visits the hotel frequently, meaning often. Some visitors and guests come almost every day:

**Woman:** Bye now

**Employee:** Oh, are you leaving?

**Woman:** Yes, I'm leaving now.

**Employee:** Are you coming tomorrow?

**Woman:** What day is it tomorrow? Oh, Monday, yes... yes, I will be here.

**Employee:** All right, take care. See you tomorrow as usual.

### Overheard conversation July 2014

This illustrates a friendly little chat, as if it should be a small talk between family members or between close friends who know each other well, but reveals much more. Thus, the type of talking that we are familiar with at home between friends, and even at work in a good relationship between colleagues is likely to be the open way of speaking to each other in this hotel, such as informal conversations easy to overhear in the main lounge. The loyalty and therefore the trustfulness the participants in this regard show to feel (by their smile to each other, touching hands and with a relaxed chatting and gentle voice), raises a willingness to rely on an external partner in whom one has confidence (Cohen 1986). The behaviour comes spontaneously in an informal manner with an element of well-being to it, and is clearly meaningful observed to the people involved. As well as motivating the guest(s) to visit the hotel, and then come *tomorrow*, the *caring* behaviour might give the guests a feeling of being cared for in that the employee is really concerned and wants and hope to see, expects to see this person again. They have time to talk with their guests, and to enjoy such activities. Since interactions of everyday

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short chats and friendly comments similar to this are common at the Hydro, it is also visible and understandable to other guests and visitors. This influence guest/visitor perceptions that Hydro Hotel is friendly and welcoming hotel, has been overheard, and employees pay personal attention, and are concerned and attentive towards all guests, often observed and endorsed during my fieldwork. This might not always be the case in public areas in hotels and is therefore valuable to people who obviously seek contacts in a service establishment where 'familiar' contact is part of the hotel's practices. Indeed, it is not difficult to take in the friendly setting at the Hydro, and from my observations, one session is illustrated from my field notes:

*Many guests and visitors are elderly retired, local residents, both singles and couples. The majority of the regular guests is aged between sixty and ninety and are familiar with the hotel's history, the various programmes on offer and the staff. The guests move around in the public areas in terms of what they are involved in and, on a fine summer's day like this, many lodge themselves in the garden. Small groups of people sit and talk or simply watch other people - just like me, still sitting at the same place with my notebook and a cup of tea. One of my observations was a couple coming over towards the lift: she in a wheelchair and he is using a walking stick. After some effort, she managed to get out of the wheelchair and into the lift, while he rather easily got into the wheelchair and drove it towards the side entrance, where he parked the vehicle. He returned to the lift, probably to go upstairs to help his wife. At this time, the employees are moving efficiently between the different public spaces. They carry food and beverage to guests situated in the main lounge. There is very often non-stop serving in the public spaces, but there is no sense of undue haste.*

### **Observations/field notes June 2014**

The excerpt illustrates both the age segment common in everyday life and the time and space available for every guest and visitor to move around and manage their own time reflect on daily life and a sense of obviousness. Employees seem to be attentive when guests want them to be. The sense of caring is evident in many of the daily activities. The couple from the lift, and from observations later on, are living permanently in the hotel. It is their home, some of the resident visitors told me. They go on with their life without any intervention of any kind, unless needing assistance. The main lounge has room for many activities, due to its size and how it is organised in *the middle of everything*, and within reach of many facilities surrounding it. The flow of people continues into the most popular

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areas, into the Conservatory, the Crystal Restaurant, and to meeting rooms and ceremonies, depending on the time of day. An example of another observation exemplified:

*In the Conservatory, the guests usually enjoy light meals and coffee or juice. This area is always full at lunchtime and during the afternoon, when the guests socialise with one another and with the staff. The bar is not a main attraction in this hotel, except for weddings and large ceremonies or meetings. Few guests arrive to visit only the bar. Another notable social gathering point is the open space in the main lounge, which is air-conditioned and has access to all of the other public spaces. The Conservatory is bright, with open doors leading out into a private garden. Here the guests can play croquet, watch other guests' playing, eat and drink, or just sit down to enjoy fresh air and the peaceful sea view.*

**Observations/field notes June 2014**

As illustrated through observations, the public areas are relaxed and accessible from many angles, and popular during daytimes and afternoons. The many activities that take place here include numerous guests and visitors, which are organised for this purpose. Residents, for example, told me later in interviews, they frequently use the hotel for small meetings with friends, enjoy Sunday dinners with traditional food, and invite club members for coffee and tea sessions to remember previous games and spend a pleasant time with no obligations to but to amuse each other and enjoy the time together as exemplified:

We have used this hotel for years. We know *what's on* here, because every time you come in there, using the main entrance, you find a display at the left before you go up the stairs to the main lounge. It is all there, what is happening at the hotel from time to time, may be only one thing one day or several events another and we are always welcomed to join in... and it depends, you know, what we are there for where we sit down ...

**Interview guest June 2014**

The hospitality and inviting attraction to the Hydro Hotel illustrated here is the culture of social life in this hotel and as such links to the debates drawing on Kuper and Kuper (1996) and the study of social practices: daily hold on host/guest relationships, communication forms and language use, emphasis on valuable meanings persisting and constructed in human societies, as here in public spaces in this hotel. Other statements underlined by guests:

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... you can sit absolutely anywhere, eat anywhere – there is such a lovely atmosphere, so relaxed. And you know, we meet local people, lots of people from Eastbourne come regularly, it is such a nice place to visit for many purposes...we have bowls club lunches here and coffee mornings with close friends every month. We really feel very comfortable here.

**Conversation guests July 2014**

The Hydro practices bonding with guests and visitors and their words-of-mouth count as strong recommendation that benefits this hotel. In applying this hotel concept to both tourism and hospitality connections across or linked to the type of establishments dealing with retired and elderly guest segments, the hotel attitude, guest alertness, and welcoming appeal are further recognised. Serving as caring, therefore, represents cultural meaning or signification of particular cultural forms and thus, a metaphor and social tradition understood in this context.

### **Cordial atmosphere**

The cordial atmosphere is apparent and the guests seem to enjoy their stay without any particular ‘code’ to follow, and they come and leave the hotel as they please. During special evening arrangements, such as wedding ceremonies and family parties in the garden, employees have to be particularly attentive. However, they are able to see the whole garden from the Conservatory and observe their guests, are ready to serve and assist at any time. The employees have control over the public spaces and are constantly on the move to and from these areas undertaking their daily operations, helping and taking care of their guests. The hospitality the hotel has established with guests needs safeguarding, as one duty manager asserts here:

Well with 50 staff on job every day, we need to prepare ourselves for each day and the day operating meeting is therefore very important to us. We have meeting every morning, to see if everybody has what they need for the day, different from each place in the hotel, for example, the dining room needs all the details ...you know, many have been here for over twenty years and we have to avert mistakes by routines becoming habits. We sometimes deal with guests that become ill and seriously sick and delicate matters can occur that are taken care of by our special skilled staff ... but we all need to be motivated and keep up the good mood for our guests.

**Interview DM June 2014**

In another statement coming from regular tourists/guest who have been to the Hydro so many times that they are now friends with employees, their recurrent summer visit lasting

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more than one month each time, one gentleman and shareholder noted during our conversation:

...we have come here for many years now, every year to visit this hotel and the staff. We enjoy it so much here. We are familiar here and we know the manager... always helpful, as you can see yourself we need special care now and then...and...we can always rely upon our 'friends' working here...

**Conversation G June 2014**

Conversations similar to this demonstrate the sub-theme and the open communications between guests and employees as valuable for the hotel stay. The duty manager, on one evening of observation, sat down with me and told me that employees are the most valuable assets as they have to be able to deliver quality hospitality. "They need cordial treatment to develop and to grow accustomed to this type of hospitality we provide at the Hydro". He continues:

Young people enjoy being trainees here and I suppose you have met the two girls from Austria. Our service industry has always employed large numbers of foreign workers. However, we live in a global world, maybe hotels more than other enterprises and, truly, working alongside people from many cultures and other backgrounds is an enriching experience. We are proud of our workforce.

**Interview DM May 2014**

This illustrates that the management are concerned about the different cultures the 'working force' brings to the hotel, its value and the sharing activities that will provide easier contact and communications with staff, often from various cultures too. The guests at the Hydro are experienced and many have travelled and visit other nations and continents, and have also stayed abroad for years in a foreign culture different from their own. This makes the hotel experiences rich in terms of remembering and reminiscing with employees. I communicated with the two girls/apprentices from Austria early in their stay and they were smiling and looked as if they enjoyed their work. Later on in the fieldwork, I suddenly met them just before they left the Hydro after three months to go back to their home country. I asked them how the work experience had been for them so far, and how they have come to learn about hospitality culture at this hotel, and one of them said that Hydro is extraordinary:

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All the employees care about you, helping you and guiding you around. It is as if to belong to a family ... they really care for you here. It has been an exceptional time for us. We have experienced real teamwork. Actually, we do not want to leave...

**Conversations E June 2014**

The hotel is chosen by many of the guests and visitors because of the warm relationships they develop with the staff, some of who become close friends. The above comments illustrate the personal relationship that exists between the hotel and the employees who work there. It is almost as if, in being a 'friend', they are supported and cared for in a very 'homely' way. Some guests stay several weeks on holiday, and have done this for more than twenty years. This is interesting as it illustrates the fact that cultural public areas can generate encounters between people that end up facilitating strong relationships. As one father who was with his daughter stated:

I did not drive myself this time; we took a taxi down here this year. It is expensive, but it is worth the money. We like it so much here ...we have come here for many years now, every year to visit the hotel and the staff...you know the hotel has a splendid location.

**Conversation G May 2014**

Another interesting aspect about the workforce came from an interview with the PHSA. She had reflected on the construction of hospitality, she said, and how or why it emerged between some employees and guests, but not always. Her genuine interests in the working conditions at Hydro revealed her opinion and she asserted:

We have been lucky with our workforce...they seem so be dedicated, you know we have sometimes special caring challenges here, the guests often need more empathetic care and help...and we look for workers and very often we get persons who have stayed here for many years. That tells you a little of what kind of hospitality we provide.

**Conversation PHSA May 2014**

The hospitality culture at Hydro Hotel offers relaxation that supports the feeling of well-being to guests and visitors. Many visitors fell asleep in the comfortable chairs in the main lounge for a while. This is not abnormal; rather, it happens regularly. That many of the guests also do this in other hotels has been observed. This way of behaviour in the Hydro Hotel is very much related to the caring aspect of the hospitality culture. Indeed, employees care for their guests and take care of them as a personal way of giving service, and where safety and comfort are granted as daily facility. If they are regular guests, they

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might even have designed areas for relaxing, reading, and more silent activities or tranquil conversations. In this way, the friendly caring perspective is to understand as the right impression of the hospitality culture, and that the social meaning of it includes safety and being taken care of both as a human being as well as a friend and 'personal' hotel guest. In general, I tried to be sensitive with the guests, but sometimes they talked to me as if I were also a guest. An old gentleman and regular hotel guest, who live in Eastbourne, had been coming to the hotel for over 25 years. He (Permanent Guest) told me during our short conversation:

**PG:** 'You see, the staff do not interfere *too* much; they let us go on with whatever we are doing and that makes it so nice to stay here. They are helpful but they do not push the guests. This is very important. In other hotels, the employees are so fussy and ... and ... well I do not like that. Here it is nothing of the kind'.

Informal approaches such as this allow me to discover new categories of meaning. He was funny, joked about himself, and could move very little without his walking chair aid.

**PG:** '...But my head is fine', he told me and laughed, and then added, 'and the beer is good, too'.

We both laughed, and I used the opportunity to ask him if he enjoyed this hotel and why he came here.

**PG:** 'It's joyful here and we can go on with our lives'.

This is a significant comment and illustrates that he enjoys the hotel as if it were a home environment. Later, it became apparent that this gentleman actually lives at the Hydro and is also one of the 450 shareholders and after his wife passed away, he decided that this solution would suit him best. Since he became a widower, he has found pleasure in the caring atmosphere of the hotel similar to home culture. Guests who live at the Hydro receive the service they are used to and appreciate, they can join in activities and conversations with others when they feel comfortable or stay out and retreat to more secluded areas designed for this purpose. This particular gentleman has his routine and it was easy to sense that the staff knew him well and served him his drink, and later his tea, without his orders. The employees seemed to care for him as the most natural and least demanding guests.

**Specialised employees**

However, one evening after a hectic work session, one of the duty managers I interviewed returned to me and stated:

Hospitality must come from your inner you. It is a personal desire and cannot be *learned*, is my experience. I sometimes think that we have too many old employees here and I have noticed that some always ‘hide’; they are tired of working... it can be quite demanding...

**Interview DM October 2014**

Overall, the relationship between the employees and the frequent guests is best summed up by a couple often met at the hotel:

We both enjoy it here ... and the staff knows us, they know us by name, and we are not the only one they know. But we are familiar here and we know the managers and they know us. There is great hospitality here. The people who work here are specialised and that is sometimes needed... and when we think of the Hydro we both agree about the employees that are very caring and friendly.

**Interview G May 2015**

Hydro Hotel practises a caring service on many levels, and can sometimes be demanding and influencing personal feelings, evident from the previous comments. Although the employees are specially trained for particular social situations, the days are never the same, as many participants tell me, and the people involved might also have bad days. For example, when guests become ill and need urgent help, it might be difficult at some point when the hotel also serves other activities such as guests’ anniversaries, and hosting weddings. As a duty manager for more than seven years, he knows what is necessary, and why he finds his work meaningful but also challenging. However, that does not seem to blend in with everyday operations for all employees, as noted.

The quotation above illustrates that some employees have been here for a long time and might be tired and have lost their enthusiasm, which is so important in service work and hospitality understanding. Personal involvements within a warm and cordial working environment are not always free from internal ‘conflict’, and can sometimes draw *too* much on emotional intervention. As all the above are examples of ways in which human behaviour and hospitality encounters occur, meaningful and personal involvements need to be present and performed by all employees, dealing with both physical and psychological pressures. Meaningful work is also evident between employees and staff, where the

empathetic characteristics are directed towards each other, to bring out the real teamwork spirit, and help each other when necessary. Because they recognise the value of collaboration and common support, they experience a strong element of satisfaction at work.

Contented behaviour such as this is visible and sensible among guests and visitors and provides a solid influence upon the hospitality culture and the metaphorical *extended family* at the Hydro Hotel, and is assumed meaningful in this kind of work. In most of the little things we do every day, we simply think and act more or less automatically (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Thus, *meaning* in this hospitality culture is not the same as what people find *meaningful* in their lives or their work for that matter, rather a shared intuition and concern of understanding that underline the innate importance of the social and cultural awareness.

### *Playtime*

Traditional societies can have significant consequences for social structures. For example, coastal tourism and employment can attract both young and more experienced people (female and male) from towns and cities to work in hotels and hospitality establishments that provide relaxed activities. The Hydro Hotel has become a popular place in this connection and in terms of the early use of caring and treatment in relation to Spa facilities; employees have been targeted to caring activities as part of the service appeal in this hotel. Friendship and relevant social activities dominate the hospitality culture here, and the homeliness is present through the resident's lifestyle and their desire of quality of life defined as regular use of the facilities here, often eating out, and sort of live their lives, play their 'cards' in a relaxed and safe environment easy to visit and to stay. The Hydro Hotel provides easy access to the different public areas and employees have full control, also to join in in plays and games with guests and visitors. Activities and social situations in this hotel explain the meaning in *Service as caring* in this context.

### **Frequent games afternoons and well-being**

In the Conservatory, one can look out into the sheltered garden, and over the hedge and out to the sea. Guests can be found at a number of different sites here. Some quietly play chess inside, while occasionally sharing a joke. Others play croquet in the garden, or hold more

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private conversations. An employee (male) came over close to my position, and said to some of the guests:

**E:** Hello there, how are you? Have you ordered, or do you want to order?

The guests were not hurried and were permitted to keep to their own schedules. The observations carried out in this environment illustrated many friendly and joyful activities, such as games similar to family games played at home, or recognised activities reappearing every time groups of guests joined outdoor actions. Some of the older guests told me that these activities are:

... so social, they remind us of happy times in grandma's garden, you know ... with some biscuits and lemonade, and fancy straw hats ...just like the one I wear now. It is joyful and we hardly see activities like this anymore, ...except here at Hydro Hotel in the summer. We love to play games here.

### **Conversations with PG July 2015**

The garden activities at Hydro welcome guests and visitors, and many of the guests and visitors come to the hotel just to play in the garden the whole afternoon. They eat outdoor, bring their families or some families meet in the afternoon to play croquet or badminton with their grandchildren. Also, employees can join in the games together with guests and their families, and they do. In this way, it is also easier to control the flow of people and the activities along the swimming pool at the end of the garden. As an example of familiar interaction, one of the staff members addressed a newly arrived guest. This employee (young male) asserts:

**Employee:** Oh, hi, nice to see you today, too. I like your shoes. It's a good choice - goes well with your dress, and much better than the pair you had last time. I like these but I did not like the others.

### **Overheard conversation July 2015**

Conversations such as this and other observations reveal clear examples of co-constructions shaping the hospitality culture. Co-construction of hospitality culture is very much entailed to activities in company with other guests and employees. The outdoor public area is large enough to provide games and keep many guests sitting there as an audience applauding and smiling. The cultural scenes do remind visitors entering the garden of theatre. It is allowed just to sit down without ordering any food or drinks. As mentioned previously, most of the guests are regularly visiting the Hydro for the purpose

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to be entertained in an atmosphere of togetherness. Such as card games and scramble are also observed as nice activities performed in the garden.

On one of my days of fieldwork, not so sunny, rather windy and cloudy, Elaine (PHSA) sat down with me for some updates, and I asked her:

**Researcher:** *What kind of hospitality culture do you want your guests to experience at Hydro?*

**PHSA:** As you have observed yourself, we want to deliver a relaxed atmosphere. We want to signal out and to our guests that they can just sit down and relax and enjoy ... watch the world go by, so to speak. We have unobtrusive staff, I'd like to think that our staff do not disturb but serve gently and are there for our guests, if you know what I mean, to create a relaxed atmosphere.

**Conversation PHSA July 2015**

*I was excited about this meeting with Elaine. Things had turn out to be so easy to go about at Hydro and the employees seem to accept my appearance without paying any attention or feel uncomfortable by me sitting there and taking notes, which I was allowed to do in agreement with the M and PHSA. I have had some small conversations with some of the staff member, both females and males. And they all enjoy their work and answer my questions, even support me with some episode to illustrate the interactions between the guests and themselves, although not always relevant to my themes and my research questions.*

*My preliminary findings are just at the beginning of the fieldwork result, but still I was glad to present some of it to Elaine today. It was more like a good conversation between us this morning, and she joined in, reflected over daily work and situations that confirmed my understanding of what I had observed. This was a new opening for me as a fieldworker. She expressed her happiness over being able to inform her staff with what I had observed and located, to "involve employees in hospitality culture so important here" as she said.*

**Observation and field notes July 2015**

Laughter is usually heard in the garden, guests and employees amuse themselves and reinforce bonds already establish, and friendships in this way. The type of contact and interactions between employees and guests reflect a familiar attitude and behaviour that is part of this daily practice at the Hydro. As noted by the duty manager the same day: (DM means duty manager, and Hydro operates with 6).

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**KL:** *How is the hospitality culture co-constructed at Hydro, what do you think or feel that this social construction is all about?* I asked.

**DM:** You can only really receive hospitality through your guests; it is about their response. I have heard and, luckily enough, I must say...a lot of customers have told me ... your staffs are so polite and friendly ... and that reflects the hotel's attitude...doesn't it...

The duty manager reflects on what kind of impact the hospitality culture has on his work and the reciprocal benefits of being close and friendly to guests that he recognises as transforming their working environment into a meaningful place both for the hotel employees and guests and visitors. The language used here, between the employees and the hotel guests (guests that the employees have established a relationship with) in many ways enables the hotel to develop individual friendships and happy guests that indeed have returned to the hotel for years, and continually repeat their visits and extended stays because of the familiar mood the Hydro performs and provides. Though, the relevance to well-being is clear, the 'relax issue' has a bearing in this hospitality culture. As such, feeling good and well stimulate social activities and more indoor actions and amusements.

### **Relaxed social activities and garden croquet**

The hotel is not visited only for the service deliveries including traditional food and being served small meals and something to eat and drinks anywhere, (teatimes, nibbles etc.), but also for the friendship that regular guests have established with employees at this hotel. The 'reciprocity' the hotel management return is of high value to participants involved in the research study. Such human attitude and behaviour are essential to the co-construction of the hospitality culture, the caring service, and this particular hospitality society. It is in this togetherness and shared social relations (Giddens 2001), the references to the recreation and safety, peaceful location and physical landscape *Service as caring/Extended family* is co-constructed. Consequently, through these structures the fundamental concepts of familiar, belonging, security and lifestyle are explored and emerged through the hotel society as their social world (Goffman 1959; Van Maanen 1974; Cohen 1988).

These structures and human behaviours influence the way the 'hotel society' has chosen to visit the place, guests desire to meeting the culture they feel they know and where to experience comfortably in 'seeing' other people's way of such life. The common acceptances of public location allow people to seek in culture the 'patterns themselves [in]

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the defining elements of a human existence which, although not constant in expression, are yet distinctive in character' (Geertz 1973: 37). In this regard, the cultural contact is dynamic (Eriksen 2003), however, not unpredictable, but rather meaningful, human situations (Delaney 2011; Griswold 1994; Geertz 1973) as well as accepted as a good social life.

Employees' eyewitness a working environment that is meaningful to them, they often told me. It was worthwhile to stress and assist senior guests, support them as something of importance to them in their life. They received happy guests, and in particular those guests that used the hotel frequently, an *appreciative* hotel society in return. Being able to please and *thrill* people everyday, have time for them and communicate more than standard phrases had become a privilege to them, I was told. Not all service workers had such daily opportunities. The rumors/stories from colleagues elsewhere told differently of service work. At the Hydro, employees were proud of being appreciated and valued as humans, and to a great extent, contributors (they also mentioned being co-constructors to hospitality), and *seen* by the management. As such, time is an important service element in this hotel – in a positive meaning of giving time to guests and have the management's permission to utilize and predispose their working time to the best of the hotel society. The employees were informed that attitude and innate skills created the friendly image Hydro Hotel is known for. The reciprocity is predictable pattern indicated here.

*During my visit this late summer afternoon, more and more people came in and sat in the Conservatory. All the doors towards the garden are open this afternoon, and guests, who had lunch earlier, had already left this space, and new guests were filling up the area for afternoon tea. Many went out into the garden to enjoy this while watching the games and amusement. Guests came from the Crystal Restaurant, the main 'fine dining' space, and made their way towards the main lounge to sit down in the comfortable chairs arranged along the walls, take a little nap and continue the afternoon with tea and friendly pastimes, whilst other hotel guests were joining games or outdoor actions as well as the sunny and peaceful time of the afternoon.*

**Observation/field notes May 2014**

The illustration above enables us to understand the relaxed and sheltered atmosphere and designed environment this hotel provides to its guests and visitors. Employees are always present or sometimes join in the activities that go on, serving them, and take care of guests

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as well as their belongings, while some of them might be slumbering for a while. One of my focuses were the interactions that did not happened over a long time, but rather inside small groups of people, friends and visitors, entering the Hydro through the periods of fieldwork. I asked one employee while he was serving me my regular teapot:

**KL:** *How do the guests contact other guests and when is the time where interactions are manifold? What do they prefer to do except for excursions and bus trips with special arrangements?*

**E:** Are we talking about staff and activities, ...first of all conversations, they talk of course ...this all depends upon the hotel guests and the type of hotel, activities are absolutely related to whether it is a leisure visit, where the guests spend all their time at the hotel, or a business hotel where the time is short and busy. I would not say second home, that is to mush cliché, but the guests must be treated as a person. If they feel comfortable they easily contact many employees and we contact the guests as well. Every time the hotel provides concerts, programs as 'singing with us' having an invited professional or event, guests and visitors enjoy themselves and engage in activities, singing, dancing and the like. You know, out Cinema evenings are popular but that is a passive type of entertainment and our guests have a pleasant time but hardly any interactions, which again is welcomed by those with reduced ability to function physically.

As stated previously, the employees are there for the guests and they really are committed to this hospitality work and with respect, in this public place. It was not always so easy to ask politely, but still spontaneously, what prompted the co-construction of culture. At this time, however, it became more clearly that all guests and visitors co-constructed through their consumption of the welcoming hospitality within they felt included. It emerged as a way silent performing of living each day in the Hydro Hotel. The social life was highlighted through their bodily 'language' and facial expressions, with blinking eyes, smiles and gestures towards each other. And the laughter is never non-existent.

### *Inviting comfort*

Hotels such as the Hydro Hotel and how it appears as hospitality 'destination' deliver social and cultural experiences to tourists, guests and visitors. The people that visit this hotel are not arbitrary. Most visit the Hydro for a purpose. The attractive appeal belongs to the open space of the public lounge and what the diverse niches provide of traditional features, the soft and comfortable furniture, and the design the guests wish for. People feel safe and comfortable here. The comfort includes comfort they are acquainted with; they

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know it and might have similar in their own home. Sights similar to this may recall good memories and remembrances that are valuable to them for many reasons. They are welcomed every day with a friendly attitude that connects people and is thus suitable for interactions. As mentioned by one of the male duty managers, one of the appealing values of Hydro Hotel belongs to the hotel's spa, well-being facilities and social treatments. The Hydro Hotel cultural traditions are very much appreciated, particularly by local residents, as noted:

This hotel has wonderful Christmas decorations, and the food is just the traditional food we appreciate this time of the year. In fact, I can tell you...we actually come here every year. We are six couples who stay here between Christmas and New Year. That is the time of the year where Hydro provide low room prices and we stay here three nights, enjoy the wonderful food and decorations, and you know...we dance every night to live music. It is so nice...it is magic to all of us. We have done this for years...

**Conversation local residents March 2016**

What this illustrates is evident and the local residents have one of the best times of the year together with good friends, enjoying the Hydro Hotel with its special arrangement at its best. This meaning that the hotel is aware of its role as a traditional events carrier and provides their ultimate to please the guests. They, on the other hand, 'hardly pay money for the it'. The hotel design and architecture also accentuate the familiar attraction this hotel conveys, illustrated here:

...[T]his is not an ordinary building, like a boring square box building. Hydro is an iconic hotel, and if you ask professionals and dynamic people in the hotel business, as is done, they all ranked the Hydro as among the three most memorable hotels here in Eastbourne.

**Communication DM June 2015**

Furthermore, and based on the comments from the operational department of the Hydro, the photographs support and illustrate the extraordinary architecture and design of the Hydro by visualising its appearances as a hotel. The new General Manager (Spring 2016) states in the semi-interview and conversation about the effect or impact of architecture on guests and visitors:

The building has a *soul* – it breathes and lives and I see myself as the guardian of it. By that I mean this building must be maintained, nurtured and taken care of -and the building will take care of you.

**Interview/conversation GM 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

Spending time together and bonding were often cited as important drivers for familiarity

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and homely attractions. All the guests I interviewed and spoke to report a fabulous time here. They did not hesitate to mention employees as important elements in the social hotel experience and many had spent years visiting the Hydro.

### **Attractive location and good logistics suitable for interactions**

People from institutions in the whole region, and external groups of retired people come to this hotel for that extra and supplementary hotel experience. The Hydro Hotel co-construct surprises and provides happy moments through many friendly and homely interactions as between employees, guests and visitors. For example, one day before dinner many people had started to come into the main lounge where they sat down; some were standing waiting for another and there were groups who certainly knew each other and had arrived for special reasons as observed and discussed next:

*A younger woman seemed to have a message for some of the people in the large group and they started to walk towards the side entrance, as if there was a bus or something waiting for them outside... The weather was nice and warm and all the women wore summer skirts and open summer shoes. They were smiling and chatting, laughing and helping some who were in need of walking sticks, wheelchairs and/or walking chairs. The younger woman came up to me to bring with her the two men who were talking to me about where I would go today or if I could join them. "We don't know where we are going, it is something about a train and it is very exciting"; we all laughed. He looked happy and went quickly out with his companion. She, on the other side, happened to be the leader of this group, and she said, "We have a special arrangement for these people, we bring them down here from a charity and care organization and in here to Hydro, giving them a week of holiday. And then we take them out in the daytime to give them some good experiences, let them see something else, have a good meal and feel that they have a relationship with others. They really enjoy themselves and everybody is happy, you can see." She pushed a wheelchair and went out of the hotel to catch up with the other guests. They will return later in the evening, since they all should stay here for some days.*

**Observation/field notes June 2014**

This is a very typical situation at Hydro Hotel, I was told by a staff member, and it is very popular, as asserted:

The guests feel safe here and are taken care of. Some have said that they leave their

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home for a while to go on local safari, like discovery trips... they just love this.

### **Conversation with special female staff member September 2014**

Excursions such as illustrated above are very popular at Hydro and guests and daily visitors are always happy when they are able to join in and experience tours together with friends and local residents. The hotel itself host different events and evenings. In the cold season, winter and early spring the Hydro invite to indoor experiences. For example, 'Murder evenings' and literary gatherings with readings and excitements through invited performances and theatrical scenarios. In many ways, the Hydro contributes to great entertainments and attractive interactions beyond their hotel mission, 'taken care of guests'. Therefore, as the employees carefully expressed, Hydro pays back to the society it serves and have business with in terms of providing a range of activities suitable for interactions. The open access and soft sounds, gives the hotel an inviting comfort, so much appreciated that some people live permanently here. The guests like the feeling of going on with their lives, in order to continue the way they are used to, appreciate and like to share with their 'friends' at the hotel. This is significant regarding hospitality culture in hotels, and of important value to the people who live and visit the Hydro, but also the local residents of Eastbourne. The next section interprets the elements essential to comfort, for the guests and visitors at the Hydro Hotel, and follows here.

### **Homely and traditional design and comfort**

One morning, I passed a female employee preparing for lunchtime in the Crystal Restaurant. There were no guests in the restaurant at this time, and I introduced myself. She was from Portugal, a country that I have visited many times and therefore felt easy to talk about. We shared some experiences while she was setting the tables for mealtime. The Crystal Restaurant is more formal then the Conservatory and because of this, guests normally book tables for (weekend) lunch and evening dinner here. Those employees, who worked here, were working in this department of the hotel only. The ambiance was vaguely formal and business like, different dress codes and uniforms for hosts and service workers. The dress code is casual elegance and it assumes that the guests are prepared for a nice evening out. The female employee was friendly and we had a short conversation about her experiences since she had been working at the Hydro for several years.

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**KL:** ‘How many guests is it possible to serve in here?’ I asked.

**E:** ‘we can set the tables for about 180 people. We have these tables for nine people and if we need to set for a group of 20, we use the table over there’.

She pointed over to the wall and towards the Orangerie, in the smaller room next to the Crystal Restaurant. She took the initiative and guided me around and we went into the Orangerie. I was told that it could be set for 40 people and I saw that it had a high glass ceiling, allowing daylight to stream through. We communicated and shared the hospitality culture at Hydro, and she asserts:

**E:** ‘It is hot in the summer’, she said. ‘The Crystal Restaurant is very popular’, she told me, ‘and the guests love it here and they always want to talk to us, but unfortunately I do not always have time for that, so I have to say: later ... I will come to you later and talk, and sometimes I go back to the lounge and talk a little bit, you know they want to talk with us...’

**KL:** ‘you have become friends with your guests, what do you think of that, what does it mean here?’

**E:** ‘yes, they come here very often and know us, and we know them. They are old and sometimes they die here. Many are ill and need special care too, and I miss them when they are gone. Some of the staff members used to call the guests if they don’t come one day, to ask if everything is okay, you know, we care and if they used to come every day, and many do that; we worry if they don’t show up ...’.

**KL:** ‘Do the guests use the wellness facilities and spa treatments here?’

**E:** ‘Ohm, no, not really, they cannot afford that, it is expensive...although they could really need some treatments ... it could have been helpful to many...’

**Communication E June 2015**

It is captivating with the personal engagement the employees show, although their work can be demanding in terms of personal, trustworthy engagement with some individuals in need of particular care. The employees must be further prepared to give part of themselves in this work. It is emotional work and requires alertness. The work very much relates to taking care of people in a manner that brings joy to their life as well as giving meaningful feedback and responses to employees. Some guests are alone and the good relationships they have with employees compensate for the loneliness for some hours and as such, balance their days. It is also clear that spa facilities are in house business, also open to

## CHAPTER FOUR: FIELDWORK HYDRO HOTEL

visitors from outside the hotel, and treatments and services of well-being, but paid for. As illustrated by the language used by some old men who have stayed for some time at the Hydro, and in answering my open query about what it is that really attracts them to this particular hotel:

You know... the two of us old chaps ...after we became alone ...our wives passed away the same year ...it has been very good to come to this place so similar to our latest lifestyle. We really appreciate the friendly and inclusive attitude that we find here, the employees are wonderful, always time for us and offer so many activities that we can join in... like easy talks and teasing, jokes and laughing...and the relaxed games and concern they show us...

They are interested in our life experiences too. It is a good place to stay, we can continue our lives in a shared well-being tradition we feel comfortable in, and look at the comfortable chairs they provide... just like home ... you know.

**Informal conversations with guests main lounge Autumn 2015**

The reflected concern above illustrates how valuable human friendliness and social relationships help to co-construct a sense of cultural sharing within the hotel society and beyond. The staff, though, seem to have 'all the time in the world', waiting for the guests to move from one place to another, helping them to enter the waiting buses. The relaxing and caring environment provides many kinds of service, for example, organised daytrips by bus for those who want historical tours with their own guide, and garden visits, where people are supposed to walk around and sense the nature and outdoor pleasure. Many hotel guests at Hydro do this and seem to appreciate the initiative the hotel offers. This is also where other caring organisations join in at this hotel, to experience activities such as garden tours and such and visit a friendly place to eat traditional and local food, and be able to meet 'different' people and likeminded others. Regional Eastbourne people meet each other through activities like those mentioned above, and such actions represent meeting places for elderly people who do not drive, or not easily move around themselves. However, meeting places are *spaces* of common interests to interact with old friends they otherwise rarely meet. It was highly appreciated, I was told.

This is associated with people that might have the same interest in life, the same traditions, as Giddens (2001) has argued, traditions evolved over time, suddenly altered, but also reinvented or as in Hydro Hotel, rediscovered and appreciated. Social engagements are prepared at this hotel so that guests with disabilities and in need of physical help and solid assistance can enjoy days with no disturbances, no controversies or fuss. This culture

## CHAPTER FOUR: FIELDWORK HYDRO HOTEL

represents the social meaning and concerns the everyday work. The sense of well-being emerges through meaningful relationships, the thoughtfulness and caring so visible and genuine in the Hydro. There is a different perspective of life referred to here, as late periods in life, retired existences and singleness, and social situations reveal themselves and are enriched through individual activities guests looking forward to joining in with employees and specialised staff. This hotel as a public area for those who like to visit it, represents legitimised space to spend one's time, meet one's friends, and possible *new* contacts and relationships emerge – for any other reasons than being in the social world.

Based on these reflections, the co-construction of social togetherness is, for some of the members of the hotel society at the Hydro, valuable and attractive and articulated devotedly. Others unite or connect with other guests and visitors on walking tours with companionships and local known staff members. Those activities are also highly valued and enthusiastically referred to, as are the concerts and diverse entertainments the Hydro offers. The special events revolve around theme evenings, opera nights and dance evenings, banqueting and traditional buffet evenings with live music, and classical concerts. There are special programmes for those who want to join in. Such activities require great efforts from employees and staff members, due to technical equipment guests need to move around.

Many of the employees' serve and are affected by and involved in charity work managed by volunteers and supported by the Hydro Hotel. If the hotel was chosen for its location in the first instance, the guests have then been able to establish friendships with the staff that count for much in their decision of where to spend their holidays in the future. They can stay at the Hydro Hotel and forget their everyday worries for a while, and enjoy being taken care of. The hospitality culture with its keen focus on safety and providing memorable social experiences is clearly appreciated by the guests. A couple of local residents reported:

**Resident:** ...You must book one year ahead for special events like Christmas lunch, and we will do that when we leave this evening to make sure we get a table. It is very popular. We call it our second home. It might be a little outdated, it is always the same; traditions are important here and we love it. You are taken care of as a guest; they say goodbye to you when you leave, like - take care see you on Sunday. It is certainly a different hotel.

**KL:** *You are very positive about the hotel.*

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**Resident:** Ohhh [laughing], – wonderful view of the garden on the other side, and over the hedge and to the sea... our niece stayed here once and she kept coming back... I cannot forget the hotel with its beautiful views in the sea... So you see, people have lovely memories, too, of this place.

The Hydro serves many human purposes important in peoples' daily lives that connect them to this hotel. The informal and welcoming attitude among employees and staff members/management create strong relationships with guests and visitors experienced as an extended family, expressing happiness when the guests show up, and visit the hotel every day for some hours, or live there as if their home, at least their second home. The interior design and particular furniture is so inviting and comfortable to sit down on that guests do this for many hours without being disturbed. Just across the room in which I sat writing my (diary) field notes, an elderly couple was sleeping in comfortable chairs. No one disturbed them and employees removed the empty coffee cups without making any noise, taking care not to wake them up or disturb their guests. I allowed myself to ask PHSA if this was a pattern:

**PHSA:** 'oh, yes ...you know... they feel at home here, we don't disturb them. Some guests come here and they eat, sleep for a while and we wake them up sometimes' ... she was laughing, 'we serve them fresh coffee, and then ...well, they go home'. This is a large part of their life, and we who are working here; we feel this is a contribution to 'the good life in actually facets of social life'

**Informal conversation with PHSA August 2015**

This illustrates that guests feel comfortable, protected and safe, but also appreciate the informal contact provided here as well as the service that goes with it. Mundane activities, such as purchasing food and cleaning are taken care of. The social processes that take place in this hotel are a vital part of the modern social life at the Hydro, and as such, it is the framework of different disciplines understood through the co-construction – the human interactions – of hospitality culture as the elements and the concepts that constitute this social and cultural public areas and thus, contribute to shape the everyday life (Bell 2007; Mars & Nicod 1984; Lugosi et al. 2010; Baumann 2000, 2001; Lugosi 2014). The guests feel so comfortable they fall asleep with their private belongings under their chairs, which are still there when they wake up. They are being looked after and they have faith in this, as if it was their own 'home'.

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There were interviews with local residents, not yet retired, who also come to the Hydro to relax after work and for a drink, sometimes to finish up their computer work while enjoying a peaceful end to the week, they told me. They thought the hotel was a little similar to *Fawlty Towers*,<sup>10</sup> they said. They arrived in the afternoon and after some time a waiter came over to them and asked if he could bring something to them. Yes, thank you, they said and one of the ladies ordered two drinks of gin and tonic. The time went on and they were still waiting for the drinks, when another waiter came over and asked the same. She got the same answer, yes, thank you, we have ordered two gin and tonics... but I think the ice must have melted by now...she said as a friendly joke...the waitress padded ahead into the bar region, the second lady told me, and we were thinking: I don't think we will have our drinks, it has taken 45 minutes now, but then the waitress returned with the two drinks. In many ways, this illustrates that time is not so important here at the Hydro. Some employees have adopted an attitude of having all the time in the world, and with good reason. I asked the two ladies how they understood the hospitality culture at this hotel, and they both answered that it is quirky and old fashioned, however, suitable for the majority of guests, as one of them asserts:

I used to bring my mother at 94 years old here, and she just loves it. The hotel is a little shabby, a bit down...but that's why we like it, you know...we call it granny's sitting room, and good gracious, they laughed...

**Informal conversations with guest Autumn 2015**

This indicate several types of behaviour like employees that are a bit tired of working, or not so concerned of time as normally expected in service work. Still, this also illustrates that some of the frequent guests or regular visitors think well of the hotel, and/or they have relatives living here and it is voiced as a *home* to them. It is a relaxed and friendly hospitality culture offered that feels pleasant, although old fashioned and in need of some refurbishing and refreshments in terms of facilities. However, it is the *atmosphere* in the hotel that is attractive, the sense of coming home to something that reminds one of better and carefree life, and it retells them of familiar moments by their caring behaviours, the warm welcome conflated with carefree times with grandmother. The furniture and comfortable chairs, for instance, were just like those at Hydro Hotel and the recognition of those days back in time materialised and 'alive' arose out of memorable surroundings and

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<sup>10</sup> Fawlty Towers, (BBC TV Series 1975-1979) Basil Fawlty is an inept and slightly out-of-his-head English hotel manager, who is tortured by "that annoying section of the general public who insist on staying at hotels".  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcEws7il4EY>

bygone design. Thus, and at the same time the friendly employees, the sense of caring, other guests' and visitors' contentment with the same provision and human well-being practices are visible evidence that supports the feeling of comfortable homeliness to be able to co-construct hospitality culture, and feel relaxed in traditional design. This human and social mood herein, signifies the characteristics and the distinctive culture of the Hydro Hotel, valuable to those who came to visit this public place.

### **4.5. Chapter summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to emphasise the importance of the Hydro Hotel as regards the co-construction of hospitality culture and the sense of performances of such interactions and activities. For the guests, it is a way of meaningful life that emerges through consuming the social and dynamic way of living or spending one's life in togetherness in a public area such as Hydro. This hotel depends on the employees' skills and innate personality to provide a genuine mood sensible to their guests.

For the Hydro Hotel, it has become a community institution. The Hydro means something to the inhabitants of Eastbourne (the dwellers and travellers), and the local residents, the guests from the whole region and the daily visitors together with many guests and employees; they all appreciate the hospitality culture and because of the good feeling they link and narrate to the hotel, they are essential to co-construction the culture. The Hydro Hotel society has come to be concerned in far larger vision than mere profit earning. It is a social institution where humans want to visit and pay repeat visits to. They feel 'home' here, with respect to employees, and in their eyes, evidence the status of the Hydro as a caring and friendly hotel with high-level quality.

The members of the hotel management, which also consist of individuals with innate and emphatically skills, speak well of their establishment. Their work might feel demanding at times, but employees perceive the social relations with guests and employees, and their interactions and communications as meaningful and important. The focused interpretation through observations, field notes (diary), momentary conversations and semi-structured interviews revealed a welcoming atmosphere and dedicated employees. It is the people

## CHAPTER FOUR: FIELDWORK HYDRO HOTEL

who work here who are responsible for the security and the keeping safe of guests and their belongings. Guests living at the hotel and their life style and routines in practices are followed. Even though the hospitality culture and how the co-constructed performances emerge in public spaces, the guests and employees feel relaxed being close to the Hydro Hotel in Eastbourne.

The above analysis has highlighted the key findings in this frequently visited, independent hotel that attracts people who feel comfortable in traditional environments similar to their own. Given the homely atmosphere surrounding the Hydro, guests and visitors are stimulated to relax and enjoy the hotel programme and share it with other guests, and even more with employees. For many of the guests, I was told, the main reasons to visit the hotel were to spend annual holidays, and bring family and friends to celebrate personal anniversaries. The encounters with the employees themselves and their friendly attitude are significant elements. They have engaged in hospitality work and thereby improved their skills, which are acknowledged both by the management, guests and visitors. Hydro facilitates this warmly process and puts the hotel in touch with other and surrounding institutions such as *care homes* for elder people and similar establishment with well being elements and moorings for their guests, visitors and dwellers. This is at the forefront and their key focus and underlying service performance. Due to the strong friendships they have been able to establish with guests, visitors, and fellow colleagues, over the years, all have a strong bearing on the culture found here. The cultural scene at the Hydro Hotel is illustrated and evidenced, also in photographs visualising social relaxed and wellbeing situations. The visible and sensible focus on the social elements construct meeting places and relaxed spaces of plentiful activities to enjoy in company with other guests/visitors and hotel employees.

The next Chapter Five will analyse and interpret the hospitality culture at Hilton Hotel and will follow the underlying fundamentals upon which hospitality culture rests in revealing how the culture is co-constructed through hospitality. This is where we now turn.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## **5.0 FIELDWORK HILTON HOTEL**

### **OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel, hereafter referred to as the Hilton Hotel. The Hilton Hotel belongs to *Hilton Worldwide* (2016a)<sup>11</sup> and is part of a global hotel chain. The chapter provides historical context surrounding the hotel chain and brands. This researcher had initial, exploratory meetings with the General Manager (M) agreed upon in the introduction letter, as well as further meetings with the Operational Manager (OM) and key members of the management. The current analysis follows the same process and structure as provided in Chapter Four. In conjunction with relevant hospitality aspects, such as strategic social programs and websites with essential information, Chapter Five then goes on to analyse the observations, conversations and interviews with selected members of the hotel management, front line employees, such as receptionists and concierges, hotel guests and day visitors as well as corporate delegates and hotel event leaders in this hotel society. This chapter builds on interpretation as analysis through descriptions and critical discussions, as previously introduced in Chapter Four. The use of themes, extraction and coding are also implemented here as stages in the assigning units of meaning (Henning et al. 2004; Maxwell 2005).

#### *Setting and cultural scene*

This research study has used an ongoing coding through the interpretation and hermeneutical understanding of meaning. Here, the spoken words and language in conversations are important to understand and are examined in the context of the social world of the Hilton Hotel. The chapter will start with the historical context and cultural scene for gathering empirical data. Whilst this hotel case is different in size, type and membership, the presentation, to an extent, follows an additional introduction to the setting and cultural scene, which is different from what is done with the presentation of

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<sup>11</sup> Hilton Worldwide 2016: <http://hiltonworldwide.com/> whose portfolio includes twelve global brands and logos, all evident on this website.

the Hydro Hotel. Accordingly, the ‘world’ of the Hilton Hotel is further discussed and argued.

*Findings*

The thesis research study of two hotels contributes to an understanding of how co-construction takes place and how and why the cultures emerge through hospitality. This occurs in relation to performances, enacted and revealed, played and displayed in public areas.

Concepts	<i>Culture</i>	<i>Co-construction</i>	<i>Performance</i>
Overarching theme	Corporate Leisure		
Sub themes	<p><b>Service as brand</b></p> <p>Hospitality and hotel visions ‘Sounds’ and ‘Tastes’ of Hilton Local community leaders</p>	<p><b>Service as discipline</b></p> <p>Sense of urgency and discipline ‘Drilled’ hotel culture Corporate Lifestyle</p>	<p><b>Showtime</b></p> <p>Putting on a ‘show’ Staged performance Hospitality as performance</p>

**Table 5 - The Hilton analytical diagram**

The way this aim was reached was through an exploration of how, and if at all, participants who represented the hotels’ society, contacted each other and where in public this social process occurred and came into being. Public areas and designed hotel space are meeting places. As such, and by doing fieldwork, the researcher was able to observe and communicate with guests and employees. It is clear that the human roles in these settings are both as co-constructors and performers, as well as an audience from time to time. It depends very much on the occasions, events and alterations of the socio-cultural situations that are part of hotels’ everyday life. The hospitality culture each type of hotel might provide is, therefore, explored in order to be revealed and is likely to reflect the

hotels' vision and mission. This is the case at Hilton Hotel, as it is closely connected to the hotel affiliation as a worldwide brand.

### *Historical context*

When Conrad N. Hilton opened the first hotel to bear the Hilton name in 1925, his ambition was to operate the 'best hotel in Texas'. This was the beginning of what we today acknowledge as the Hilton Hotel chain. The focus on hospitality as something meaningful to guests and employees was novel thinking at that time. The intention to physically place and establish the hotel close to, or along, the infrastructure (highways, roads, railways and airports), and to offer easy access for guests and customers, was likely to be an advantage. The ideas were also to provide accommodation at low room rates and to cater to families: children were invited to stay at the hotel with no cost to their parents. This became the way the Hilton Hotel introduced 'hospitality', closely linked to accommodation, food and drink, and also cultural experiences. The main issues and themes surrounding the Hilton are linked to relevant aspects of the current research. The information is presented on the website as 'Hilton history', and comes as a section within large *stories* offered herein. These aspects provide both a framework and a focus for the analysis of the observations, conversations and interviews with the hotel society participating in Brighton. The Hilton hotel chain narrative was guided by their vision and mission and is presented in a synopsis in the next part.

## **5.2. Hilton Worldwide**



While the Hilton, as such, represents an international hotel chain with merely international world *hospitality* associations, it is necessary to look into the many websites in order to be able to map the common norms that the many different Hilton hotels share on a global ground. Thus, it will also be possible to understand what individual leadership or hotel managements stand for and what they are committed to. This will constitute the empirical findings in this research at the Hilton. Furthermore, Hilton Hotels Worldwide represents a customer loyalty programme, named *Hilton HHonors*<sup>®12</sup>, which, according

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<sup>12</sup> *Hilton HHonors* ® represent the Hilton loyalty program internationally and include the many beneficial elements to be gained by loyal customers and guests. <http://hiltonworldwide.com/> Accessed 12.04.16

to information on the website,<sup>13</sup> has more than 48 million members worldwide. As the Hilton Hotel states: ‘Hilton HHonors is more than just a guest loyalty program’. Websites are incredibly important, mission critical, and cost-effective marketing tools for businesses. Having a good website not only generates more business opportunities, but also enhances a company's image and supports the interactivity with both institutional and individual customers (Ha & Love 2005). Good web design goes beyond technology, design, and layout. It includes a wide range of content, usability, navigation, and interactivity issues. The website information includes the benefits of membership, and what this means to guests and customers. Hilton Worldwide differentiates between the twelve brand portfolios they operate. These provide ‘lifestyle’ variations in order to provide different hotel experiences to their guests and customers. In this sense, their ambitions are immense.

All the Hilton Hotel brands are introduced as individual experiences with a special ‘twist’ to attract individuals, members, partners and corporate customers from a global perspective. The way this is done entails making their website information available via downloads of annual reports and gallery photographs. This is important as it enables guests and corporate customers to learn how the hotel creates their hospitality structure, and what they, as a hospitality company, expect and emphasise as a ‘social building block.’ As the Hilton Hotel management mentioned, they orientate their business around:

Hilton stands for something, it has a well-known reputation. To some of our guests it means luxury and quality services... but we have many ... we have different people entering through our doors and business-customers choose this hotel because it means security and safety to them, and mostly it means events and cooperation ...annual venues and long-lasting businesses are up to... if you understand. Everything is important. This is our building block!

**Conversation concierge September 2015**

There are many slogans and metaphors available on their websites, such as We are Hilton<sup>14</sup>. This is a video film of employees and corporate guests that shows and uncovers their perception in person of how the Hilton’s hospitality and the hotel’s attitude have changed their self-confidence and self-respect. Employees (particularly their personalities

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<sup>13</sup> Hilton Worldwide (2016a) *Discover a world of opportunity*. Available at: <http://hiltonworldwide.com/> Accessed 12.04.16

<sup>14</sup> Hilton Worldwide Careers (2016) *We are Hilton* (videos) <http://jobs.hiltonworldwide.com/discover-hilton.php> Accessed 19.05.16

as we shall see in the analysis later), and aspects of their working environment and professions have been influenced through empowerment. This has resulted in loyal workers and committed employees, which seems to be the purpose and the reason for exposing their *philosophy* in social media. The written language and text the hotel chain uses to captivate their audience, their corporate customers and hotel guests, is likely to impinge on the attraction as a hotel choice as a preferred hotel not only for individuals and tourist groups, but also for business travellers. The aim of the video is to show the visitors and viewers of the website how all employees have gained their self-confidence, feel comfortable at work, perceive mutual respect, have earned trust and added value to the hotel product. In other words, the employees, for example, have experienced a meaningful working environment, and an atmosphere of targeted, sociable and respectful attention, which constitutes their sense of self. This is articulated in these videos. This is also presented in and illustrated through ‘mission’ and through testimonies from employees in: The heart of Hilton<sup>15</sup> that follows here:



We are going to keep it simple to our guests; we will be a part of their life!

**Quoted from video female employee Summer 2016**

Our vision helps to give the feeling of bringing the good feeling of hospitality to people...

**Quoted from video female employee Summer 2016**

This is our vision, and if you not are trying to fulfil this, what is the point of being in the hospitality business in the first place...

**Quoted from video male employee Summer 2016**

I am Hilton!

We are Hilton!

We spend more time here than with our family, and that gives us the feeling that we belong here...

It's my second family, and because of the career opportunity they have given me, and the growth here, I really feel that this is a great place to work.

**Quoted from video several employees Springtime 2016**

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<sup>15</sup> Hilton Worldwide Careers (2016) *We are Hilton* (videos)  
<http://jobs.hiltonworldwide.com/discover-hilton.php> Accessed 27.05.16

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The Hilton created the hospitality right... and they're the founder of the hospitality world, so working for a brand that created this world is really rewarding I would say...and it really feels honourable to be a part of this world.

**Quoted from video female employee Springtime 2016**

The Hilton Hotel's staff illustrations are mentioned here because their loyalty programme holds a strong position in the hotel enterprise and is related to the priority of corporate concern. This shows how important the Hilton brand is to employees and also why it is vital to employ people who are committed to hospitality work. Moreover, the ability to receive this kind of information regarding personal hospitality experiences through employees' highlights at the Hilton Hotel's diverse websites, allows the Hilton to elucidate its key themes, such as Vision, Mission and Values, which can be evaluated and captivated by the hotel audience in terms of what it stands for and what it includes. Making a video production on line like this also functions as media tool for the hotel ranging a vast amount of people who already work at the hotel as well as those who wants to work at Hilton Hotel. Each brand follows the overall strategy and customises their particular hotel product within each segment. A synopsis of the overall information is provided in Table 6.

<b><i>Vision:</i></b>	To fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality	
<b><i>Mission:</i></b>	To be the preeminent global hospitality company – the first choice of guests, team members, and owners alike.	
<b><i>Value:</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hospitality</li> <li>Integrity</li> <li>Leadership</li> <li>Teamwork</li> <li>Ownership</li> <li>Now</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We're passionate about delivering exceptional guest experiences</li> <li>We do the right thing, all the time</li> <li>We're leaders in our industry and in our communities</li> <li>We're team players in everything we do</li> <li>We're the owners of our actions and decisions</li> <li>We operate with a sense of urgency and discipline</li> </ul>

**Table 6 - Hilton's Strategic Framework**

**Source:** Author modified from website<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Hilton Worldwide (n.d.) *Executive Statement*.

The hotel's positioning of the Vision, Mission and Values is evident in the Hilton Hotel information contained in their videos (Hilton Worldwide 2016). It is here the international hotel chain presents their messages to the social world, and how they like to distinguish themselves as an impassioned hospitality organisation. As stated by one manager in this research, due to the Hilton Hotel engagement online, the management communicates on social media every day, utilising the newest techniques available for this purpose. Hilton Hotel ensures that every guest is taken seriously and gets to know they are taken care of as guests and customers. The management is assured that every time an active member stays at any Hilton Worldwide property, their personal preferences are updated and available to all Hilton facilities and properties. This is noteworthy here because Hilton Hotel management describes these activities as 'their personal touch'. It is hoped that this might emphasise an appealing effect, leading to positive opportunities in joining this hotel. Hilton Websites are not only a marketing channel, but also a business platform. Such a message is likely to be perceived by the single guest as the Hilton Hotel's *hospitality attitude*.

With an introduction to a hotel chain that carries the ambitions to communicate with the social world at this level of engagement, the hospitality practices are significant enough to look into and interesting to investigate. Thus, while the hotel society and the hospitality culture evolve a sense of caring and homely togetherness at Hydro Hotel, the findings of how hospitality culture at the Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel emerges and evolves will be presented in the following part, starting with an introduction of the current Hilton Hotel investigated here.

### 5.3. Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel



As the insertions of Hilton Hotel logos<sup>17</sup> indicate, these corporate logos permit the international hotel chain to be identified as a well-known professional hotel *at a glance*. These words are used on the website to introduce and give brief information about the Hilton Hotel in Brighton. It is useful here because the Hilton does not use brochures,

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To quote the website, the mandate is the focus the Hilton Hotels embedded in their overall *Vision, Mission* and *Value* underpinning the understanding of hospitality in this context.

<sup>17</sup> Hilton Hotel & Resorts (2014, 2015) *Hilton Brighton Metropole*. Available at: <http://www.hiltonworldwide.com/portfolio/hilton> Accessed Spring 2014 -Autumn 2015

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leaflets and written handouts; rather, the hotel provides vast information online and shares different aspects of the *Hilton world* with the readers on a deliberate basis. Therefore, the information on several websites derives from necessity and appeals to readers from its relationship with each and every programme. The Hilton Hotel speaks to people this way, and to those who visit their websites. This is likely to motivate guests and employees alike, those either looking for hotel accommodation or individual work in this hospitality industry. Thus, this is *sensible* communication on the websites and useful in this investigation, bringing the hotel closer in order to observe and understand empirical facts. The Hilton Hotels' diverse logos are also related to such influences in the context of hospitality. The Hilton Hotel, a four-star hotel in the city of Brighton, is located on the seafront, right in the 'heart' of this vibrant and idiosyncratic city. Such is how the concierge at the Hilton describes the location of the hotel:

Big hotels such as Hilton Brighton Metropole and its location use the technology online to enhance the hotel experience offline, to invite guests to this vibrant and idiosyncratic seaside city. There is a liberal attitude in general in Brighton ...and we ... we are in the heart of it ...

**Conversation with concierge September 2015**

### *Accessing and observing the Hilton*

The hotel is situated along the well-known Brighton beach. It is well known in the sense of the charm related to the seafront and outstanding view of the piers the hotel provides. In addition to this, there are the activities that take place here, as well as colourful beach huts and nightlife. The hotel location is divided by the infrastructure, and there is a main road that gives easy access to the hotel, which faces the shoreline.

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**Photograph 10:** Hilton Hotel main entrance  
**Source:** Hilton Hotel website

Architect Alfred Waterhouse, who named the Waterhouse Restaurant and the Waterhouse Bar & Terrace along the building, designed the hotel.

Architecturally, the hotel is a large Victorian building. It was constructed in 1890, and was originally called the Brighton Metropole Hotel. The current reception area holds a display where the early part of the historical building is presented in text and illustrated with old photographs. This can be seen in the reception area along the computer corner that is available to guests. This is also the Hilton Hotel narrative and displayed to people who visit the hotel and who are interested in seeing and reading the old story of the building. The hotel was taken over by Hilton Company in 1925. With the baroque facade in a red brick colour, the *visual* entrance, an arcade of glass and steel, is made of different material from the main body. This emphasises the architectural break in time from the Victorian era and Edwardian and Regency styles. With the glass arcade entrance and its location, the Hilton Hotel marks itself out as a business hotel, although some will identify the hotel's appearance with luxury and an international upper-class lifestyle too. The external entrance corresponds with the inner design of the hotel and with the hotel reception area, which is spacious enough for large groups of business delegates and guests/visitors.



**Photograph 11:** Waterhouse Terrace sea-view across the main road between the Hilton and the beach  
**Source:** Hilton Hotel website

Photograph 11 illustrates the scenic view from the main lounge as well as the outdoor Waterhouse Bar & Terrace, a popular area for hotel guests, local residents and tourists in which to sit and watch the busy and lively scenery in front of them. The photograph also evidences the close proximity of the hotel fronts with the main road over to Brighton beach.

### *Navigating the public field*

Photograph 12 illustrates the open reception area with the booking space to the left in the picture, and shows how this space is available for large groups of guests and visitors to move around. This leads to the staircases at the end, into meeting places and further into the large conference venues and event rooms.



**Photograph 12:** Hilton hotel reception and lobby public space

**Source:** Hilton Hotel website

The reception area is efficiently designed, which enables staff to move fast and serve rapidly between the many events that go on here. The relaxation zones are shielded from this busy gathering and meeting place. The hotel has an open lobby/reception area that still features the original décor, although in terms of design and colours it has a functional and modern appearance. This attracts people of all ages, young and old, singles and couples and hosts the various social and cultural activities that follow in their wake. Public space gives access to a wide range of social activities, meeting and dwelling areas and contact space between individuals of the hotel society. These observations and range of event encounters are all from the fieldwork at the Hilton, and were carried out between 2014 and 2016. The following photograph 13 is used to provide the visual appearance again. It is collected from the Hilton Hotel website gallery, and has been added to the related paragraphs and footnotes. The researcher, although allowed by the management to take photographs in order to support the research, acted with caution and discreteness so as to avoid guest disturbances when possible and whenever necessary.



**Photography 13** The Waterhouse Bar & Terrace and the sheltered main public Lounge.  
**Source:** Hilton Hotel website

The Hilton Hotel consists of 346 guest rooms of varying size and standard. However, a full-service hotel operation with room service is available 24 hours a day. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are provided, and the Waterhouse Restaurant serves European cuisine and has an à la Carte menu available around the clock. The Waterhouse Bar & Terrace is an open public area with entrances from both the reception area and from outside along the front of the building. The hotel offers the Living Well Health Club centre, and provides spa and health club facilities (opened 2010), including an indoor swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, solarium, steam room, beauty and massage treatments as well as a fully equipped fitness room with professional treatment for hotel guests and customers.

In addition, other visitors and residents are able to take advantage of these hotel facilities. It is possible to combine the need for relaxation with amusement and events by the beach on the other side of the road, such as watching the everyday life, street parades and different types of people passing by, whilst eating and drinking. The Hilton hosts a diverse range of events and conferences, such as a Tattoo conference on the one hand, and political and business conventions on the other. From the Terrace, for instance, the main entrance is observable around the clock. This is of great significance to guests and visitors. Hilton Hotel represents a high standard hotel but with an informal welcoming

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appeal to local visitors. It is a place to enjoy afternoon tea with other guests, and is a place to be seen and, at the same time, to see others. The open access inside and outside offers good sights of people coming and going and it operates as a scene or a window out to the world, where actors can show off for some limited time in a public area that is important to them.



**Photography 14** The Waterhouse Bar Lounge often used for corporate socialising.  
**Source:** Hilton Hotel website



**Photography 15** The Waterhouse Bar Lounge often used for corporate socialising.  
**Source:** Hilton Hotel website

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The ‘intimate’ public space is full of light (meaning designed space devoted to socialising and relaxation). There are no hidden corners and the space is open and ‘sensible’ in terms of three permanently operating TVs, six waitresses/waiters going to and fro with food, friendly, alert to guests and visitors. The GM (General Manager is used here separated from the OM – operational manager at Hilton) is constantly serving drinks while talking to all his guests. These observations were carried out at the Hilton as fieldworks between 2014 and 2016. As such, they count as the range of events encountered in the fieldwork period at Hilton Hotel.

The Hilton *Salt Room*<sup>18</sup> is unique to the Hilton Hotel. The name derives from Service and Loyalty Tracking for customers – SALT, as a special space for corporate displays and arrangements, and thus is seen as a Hilton corporate approach. However, as a special seafood restaurant with an experienced chef, it opened in 2010 on a license from the Hilton management also as an informal restaurant to the public. The entrance is from outside the Hilton. The hotel has a special focus on local food, often through presentations as a taste of Sussex and the chef’s signature dishes. The Hilton operates large family rooms and bedrooms as an option for guests with younger children. Some are family rooms with sea views. For meetings, conferences, large congresses and similar (marked MICE – *meeting, incentive, conference and event*), the hotel provides a business centre, 33 meeting rooms, and 9 exhibition halls with flexible use.

The public areas are designed for events, social meetings and conferences, and the Hilton utilises social media as an everyday platform to communicate and stimulate social contact. As previously mentioned, Hilton Hotel contacts corporate customers and guests through their website and does not use brochures or written leaflets to promote their facilities and hotel programmes. This is interesting and is noted here because hotel brochures used to be available at this hotel; however, the intense daily work and responses on social media have changed their communication form and their primacy. The hotel websites have rich information, both in general in terms of the Hilton Worldwide (2016), and the Hilton Brighton Metropole (2016) in particular. For detailed hotel information, the Portfolio at Hilton Worldwide (2016a)<sup>19</sup> seems the most useful.

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<sup>18</sup> [www.saltroom-restaurant.co.uk](http://www.saltroom-restaurant.co.uk)

<sup>19</sup> Hilton Worldwide (2016a)

### *The passion of hospitality*

The Hilton is the leading hotel chain in the world. They currently convey their policy and objectives to the public on a large scale. They state on their website<sup>20</sup> the responsibility that follows this provision and they offer *the best hospitality in the world* to all those visiting them. The expectations will be fulfilled, and according to themselves, they encompass a comprehensive corporate social responsibility. Through the Hilton way of communicating with the social world, the hotel on its own website also shapes their hospitality culture that is strongly connected to how they want to be perceived and understood. The overall corporate culture and varied corporate branding, illustrated through the twelve logos,<sup>21</sup> show how meticulous, yet consciously structured, the images are presented to their guests, customers, participants and corporate partners. This achieved through attitudes, mind-sets and through the language written in the texts. At the same time, the diverse brandings hold different themes so as to attract various people from different segments and those with distinct needs or wants regarding hotel experiences in terms of expectations of hospitality and service delivery. As the Hilton hotel chain, and the Hilton society, has proclaimed: *We are passionate about hospitality.*

### *Famed site*

As ‘the global leader of hospitality’, with a 96-year history, and as pioneers in the industry, they invite ‘travellers, developers, partners and team members alike’. They write on their website that they wish to participate in their business and corporate responsibilities through a lens of social engagement. The Hilton Worldwide University<sup>22</sup> is a global virtual university that provides insights into their staff development programs. This is demonstrated by offering an extensive training curriculum on the Internet, and is described in detail on their website. This is important to be aware of in order to

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*Discover a world of opportunity.* Available at: <http://hiltonworldwide.com/> Accessed 20.04.16

<sup>20</sup> Hilton Worldwide (2015) Travel with Purpose 2014-2015 Corporate Responsibility Report. Available at: <http://cr.hiltonworldwide.com/download/Hilton> CR Report 2014, 2015 pdf. Accessed Spring 2015

<sup>21</sup> [www.hiltonhotel.com](http://www.hiltonhotel.com) All 12 brands are available with their single logo and information linked to it.

<sup>22</sup> Hilton Worldwide University (2016) *What is Hilton Worldwide University?* <http://hwu-overview.com/introduction/university.html> Accessed 20.04.16

understand more clearly how the Hilton Hotel in this case is closely linked to the large Hilton Hotel chain and the overall branding in *vision* and *mission*. However, it is also important to be aware that it operates in its own right and own way, related to the place and location, and most significantly, to the management and committed task of each single hotel. The following part of the chapter is to examine the themes that have emerged from the analysis and findings, and the early discussions in relation to the observation of everyday hotel life and practices, conversations and interviews with employees and guests, conference delegates and events. Regarding the analysis of interviews, conversations and observations, Chapter Five follows similar steps of analysis to those in Chapter Four. To organise the data, related categories were coded and overarching theme and sub-themes, which emerged from the data analysis, are presented in the analytical diagram as previously displayed. This is where to continue from now, and accordingly, the empirical data will be analysed succinctly. The culture at the Hilton is illustrated by the overarching theme *Corporate leisure*, which emerged from empirical data gatherings, and is a rich description with three sub-themes: *Service as discipline*, *Showtime* and *Service as brand*.

### **5.4. Overarching theme – Corporate leisure**

The aim of this part is to analyse and interpret the understanding of co-construction and the performance of hospitality culture at Hilton Hotel. This is considered in relation to the observations, conversations and interviews undertaken at Hilton Hotel. The overarching theme at Hilton Hotel emerged as *Corporate Leisure*. This is the embedded and reflected culture upon which this hotel is working. This represents an empirical meaning through interpretive perspectives, and it is revealed through the language communicated with the participants and me as the researcher. The meaning is the shared understanding and interplay in these encounters. The interpretation process is an individual hermeneutic activity fruitful in cultural setting (Tresidder 2011), as well as the practical languages, which have their roots, not in the lofty ideas of philosophers, but in the shared experiences and *dialogues* of ordinary people (Guba 1990; Hall et al. 2013). I agree with this, as the understanding of meaning is context related.

## 5.5. Sub-themes

In these sociocultural settings, I understand hospitality culture to be communication and interactions through voiced contacts. The analysis is organised into the three sub-theme sections. The key themes characterising the pattern revolved around the overarching theme: *Service as brand*, *Service as discipline*, and *Showtime*, and are analysed as follows.

### *Service as brand*

Both service and branding are two important perspectives the managers at Hilton Hotel like to present. The Corporate Responsibility Report 2014-2015 (Hilton Worldwide 2015) reveals some of the thoughts about the future commitments for the Hilton as a hotel chain, the many hotel programmes, and the different operators and owners, franchisees and their employees. This is particularly interesting as it underpins the strong commitment, in which the employees need to engage, between corporate work and leisure involvements. In quoting the Hilton Hotel website, the Executive Statement<sup>23</sup> communicates the Hilton hotel values and vision. These can be seen in the following three excerpts from this statement:

At Hilton, our people and business are guided by our vision – to fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality.

These powerful words, first articulated by our founder Conrad Hilton in 1954, are just as relevant and inspirational today. They are based on the belief that we can use our passion for hospitality to make a lasting, positive difference in people's lives and the wider world.

Our values serve as a compass for how we deliver our Hilton hospitality to the world. They define our responsibilities to our people, the guests we serve, and the owners we grow our business with and the communities we call home.

**Christopher J. Nassetta**  
President and Chief Executive Officer

This illustrates that Hilton tries to maintain the initial culture the founder stated back in 1954, and it still serves as an inspiration to the employees. It is a *religion* or a business cult and has a strong bearing on how they will continue their mission.

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<sup>23</sup> Hilton Worldwide (n.d.) *Executive Statement*.

Available at: <http://cr.hiltonworldwide.com/approach/> Accessed May 2016

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It is about putting oneself at the service of others, and this is generally consistent with the earliest forms of hospitality. Yet, it is also a performance related to personal achievement and quality teamwork (Goffman 1959), as parts of the coherent experience of hospitality culture. The employees present themselves as dedicated hospitality workers and the management want them to appear as such. Seen from this vein, the promotional videos carries strong messages to the hotel workforce, but also out into the world and for those who are looking for jobs - and for guests, a remarkable place to stay over night.

Back to quality teamwork, it is always an issue to understanding how performances are sometimes carried out, and how these activities evolve through practice together. As such, *togetherness* manifests the co-construction of the Hilton culture. Accordingly, much depends on the performative competence of the actors, and as Geertz (1986) emphasised, such performances are about ‘making experiences [and] authoring selves.’ Based on individual beliefs, it will continue and restart with new guests every day and can be shared in public places designed for this purpose. A question that became central during the fieldwork sessions is: Will the Hilton be able to succeed in the deliverance of future hospitality culture? The findings revealed that attitude and behaviour among participants, which emerged from interviews and conversations, illustrate that employees also have opinions about the Hilton culture regarding what the guests expect. They know what the Hilton Hotel stands for and they have been informed and trained how to understand the meaning of the hospitality culture and what the consequences are if they fail or make mistakes. Employees and guests view the Hilton Hotel with respect, as a branded hotel that stands for quality and provides security to the participants. However, the Hilton’s visions and missions place high demands on their employees. These exert a substantial influence on the hotel leader and the management when choosing the right people for the right tasks. Some expressions of what it feels:

The Hilton Hotel in Brighton is a very stimulating working place...for me... I have experiences from another Hilton in London, ...but here we are important in the different roles that we put on, ...skills related to the conferences and many events. We need to be open minded, you know we see many different people that come to this hotel because of the reputation it carries of being a seaside hotel and many lifestyles are performed here ... as there are many gay and homosexual people that feel free in this hotel... many same sex weddings and so on...

**Interview General Manager July 2014**

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The reputation of Hilton as such, stands for something of value for the employees, the manager states, and for the many guests and their lifestyles. They are all welcomed at this hotel, otherwise discriminatory not to. The 'open mind' reflects the management's ability to 'see' the guests, and to appreciate the social and individual interest in their hotel as the preferred one. Ultimately, it is vital to present the hotel attitude through their values, and through the organised services that aid the inclusiveness and awareness of such amongst the guests and visitors. The Hilton Hotel's organisational culture, and the way it seems to be espoused on social media as in-house business values, is key to the development of hospitality culture at Hilton. Successively, it may appear that the shaping of it has been clearly articulated and communicated to their guests and visitors as 'the way we do it here'. However, culture is also located at deeper levels that can be quite different from the surface manifestations. Basic or deep assumptions differ from adopted or espoused values in that they are highly complex, deep-rooted assumptions that are often difficult to accept and implement.

One important point here is the manifestation of social life in hotel, and the space or time as stimulating aspects. As was noted by Turner (1974: 13), "[in] this gap between ordered worlds almost anything may happen". Shields (1991) has explored "the liminal, carnivalesque and illicit pleasures" (1991: 94), associated with the British seaside resort of Brighton, which have been debated by Pritchard and Morgan (2005) as well as Wharton (2007). Discussions and arguments such as these contribute to this research with some more thoughts by Rob Shields, who argued that many Western guests and tourists no longer needed "to create marginal zones for reckless enjoyment" (1991: 109). Rather, it might be argued that seaside hotels remain very much at the heart of such discourses.

The challenging of social norms that are considered to be out of the ordinary for most people, and which are distinct from our normal place of home, support the attraction of Hilton Hotel and its 'Events with an imagination'. These are seen as a 'personal touch' under their well-known brand. Besides the management interpretation of responsibilities, they reach their guests and fulfil their expectations at some point. Some guests understand the consequences of being part of an international hotel chain, and one expression from a frequent guest is provided here:

This hotel has a strong position and people choose to stay in this hotel because it means security and safety to them. So many things happen at the same time and

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the hotel needs to deal with it all, don't they...or we all contribute on the web later ...when we feel we have something we would like to share, or we are curious about others.

**Conversation with guest/tourist August 2015**

Many guests and corporate customers use the electronic access to the hotel as previously mentioned, and this is time consuming and challenging. However, it is the future and the operational manager related how important it is to be aware of these social networks and the comments and conversations that are going on, and the way it influences Hilton brands. Furthermore, the way it is handled by the management is highlighted in the following quotations:

It is very much through Internet these days; we have our own website, social medias... we twitter, we are on Facebook, we get e-mails from the Facebook page, booking.com, laterooms.com and many other websites. And the other way around!

Then there is TripAdvisor, Trivago, hotel.com, lastroom.com, lastminute.com ... ehhm...we check with these and correct the targets and marks that are coming up ... yes, and we always do this.

Yes... Hilton has 12 brands and everyone has the same standard. There are several brands within the brand. Brands bring business. You have to deliver the product that is promised.

**Interview operational manager September 2015**

The operational manager told me that hotels such as Hilton Hotel use the technology online to enhance the hotel experience offline. In other words, the implications for Hilton Hotel are the direct characteristics and the social nature to understand that brands are social objects and socially constructed. However, relations as stated above also make the hotel more vulnerable to negative critiques as well as positive responses. Such individual 'reports' (referring to TripAdvisor, for example) are daily matters and mentioned here due to the vast impact on hotels in general. Many of the members of the management said that the general manager deals with social media, such as TripAdvisor, every day, and takes this work very seriously. Most importantly, the Hilton must keep its promises. Factual information and answers are important to the Hilton Hotel's reputation and standing.

Based on the time-consuming work and attention this might require, these shared hotel experiences are followed up and keep the management alert, both positively (they become aware of their own weak points), and negatively (there are few possibilities to

change overnight or make ad hoc investments). A number of comments from the GM are presented next:

Hilton as a brand stands for high quality. It has a great reservation system, it stands for security and it means we have to obviously deal with ... you know we have so many brands and they all stand for something that guests will experience. From that perspective, it is great...

Our customers go into Internet booking and pick a brand they like and our loyalty customers return to the same brand. Here, you know on Tuesday evening, our loyalty companies meet at the events and they are Hilton honoured members that have used us for a very long time, and obviously will come back to any Hilton. So, they think, if I want to go to the south coast, where can I go? Brighton, thank you, and they book into this hotel: [www.hiltonhotel.com](http://www.hiltonhotel.com)

As a hotel member, you really have global alternatives.

**Conversation GM September 2014**

The Hilton hotels' **Inclusion** programme illustrates the attitude from a global perspective and it also 'trickles' down into the brands, as is reflected here:

As a global hospitality business, our ability to understand, operate and celebrate in a multicultural world is critical to our success. Our approach begins by fostering a culture that values diverse people, talent and ideas. And we carry that commitment to the marketplace with our guests and our suppliers.

**Document observations Hilton Hotel website 2016a**  
Accessed 20.04.16

The **Introduction** on the website<sup>24</sup> clarifies how they see themselves as a company which operates in more than 100 countries, as a 'business of people serving people':

As a company that operates in nearly 100 countries, our goal is to serve any guest anywhere in the world for any travel need they have. As a business of people serving people, our success depends on our ability to understand and reflect the different cultures, perspectives and needs of our guests, owners and communities around the world.

Diversity and inclusion are core beliefs we celebrate at Hilton, and when we combine the unique talents and perspectives of our Hilton Team Members and franchise employees, together we provide the best experiences for our guests.

**Document observations Hilton Hotel website 2016a**  
Accessed 20.04.16

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<sup>24</sup> Hilton Worldwide (2016a) *Discover a world of opportunity*. Available at: <http://hiltonworldwide.com/>  
Accessed 20.04.16

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All these ‘indicators’ of the Hilton Hotel’s self-reflections illustrate one way of maintaining the hotel consensus. This is done in order to ensure that the hospitality culture of this hotel is likely to permeate values to employees, guests and hotel visitors as the preferred or selected hotel to visit or work within. Now, as much as the hotel espouse to the market whether to guests or employees, local or global customers/partners some elements here are constitutional/statutory- at least in the UK. However, such is beyond the scope in this investigation and not discussed further. Employees feel honoured and valued as vital hotel resources by being trustworthy in their positions and this governs the management structure:

People and companies show serious involvement as corporate partners and this lifts up the philosophy of the good teamwork that is included in the Hilton’s own values...contributes to how these principles influence the team player in all the things we do...many employees feel honoured ...being part of the trusted team. We all feel proud of what this hotel offers to us...people who work here ... and again how to turn to our guests. We rely on personal contact when the situations require this. This is an important resource we feel we belong to.

### Interview Concierge September 2015

This illustrates an important part of *Service as brand*, and the organisational culture represents a culturally meaningful organisation at this level. Briefly, on the corporation and hierarchical level (management and employees), Hilton Hotel initiates their *co-construction* of hospitality culture. Some aspects of the culture can be applied ‘corporation-wide’ (Hofstede 1998); others are merely specific to smaller units and single hotels, such as in this research study. Thus, practices are the visible part of this culture, while values represent the invisible part.

There are sub-themes that have evolved around the overarching theme *Service as brand* and have been observed and supported through the hotel websites and Hilton’s hallmarks as promises, namely: *Hospitality and hotel visions*, *Sounds and Tastes of Hilton*, and *Local community leaders*. Those three sub-themes will now be analysed.

### **Hospitality and hotel visions**

The **two** visions at the Hilton Hotel were *explained* in the initial interview with the GM and illustrated as:

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### Vision I:

For **corporate** guests, we want efficiency and speed in this hotel.

- Events with an imagination
- They want to be looked after while the convention is going on
- Be creative, suggests all sorts of things to do
- Some are easy to do and we do it
- Others are more difficult but high value, and at the end show a return on the investment

### Vision II:

For **leisure** guests, we want to portray Brighton inside out.

- Brighton is quirky, not perfect, but it has spirit and diverse moments
- It is ‘cooking without a recipe’
- Leisure guests with families. We want to give different perspectives through our thinking of diversity
- Spend some time with the guests

The GM continues to explain how Hilton Hotels see and understand their two visions, which are what their customers and guests really want and expect from the hotel:

So, ...actually we have two visions at this hotel ...one is for groups and their expectations of event imaginations ...and...look at the big space that we have, the convention areas, the little church, ambassador rooms over to the big Chartwell room, over to the big conference room that can hold over a thousand people, and I want them to think that they can have any event they can imagine; so I want them to know that we care for them, that our team looks after them, from the moment that they acquire with us; you know we want to arrange for a hundred people, be confident that we can do that, until they step through our doors ...you know for sight expectations. You know, this is depending on the money and what you want to do, eh...this is a blank canvas go and do what you like. That's our *Event with an imagination*.

And for the leisure guests we want to portray Brighton inside out. You know Brighton is quirky; Brighton is not perfect. Brighton has spirit. The walks through the lanes, the small shops, you know, we want to be like that. It's that ‘cooking without a recipe’.

**Interview GM September 2015**

As illustrated here, the broadminded way of dealing with one's own hotel strategy and management is strongly connected to the general manager's skills and experiences, but it is also based on trust and reliability towards the community within which they, as a hospitality enterprise, operate. Indeed, every day operations depend on meticulous networking and co-constructions with participants in characterising the hotel society

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inside dynamic sociocultural processes, such as procedures that often deal with various individual concerns. Every day is different, I was told, and the challenges are met with cautious awareness. The Hilton Hotel's reputation and general word-of-mouth need to be persistently cultured, as is asserted here:

We are completely open to the facets from the local community and Brighton is our location and our community. The Vision presented on our website is related to the overall philosophy you will find on the global perspective. In this hotel, I have been given the task of putting my personal touch on my work. I take this opportunity very seriously and the *personal touch* is Hilton's way of doing hospitality, and it is important to understand how Hilton as a brand, stands for high quality.

**Conversation GM October 2014**

The two visions of Hilton Hotel, the metaphorical images to be found on the hotel's website, are an important strategy the management/general manager have undertaken in order to adapt to the market, as well as to the community of the Hilton in which it is located. The intangible divide represents the personal touch, which reiterates the way Hilton Hotel provides and presents their hospitality. The GM expresses his emotional connection to this part of his work and voices his seriousness and his intention to fulfil and meet the expectations concerning both corporate customers and leisure guests and visitors. The way this is understood and done instigates the meaningful ways of dealing with daily life in this hotel, and is explained in the following:

The corporate guest doesn't want to stand in the queue; he wants to get a room that he has ideally checked into beforehand, so that he can just pick up the key' [as recommended on the website]. He may want dinner and a drink in the bar, and he wants his breakfast before he goes to work. That is a typical corporate guest. The group and convention guests like to be looked after while the convention is going on. It is here we accomplish our hospitality culture.

The leisure guest, the tourists and visitors have different expectations. They have children, they want to use the pool, they want to go to the ... they will spend more time at breakfast, they want to have information about what to do in Brighton, and you know ...I will, ... I want us to give them different perspectives. Because there is no point in giving them the same information or an overview, because they will never experience it the same way, it is never going to happen. People are different.

**Interviews GM September 2014**

Demonstrations of the willingness to provide and perform hospitality culture all play a significant part in how initial contacts between employees emerged. The differences between the two guest segments are quite clear, and the significance is derived from

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employees' personal ambitions and skills, combined with the feeling of being part of the place-personal identity and belonging. Hilton, with such a challenge as working with two visions, illustrates how the hotel would like to appear and be perceived, and how it sees its own position related to value adding, which is vital in the social world. Several of the conversations with employees explained co-construction, for instance, as the social and cultural consequences of shared concern. Hospitality in this way is interactions in itself. They have a position as employees and were part of the governing structure, and were linked to their hotel commitment. When we turned the conversations to hospitality as culture, it was clear that personal aspects were more central, and not every employee had the feeling of being content. They felt a lack of important information; particularly that information was not always shared directly with front staffs that are responsible for dealing with guests. This is illustrated by the following:

When it comes to hospitality, it is very important to the hotel. It is normally in the hotel *vision* ...and the employees are told how to deliver hospitality without any explanation of why, or things like that. You know ...people are different, employees are different, and they perceive differently and sometimes have very different background and life experiences. We all perceive situations... especially other people and guests differently, ...and we have different personalities, so there should have been room for individual handling or ways of performing and doing hospitality, depending on what it is about, of course. Some general guidelines with a personal touch if you will... I try to do it that way... you know, that is the most honest way of being hospitable... being yourself. Do you know what I mean?

**Conversation with employee September 2015**

Moreover, not everyone spoken to thought highly of the hospitality of the Hilton or considered the hotel standard to be representative of the brand culture and hotel business:

You can look into TripAdvisor. That is a disaster for the hotels, because the customer just wants to get money refunded, a cheaper room next time they visit us, more and more. That's the tragedy it is madness! I am a front officer, but I do all sorts of work and it is a fact that my engagement is not appreciated. I sometimes think that this is not living up to the reputation of the brand the hotel is supposed to be a flagship... it is very speedy and there is less time to help each other out...to find a solution together.

**Conversation with employee September 2015**

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The last comment is important as it illuminates the Hilton Hotel's lack of guidelines or a handbook. There also seems to be a contradiction in the way performing and doing hospitality is linked here. They like to contribute to the 'mission' and 'vision' of this hotel. Although the management have an opinion of being informative and supportive, some do not seem able to link it to the responsibility of 'playing the game' included in the brand image. Nevertheless, the wide influences that the employees and guests at Hilton Hotel, as a brand hotel, can offer and utilise seem to be very obvious. This was particularly evident during small conversations with employees throughout the fieldwork periods.

Employees have the possibility to move within the Hilton Hotel chain globally, and that gives individuals the option to experience the hotel concepts from different perspectives and through different brand profiles, which is very useful with teamwork. Based on hotel membership through Hilton HHonors,<sup>25</sup> the guests contact a number of hotels if they want to travel, and come in contact with Hilton partners and corporates, and learn to orientate themselves. One way to process Hilton brands is, therefore, illustrated next:

The guests don't have to pay commission, we get the line directly; we know the guest profile, who he is, what he likes, and that's great. So, that drives a lot of business our way. And also, the sales force...you know we have hundreds of people outside the hotel, selling us, sales office in Nor... well they have closed in Sweden now, and ... well we have in the Iberian countries, Portugal, Spain, and Amsterdam in Holland... they all sell us. So, in that case, we get important information from them, details about our customers, which are, you know, important to us. It also strengthens our brand images by doing just this.

**Conversation GM September 2014**

These comments are interesting as they bring forward the importance of how the hotel, as a member of the global Hilton Hotel chain, positions and *sells* the different brands both internally and externally, nationally and internationally alike. This is likely to be an advantage and explains one of the meanings and guest benefits embedded in brand and image in this context.

Hence, the importance of the Hilton Hotel history of the brand is evident on the web pages devoted to each section of the research. The consistency with which this was

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<sup>25</sup> <http://hhonors3.hilton.com/en/index.html> Membership with *Hilton HHonor*. Enjoy instant benefits when booking through the Hilton Honour's app.

evident across and within all Hilton brands is remarkable. The Hilton *pages* feature extensive photographs documenting the hotel's involvement with employees and guests, and the relationships to hospitality culture as a dynamic process in the corporate as well as the leisure hotel operations.

### **'Sounds' and 'tastes' of the Hilton**

Hilton Hotel strategy and managerial concerns about service delivery and operational efficiency also include the physical quality of the Hilton as an international hotel. In this respect, the design of the public space defines the nature of the sounds and tastes of the hotel, and mainly found in the large reception area (photograph 12, p.177). In this area many guests and visitors flow through and from this space, some are waiting for other guests and friends and others are lingering around and delineate the visual focus by standing watching and gazing the dynamic collective atmosphere and social setting. The stimulus that aid the co-construction processes also evoke in terms of visual and sensible effects (Dann & Jacobsen 2003). Such type of travelling and tourism expresses one facet of contemporary life that once was termed "Eros-modernity" (Wang 1996) - a culture (ethos) that "cultivates emotional and imaginative pleasure" (Dann & Jacobsen 2003: 25).

Recognised and evident at the Hilton, the polished stone floor gives a hard echoing sound of feet moving efficiently through the area, as does the wheeling of the luggage carts across the hard surface of the hotel. This results in a sound of rapidity and haste and bustling activities. This also has a kind of efficiency, and cleanliness to it. Indeed, it is a public area that deals with many people and diverse sorts of activities, and locates environmental 'voices' and social actions. The sounds and tastes provide an environmental-enhancing element to the hospitality culture. Particularly the daily sound was an important element of well-being at Hilton. Something-is-going-on sort of feeling has more or less a collective sharing in public space, which is related to physical senses and thus, perceived by the senses (sensory input). Lately sensory research has been popularised as a critical approach to challenge the disembodied intellect of tourism theories (Andrews 2005; Pritchard et al 2011). My subjective experience allows for further explorations of the affective implications of everyday sounds as a new path of research. However, based on these insights this study continues to be confined to the physical characteristics at Hilton Hotel, and the significance of the other bodily senses in

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tourism, are recognised and treated elsewhere (Dann & Jacobsen 2002, 2003), and not directly dealt within this research study.

From a different vein, the logistics make guests and customers move quickly into other public areas with more comfort, as does the need for secluded conversations, business appointments or other more private matters after booking and checking out sessions are completed. Also, these public areas are without carpets and so resonate human activities, such as the employees arranging tables and chairs and the sounds of efficient operational actions. The surrounding public spaces are sheltered from the reception area and people have to move away from the main entrance to sit down. In this way, it is possible to sit more privately in the Waterhouse Bar Lounge, in the half circular, upholstered seating along the first wall seen when entering the space. This, therefore, confines and limits the possibility to make contact or interact.



**Photography 18** The Waterhouse Bar Lounge and slightly sheltered sitting comfort.  
**Source:** Hilton Hotel website

Daily activities include guests and residents (young women with strollers) that come to this hotel for a cup of coffee or tea while meeting others in the same situation. Guests enter the place to walk and bring their dog, and enjoy social relationships with friends, whilst others just sat down in the bar area for a drink with family members or colleagues, for instance, on Friday afternoons and weekends. Saturday lunches seem to be popular when younger people (men and women in their forties) entered the main lounge for

informal and casual gatherings for drinks and talks. They catch up on their social life by seeing and gazing (collective gaze, Urry 2000), as well as being seen themselves.

These are common activities and, I was told, are sort of mundane urban lifestyles, particularly for younger generations, who like to be seen here, and who like to *exploit* the hotel facilities. This is characteristic of Hilton Hotel, and it is illustrated here through the design and logistics of how the hotel is arranged, and through the furnishings and layout of the bar/lounge area that can force customers closer together and increase the likelihood of interaction, and be arranged for after big conferences. Therefore, merely an intimate physical layout is required in this regard, often accomplished around the soft evening light and casual servings this hotel provides. Service delivery of food and drink are the main daily tasks in Waterhouse Bar Lounge and the large open area and the outdoor terrace and other entrances are full of guests and visitors at weekends. This public space is located close to the hotel guest sections, the hotel indoor parking area and the spa and beauty treatment facilities. These construct calm and muted sounds through the flow of guests and visitors along social engagements and generate interactions through conversations and laughter. All of that is going on at this time. The rising bustling sounds and smell of food and perfume create the taste of an affluent and extravagant atmosphere that people seem to enjoy and feel comfortable within, for hours. The signs and behaviour, and the sounds and tastes discussed here, communicate the basis on which individuals associate with the environment and how their identity emerges and their social and cultural belongings are conferred:

We come here every Saturday to experience and feel part of this urban setting. It is bright and airy, no dark corners ... and we come and go as we please. The place gives us a feeling of intellectual conversations. That is eh... we find that very interesting, it has something to do with the people, the journalists and artists ...often seen here, and we appreciate it ...a good culture to be in ...open up your senses... in fact it has become our habit.

**Conversation guests/visitors May 2016**

This quotation evolved out of a rather unexpected guest contact during observations, and it illustrates that guests do contact other guests if the setting invites them to do so. Interactions between strangers do not come spontaneously; rather, it was observed that the time and friendly body language from employees stimulates such behaviour. At least afterwards, when one reflects and writes down field notes, it turned out to be exceptional

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and significant in terms of the location and comfortable setting wherein it was perceived. It reveals an alert attitude among cultivated others. These guests want to continue this tradition they expressed, and it had become their habit, and part of their social activities, and was interesting to follow up.

At Hilton Hotel, as a business hotel and the brand it represents, the use of open space and literally open doors means one can experience the historical parts of *grandeur* architecture also connected to modern design. One visual part of the welcoming taste is also young employees in formal, dark blue suits and apprentices alike, helping each other out with daily operational activities at the reception desk, which is located straight inside the main entrance. The glimpse of fresh flower arrangements and artistic furniture (art nouveau chairs with velvet colours and abstract patterns) in the background brings about a mix of social materials; underlining the diverse social impressions the hotel brand stands for and signifies. Impressions of rational and effective work at the reception desk, informal conversations, to a certain extent among employees and guests, but also amid guests and other guests in the main lounge, turned out to be a responsible link between the corporate approach to customers and the leisure encounters with guests which influence the hospitality culture.

*Early Saturday morning at 07:00, people had started to 'line up' for breakfast. It was absolutely full in the Waterhouse restaurant, and the employees and members of the management had been busy arranging for breakfast in the Waterhouse lounge and bar area to the extent that this public area was also completely full. The bustling and lively sounds from many customers and delegates, visitors and regular hotel guests filled the public spaces at Hilton Hotel this morning. The next day turned out to be totally different.*

**Observations and field notes September 2015**

As illustrated above, the Hilton Hotel is flexible in the sense of utilising public areas. For special purposes such as during big conferences, they need to arrange for breakfast serving to be operated with ad hoc solutions. The hotel comes alive during sessions like this, with bustling and lively sounds that invite interaction and contact with each other, and it represents a stark contrast to general daytimes, when all delegates and guests are at the conferences or out exploring the city of Brighton. In the emptiness of public spaces during the long periods while conferences are going on, employees need to put on different roles in order to be useful and to support the corporate businesses with regards to what customers expect from the Hilton Hotel. Some employees operate in the silent

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hours in the main lounge serving coffee and similar drinks, and they have more time for conversations with guests:

This is a time in between activities at Hilton and the ground level becomes a relaxed zone. We have more time in here to talk to people. I would rather speak with you than stand over there, just waiting... People are relaxed in this area, sit down and enjoy or rest... have a break or time-out...

... or want to talk to **me**. I like this time of day. Gives you time to think...

*You mean doing the napkins, I asked...*

Ohhh I love doing the napkins. There is something about the texture ...it's so soft and clean. I can work with napkins and my mind can sort out things ...and all of a sudden, it's 5 o'clock and I can go home.

**Conversation employee Waitress October 2015**

Guests and employees appreciate the public area where it is possible to slow down for a while, and act in a friendlier manner with guests. This reveals that the hotel operates on a tight schedule during days with lots of events, conferences and corporate meetings, and this is often combined with private parties and wedding ceremonies in the afternoon and evenings, and demanding alterations between duty and emotion. Many service operations are going on, and often all at once. There can be exhausting and long days, thus break moments, such as the ones presented above, are welcoming and more cordial. On the way to observe and communicate at the breakfast in the Waterhouse restaurant, I came in contact with a guest who started a conversation about the conference in the Sandringham Room that morning. It was about communication skills, he told me. The event was arranged with a corporate company from Amsterdam and he, as the Dutch organiser, stated:

Hilton Hotel is a corporate partner here, but we are never 100% happy with the conferences and need to be alerted about what the hotel has promised in the deal. We have to follow up this deal. You see, this is a six-day course and we start with a mingling time and proceed with a speaker at 10am. Then coffee and tea, fruit or nibbles that the hotel kitchen delivers. But there are always small and big mistakes that the hotel makes. We have from Amsterdam, a long relationship with the Event Teams at Hilton, and we both learn something every time. The Event Team leader is our contact and we only hire location at this hotel, and our members and delegates are not hotel guests here.

**Conversation Event organiser Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015**

This illustrates the *sounds and tastes* of Hilton Hotel, and those different activities above need altered approaches and, thus, result in distinguished patterns of behaviour and encounters both with guests/customers, and with employees. The co-construction of hospitality culture is, therefore, linked to the time and the social situations that occur all the time, and these are the fundamental features that convey and express the hotel's organisation and social interactions.

### **Local community leaders**

I followed the weekly session of loyalty programmes that Hilton Hotel arranges for corporate partners and conference leaders, and was welcome to sit down in this bar area to observe and contact people if possible. This is a very important activity the management initiates and partakes in. It renews the hotel relations and strengthens the bonding between the city of Brighton as a community, its politicians and city promoters and events companies, and many others involved with city planning. The management hosted an informal party for corporate guests, which lasted for one and a half hours. The GM served his guests with nibbles, generously providing drinks and soft drinks. I was sitting secluded from the party; however, I was able to hear words actually spoken and see gestures actually made (Goffman 1959).

The weekly event for corporate customers seemed successful. The GM came over to my position and told me that he invited regular guests such as these, every week, to adjust and tune-in to their businesses, strengthen their already good relationship, and prepare for new arrangements. Normally, he told me, he would host small events such as this in private meeting rooms (30 people), but today all were fully booked. He told me about the capacity of Hilton Hotel as a conference and business hotel, and this is reflected here:

...[b] ut then again, to feel ... you know we have a vision at this hotel ...actually we have two: one is for groups and their expectations of event imaginations... and...look at the big space that we have, the convention areas, the little church, ambassador rooms over to the big Chartwell room, over to the big conference room that can hold over a thousand people, and I want them to think that they can have any event they can imagine; so I want them to know that we care for them, that our team looks after them, from the moment that they enquire with us, you know... we want to arrange for hundreds of people, be confident that we can do that, until they step through our doors ...you know, foresight expectations. You know ... um ... this is depending on the money and what you want to do, ehm

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...this is as blank canvases go ...and do what you like. That's our *Events with an imagination*.

### Interview and conversations GM



**Photography 19** The Conference area where large events and conventions take place. Design materials and diverse lightening provide shifting atmosphere and settings.

**Source:** Hilton Hotel website

This illustrates the strong focus the hotel expects to share with the corporate partners and the community within the conferences and events they accomplish. The Hilton Hotel takes a step forward and makes an effort when the hotel co-constructs the hospitality culture in and through conversations by participants. They communicate the businesses in *the outcome* of big events and conferences. It is through the *theme* interacted with others that culture is understood and meaning is made. Such meaning created with other informs and shapes the perspectives of the products and practices of the corporate hospitality culture, and is argued in this part. Furthermore, this indicates beyond the way the GM reflects on their ability to arrange for many people and large conferences and events. It illustrates the hotel's willingness and passion for experiences to be adventures, to be a part of the history of Brighton, and the open-minded philosophy – where everything is possible, as was mentioned earlier. Thus, the relevance of being the leader of important business events is explained. The Hilton focus is on the community they live in, and grow their business with and around. The result is seen via photographs of the GM in local reviews and magazines. For example, it was referred to in *The Best of Sussex Life* (2015), where the Hilton Hotel was host and venue partner, 'making our dreams a reality' at the second Celebration of Sussex Life Awards 2015 (Food-Drink-Hospitality). Local businesses are joined together with restaurants to museum visitor attractions of the year. Such information can also be viewed in newspapers (for example, *Eastbourne Herald*,

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January 15, 2016), which report on charity and funding works in the community, where the Hilton Hotel represents a vital business partner and front as venue leader, as is noted by corporate customers. In one of the interviews, a male corporate partner explains:

This is a business hotel, and they very much work with events and conferences, networks and partnership. This hotel is very professional. So, at big conferences like this, where all my companies are represented today, there is no time for interactions with others, until tonight, when it is over and everyone is having a drink and ‘chilling out’ before dinner.

### **Interview corporate partners September 2015**

As the above statement clarifies, Hilton Hotel prefers to be recognised as a business hotel. Being the perfect host for conferences, events, charity arrangements and other ambitious entertainments is the hospitality culture they themselves like to be renowned for. The way the hotel communicates this is visually on social media, such as Facebook and YouTube, and it posts its own photographs honouring partners and foot printing the Hilton Hotel. The GM also demonstrates his own focus through work and by putting his personal touch on it. There is the imperative intention to be visual in the local community to which they contribute. He has proclaimed this as ‘very much the Hilton way of doing hospitality’ and it is significant:

So, when I am doing the Tuesday evening event, as you have seen, I am not the same as other managers would be, and my guests or corporate guests are also different. So, if the management try to dictate too much, you are not going to achieve what you want. So, for example, my job in Brighton is also very much involved in the community. There are so many network events, so many people you should like to meet, you know arrange for charity works, for balls and dinners, ...for events like this; so, I spend quite a bit of time outside Hilton as well, quite a bit of networking, if you will.

### **Interview and conversations GM**

The statements above demonstrate the clear strategy the Hilton Hotel follows, and what the hotel confers as their business is of the utmost concern and part of its daily agenda. Teamwork is central to the management and to achieve content staffs that are willing to work. The hotel provides training and empowerment and gives authorisation enabling employees to make their own decisions in dealing with guests’ problems. The hotel also receives personal engagements and respectful involvement in return. Such management

impacts on feelings of confidence and being valued, and the management through employees' certainty of being a part of the hotel resource develops trust. The following part and second sub-theme *service as discipline* is where we turn to next.

### *Service as discipline*

Hilton Hotel's appeal is, therefore, their corporate profile, their hallmark, and this is emphasised and recognised by employees with personal respect. With regards to Hilton as a hotel name, this counts as a symbol with a certain reputation in the social hospitality world. This is a business hotel and the employees carry out the service *mission* that is accomplished with a focus on effectiveness and speediness that many business customers associate with Hilton Hotel.

With integrity, leadership and teamwork representing some of the Hilton Hotel's values, the hotel operates within the senses of urgency and discipline, and a service delivery likely to satisfy the demanding corporate customers and leisure guests. This means that discipline must be associated with consistent and coherent attitudes and behaviour in encounters with guests and face-to-face operations. The main concern is related to maintaining their service culture 'the Hilton way'; however, this is done with a personal touch to it through the relationship with Hilton's vision and the Hilton Hotel management contract. Corporate agreement such as this provides the opportunity to bond with the hospitality culture and to construct an in-house working environment that supports teamwork and individual control.

This is how to understand *Service as discipline* and how it has emerged, and it is organised into three sub-theme sections as the particular pattern revolved around the overarching theme previously. The three sections are then analysed through *Sense of urgency and discipline*, *Drilled hotel culture*, and *Corporate lifestyle* as in the following.

### **Sense of urgency and discipline**

The speediness Hilton Hotel provides takes place in the reception area and is related to the pressure under which the employees are trained to be able to deliver and serve their customers in the proper manner the hotel management expect. The correct and controlled contact employees pay to the hotel's corporate customers is performed according to their

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work commitment. All employees are trained the first year of their employment at this hotel, as a mandatory part of their contract, which, as a result, expresses the service practice and evokes the hospitality culture to the business partners. The whole atmosphere becomes a part of the shared corporate agenda, as some employees illustrate:

We are always trying to do our best. Sometimes, we try to solve problems with guests at once. It is up to us to find the best solution to daily problems. I have a good feeling and the management have faith in us, they trust their employees and I really feel...I know I contribute positively.

**Interview employee September 2015**

This illustrates trust and empowerment, which are important ingredients in disciplined work motivation. As such, they are important tools in the management's urging for better ways of working and they further motivate the participation in decision-making (Ryan & Bernard 2000; Ryan 2005) that perpetuates the work with deeper meaning. From a conversation with the OM, the reflections that follow illustrate the sense of discipline and self-control this hotel management expects from their employees and responsible staff members:

...[I] t is important with flexible staff, staff that can take on different roles and assist with big events, conferences and the check in and out operations with challenging logistics. We need fast moving ...you know, we very much rely on our corporate guests, and conference is what we do... all the time... all year round. Businesses are important to our corporates and we try our best here. Our corporate guests and partners need speed and fast delivery. We try to give them that.

**Conversation concierge Autumn 2014**

The illustration of urgency is strongly connected to daily encounters and corporate meetings, as well as the business of conferences, and also when the co-construction of sensible corporate hospitality culture is at stake. Therefore, it is in many ways the essence of the Hilton services to provide efficiency on delivery and performance when merely theatrical experiences and imaginations are important and significant to business partners. Similar views are expressed by an employee's excerpt here:

Corporate work is demanding and ...very interesting too. We are allowed to utilise our skills and include our human concern. This is an annual event and it is popular with companies. That is the meaning of hospitality and we perform a highly visible and vital role in the public life and hospitality public spaces. During events and conferences, not all, but very often... these are social places where interaction happens and where guests contribute, too.

This illustrates that conferences and corporate work offer a place for informal interactions and they are a space where communications and social activities invite conference delegates and their guests, corporate customers and their leaders to be involved and engaged in social contact and conversation. As reflected here, there is a conscious awareness of a good cultural experience for the guests and the way the Hilton deals with this in practice as a culture. This is also evident in the way the manager explains their close relation to Hilton as a global hotel chain. The *Service as discipline* reveals the importance of rituals as routines: the relatively informal communication form, and the repeated pattern and greeting phrases in other daily hotel operations. The first greetings from the breakfast assistance when the guests and customers are entering the Waterhouse restaurant early mornings are polite and repetitive: Good morning. Your room number please ... and where do you want to sit? Hello, how are you? Where would you like to sit? Are you joining someone? Good morning. How are you today?

There is little variation in the greetings; the pattern is quite clear and comes rather naturally and is said in a friendly manner and with a smile. When guests arrived, and entered the check-in desk, they were met with: Good morning, how can I help? Good afternoon, how can I help?

Greetings such as these were a similar, repeated pattern; either the guests were likely to be a guest for the first time or corporate customers who paid a repeat visit. The only difference visually in observing such activities came when guests/delegates had booked in online and they came to the desk to pick up their room keys at the special express service counter. Many guests and particularly delegates (business customers) seemed to do that. The lack of personal touch evidences the effectiveness and more corporate approach, such as the sufficient engagement and practice when time is important and the conference starts in few minutes.

In a similar vein, the uniformed employees differ from those in other public areas of the hotel, as they are dressed in dark blue suits and white shirts/blouses, and are more casual than the trousers and shirts worn elsewhere. The training programmes, through compulsory procedures such as being there *with* the guests, is the idea of discipline that emphasises the somewhat controlled interactions, as is using the same language as a

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greeting code for all employees in this position. Defined dress codes and structured relationships in a sense of formal and controlled encounters with both employees and hotel guests are a vital part of the hospitality culture. The observations and analysis show that this is the everyday practice.

Based on and endowed with *integrity, leadership and teamwork* as some of the values implemented in the training programmes with employees, they operate within a sense of urgency and discipline in their performances. This means that front staff working in the reception area control and pay formal, although correct, attention and service delivery to their hotel society. Stated above and revealed through the conversations with employees, they related how it felt to work at the Hilton Hotel as an international hotel chain. Contemporary challenges have changed the hotel's position in the sense of initial personal booking at the hotel and individual contacts that follow the making of social interactions. This service is significant and has a cultural value, or lack of such, for both *host and guest*. This is reflected here:

The guest and employee interactions are difficult today. You know... earlier, all types of travelling had to go through travel agencies. It is not the case anymore. The guests and customers can order everything on their own nowadays: the flight, the time, negotiate the price and pick their hotel. But it is also a matter of providing the guests with *something special*, isn't it? ... Every hotel struggles to be *different* from their competitors. It is really hard out there...

**Interview employee October 2015**

This illustrates how it feels not to be able 'to control' the whole process of 'seeing and being with the guests', to help and guide them with diverse decisions, meet particular expectations during their stay, and not least, deliver the good, special experience the Hilton terms 'the personal touch'. These comments are, therefore, a personal reflection of what they, as employees, lack. The mere personal relationship with guests has to be constructed after the guests/customers have made several choices already. Up front of the hotel visits, they have often made their assessments before they arrive at Hilton Hotel.

Such a 'disciplined' operational system reveals little at this point in time of the service delivery. The team workers at the reception are sorry about this, which, I was told, is understood to be essential hospitality work. The corporate customers, on the one hand, appreciate the efficiency and rapid, professional handling of the service; on the other

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hand, there is no personal relationship in the friendly meaning of the word. Important, and sometimes more forceful views, were expressed by employees operating in the reception area, as the following comments illustrate:

There is quite a stressful and intense focus on the booking, selling and the reporting part. We are not talking about individual hospitality service in this case. This is Hilton Hotel business agenda with their rules, instructions and duties, and it is important to all of us, ... of course. Even if we would like to spend more time with all our guests, this is not the right moment for the personal touch ...

**Conversation employee September 2014**

... during the business season, like now, we are very concerned about the time consumed and the delivery of our work and service. This means money to our corporate and event guests, and we are trained in disciplined work and focus on urgency and fast-working operations. Time is money!

**Conversation employee September 2014**

The Hilton Hotel is concerned with the work and the best way to operate the hotel. Staff members, referring here to employees/reception workers in these conversations, have a strong influence on each other's behaviour during teamwork and face-to-face encounters with hotel guests. The management show positive concern for employees, particularly the 'front staff' serving the reception area. These employees are considered in many ways to be the Hilton Hotel's face and, are thus, entwined with the Hilton. The young male and female workforce at the reception desk work shifts, and every third hour the hotel can exchange employees to ensure they stay alert on busy days. This was illustrated throughout some of the conversations with the concierge in how personally many of the employees reflected on their work. As is asserted:

...It is very important with flexible staff that they can take on different roles and assist with big events, conferences, large ceremonies and so on... but also during check in and out operations with challenging logistics. You know... we very much rely on our corporate guests, and conferences are what we do all the time, - all year round.

**Interview / conversation concierge September 2014**

The significance of this serves to highlight the many roles that employees have to take on 'all the time', and their urgent performance on delivery that needs to satisfy corporate customers. The illustration underlines the importance of this work and the business value upon which this work is based. The urgency in their service means discipline to the

Hilton. However, the Waterhouse Bar and Lounge area was often empty before lunch, and the Waterhouse terrace on the outside had only six guests at the time of fieldwork. This was normal, I was told. The intense working conditions in the morning in the reception area were not the case during the daytime, although the hotel is full of corporate customers. However, these arrangements and events have services and performances that are connected and implemented in the venues, and they are drilled and supported through event leaders and conference-trained partners.

### **'Drilled' hotel culture**

'The Hilton way' is a slogan that is well-known to the employees who work in this hotel, and the drilled hotel culture features the corporate and structured way of performing the hospitality services, observable in every day of the fieldwork. As such, it deserves further scrutiny.

*Early in September, the business season had just started after many months with tourists and leisure guests. This season was expected to increase significantly, I was told. The demanding environment, with many guests and visitors entering the reception and lobby area, put pressure on the employees to serve their customers in the proper manner that the hotel management expect from them, smiling and spending some time, although limited so as to be most effective. The whole process was aimed at booking people in and out of the building, answering questions, but being aware of not using too much time and effort. It was about similar concerns during several hours, all at once. The operations were not possible without helpful colleagues.*

**Observations and field notes September 2014**

The many observations revealed that commitments require employees that are focussed and aware. That seems to have been 'drilled in' as a state of mind. Even more, a character that deals with such challenges, having been trained and drilled how to do it, and having learned it 'the Hilton way', returns skilful and contented employee behaviour. However, the employees seem to know this kind of work so well it almost comes naturally. After the first year working with Hilton Hotel, they have been trained properly and thoroughly. Thus, their work comes out and performs a *polished* service culture well understood by employees and guests alike. This is stated as:

When you do something 'millions of times' each month, there will always emerge special situations to deal with. What is important in moments like that is how it is handled, how it is being explained. Situations that demand extra concern like that give us the possibility to show what we really stand for at Hilton, and do something to answer and resolve problems, if possible.

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We do not want mistakes or bad guest experiences to happen often ...

We all agree with that. Our identity makes us visible, in terms of people expecting to find a certain type of service and hospitality here, and we work hard every day to keep up our reputation, our standing. This is a responsibility we urge to take care of as employees, and we are committed to look after. Good experiences for guests are everything.<sup>26</sup>

**Interview concierge September 2015**

This illustrates a committed attitude and reveals a loyal employee who understands the imperative of the hospitality culture to be consistent business. Subsequently, many of the employees are dedicated to their work and feel it important to be among those working in the front office of the hotel. The pride of being part of the trusted employees working in the front is demonstrated by the following comment:

We want to be a source of inspiration for other people and we want to help to make a better world. We provide this inspirational working environment by making new employees aware of the values that they can put into practice. We all want to share this through teamwork.

**Interview employee September 2015**

In many ways, this public area is the window out to the social world, and as one employee stated, 'people know us, they can visit us from the website in their homes and get familiar with what we offer to them as guests. The expectations are sometimes too high'. Therefore, a conscious awareness is needed. Indeed, Hilton Hotel's training system is mandatory to all employees in the first year of their work, and the staff members continued:

We also provide discrete service, which is our image, meaning not to disturb guests intrusively, but 'see them'. Corporate guests appreciate this. This is our agenda.

**Conversation employee September 2015**

We are here for the guests and corporate customers. How to create an experience for guests depends on the way we surprise them. You have to understand how they prefer the service that we give them, knowing that there are time and days that are different. That is the message we have learned from Hilton ...as the training that is obligatory for all employees the first year at work here, ...and we strive to live up to that philosophy.

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<sup>26</sup> Hilton Worldwide University (2016) *What is Hilton Worldwide University?*  
<http://hwu-overview.com/introduction/university.html> Accessed April 2015.

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### Interview OM Damian Meadows September 2014

The main issue here is that the hotel mission affects the employees' sense of responsibility and their feeling for the *right* experience. This often involves being aware that they were joining a large hotel company, with many career opportunities for those who follow up on their own commitments.

This illustrates *drilled hotel culture* on a high level and the meaning of serving other strangers. Their personal eagerness to be employed at a Hilton Hotel, and a mindful demand for individual attitude and personalities, means a great deal to those who succeed in this work. The general possibilities that exist in the training opportunities, the personal commitment to the Hilton, and the individual contacts and professional merits that they are able to achieve, increase their position in the long run in the industry as well as their own ability to advance further in dedicated hotel and hospitality businesses. Similar thoughts were expressed, and emotional expressions came to the surface both from employees, customers and guests. These are illustrated in the following comments:

In the hospitality environment of this hotel, it is an honour to be trusted ...to do the best for guests is the meaning of hospitality at the Hilton...

### Interview employee September 2015

The people here are very nice, my colleagues...and we help each other out when in trouble. It is all about giving the guests a good experience, and understanding how to be able to work as a hospitality team.

### Interview employee September 2015

The illustration above reveals an understanding of drilled culture related to required training and practices, learning by doing and, therefore, understanding the importance of teamwork and working in the same direction of drilled culture in this context. However, this understanding is also individual and seems to follow the experiences and prior practices that each employee has acquired and, as such, fully understands and illustrates. Thus:

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It is all in a hurry these days, so being as nice and polite as you can, helping and serving your guests... You have to analyse very quickly what type of guest you are dealing with, what do they look for, what do you think they want or need, know their feelings. You must 'see' the guest, see the people'. This working place is concerned with these issues.

**Conversation employee September 2015**

Although during the interviews and conversations it was illustrated that the employees wanted to deliver expected levels of service to guests and customers, it became clear that speediness sometimes distracted them from being friendly because the use of time became a strong element in the performance of their service delivery. Employees sometimes confirmed this with body language and through the loss of eye contact, while they concentrated more on the booking and the systematic style of working. As an apparent contrast, they appreciated the position they shared, and enjoyed working in a team behind the desk in the reception area, at the centre of the public and 'collective gaze', as John Urry puts it (1990).

This is in line with the hospitality culture expectation that employees should exhibit, and in the way that they manage their responsibilities and everyday tasks, as a culture of practice as attributed to Hall et al. (2013), in a manner suitable to Hilton Hotel. This illustrates the pressure the hotel has adapted as a service presentation, and with co-constructed performances the corporate marked seem to yearn for. The front staff seemed to respond constructively to this co-construction of hospitality culture, as this implies they are doing so consciously.

### **Corporate lifestyle**

Hilton Hotel's daily life and business life go hand in hand. The hotel is a busy hotel, where time and effectiveness are key elements in daily operations. Therefore, this also informs what is going on at the societal level, in communications between employees and guests in the public area. Often it is limited in the sense of being with the guest and having time to talk kindlier for instance, in a more relaxed manner. Relaxed zones are dedicated to the main sheltered lounge; Waterhouse Bar and Lounge area are secluded from the hectic reception areas. Living a corporate life at Hilton Hotel means coping with stress at work, routines and fitting in as trustworthy employees. This has to occur between corporate responsibility engagements and the leisure aspect, with a blurring

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boundary of time spent at work and in a private life. As such, the corporate lifestyle is very much related to social control at work in the performances of hospitality culture.

The employees expressed their concern about hospitality culture as being different from the rational manifestations of hospitality (Lugosi 2008). The Hilton as a business-working place, co-constructing meaningful experiences together with business partners and contemporary regional industries, places high demands on Hilton event leaders. This is the daily life of the hotel, which strives to maintain the leading, societal role of Brighton as community, in which the hotel is an important part. To manage challenges and expectations, Hilton Hotel collaborates with external agencies and co-constructs their events and theme conferences through weekly meetings with actual persons and/or arrangements for corporate customers, where the general manager is the host. This corporate lifestyle is illustrated in network building and constitutes a large part of corporate work in this hotel, as the following examples of observation demonstrate:

*In the Waterhouse Bar and Lounge area, I sat down to follow the weekly session of loyalty program, which was very interesting. The General Manager (GM) hosted an informal party for corporate guests, which lasted for one and a half hours. The GM served his guests with freshly made nibbles, generously providing drinks and wine. The researcher, although secluded from the party, was able to hear words actually uttered and see gestures actually made. The 'happening' seemed successful. The GM came over to my position and told me that he invited regular guests like these, every week, to adjust and tune-in to their businesses, strengthen their already good relationship, and to prepare for new arrangements. Normally, he told me, he would host small events like this in private meeting rooms, but today everything was fully booked.*

**Observation and field notes September 2015**

*Later the same day, there was more networking in the Waterhouse Bar and Lounge area, as more business people had arrived. This time they were all females. The GM was now sitting down with a group of these young women, and it is likely to assume that they represented different companies or conference organisers or agencies. The GM presented the hotel facilities and they all went out to have a closer look, to then return and be served drinks and nibbles. It was possible to hear fragments of their communications, and 'what to do tomorrow, how many delegates for each sessions', were obviously at their concern. They continued to communicate with lower voices.*

**Observation and field notes September 2015**

However, there are also employees that feel different about the lifestyle in daily operations. Observations and conversations revealed attitude and manoeuvres and hotel operations that fluctuated from one to another, and involved the fostering of variances of

the culture and lifestyle impressions, particularly when little or small efforts are made and not seen by management.

*So, what does the co-construction of hospitality culture mean to you?* I asked.

He asserts:

Ohhh hospitality ... that's a nightmare!

The company appreciates your work, but not your hard work. The business is going down, so it is about price and "what is in it for the customer" and guests, especially the corporate guest. You know, we have 340 rooms, and 90 rooms are good, the rest are trash, garbage, old and too small, not nice at all. The company treats you nicely up to a point, but they really do not care about your hard work.

**Conversation employee September 2015**

He illustrated this with body language, nodding his head and in his eyes, it showed he was really obsessed and annoyed over the hotel situation, and even if they did their best, it was not appreciated. He claimed it was just a job that had to be done. This is not in line with the corporate lifestyle of the Hilton way, and, it is argued, needs more attention in the future in order to keep up the good work and maintain valuable teamwork behaviour. As Mars and Nicod stated (1984), this analysis draws on Goffman's way of analysing (1959: 44-59) the way in which people generally behave through daily life and routines towards guests and customers, and ensures status at work and good teamwork in general.

Further points that clarify the corporate lifestyle issues include employees' individual language skills utilised in this respect so as to provide excellent services. Different employees are called for under special celebrations at the Hilton Hotel in order to aid understanding and offer precisely the hotel message important to non-native English speaking guests and customers. Issues such as these can sometimes be culturally challenging, and Hilton Hotel deals with this in a respectful way. The use of interpreters to translate business materials and individual matters, and the nationalities in residence due to the international working force at Hilton Hotel, support this work in a good way and may succeed in offering guest liaisons in a less formal way than expected. This is highly valued among employees and bonds them as team workers who support the co-construction of hospitality culture.

The management have faith and rely on us. We all deal with guest challenges. We help each other here and all the different nationalities make it a diverse and

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interesting working condition, although it is sometimes challenging with a variation of moods and atmosphere... This benefits the guests too, they like to be talked to... because we have all these nationalities and are allowed to use it as a business culture here...and you know, very often we can speak to our guests in their own language ...you know. I really like my job, and I am doing the best I can ...

**Conversation employee September 2015**

In this way, employees express and also illustrate the pride they may have of self-identity under such circumstances, and this refers to what Giddens terms 'internally referential', as the 'ongoing "story" of the self' (1990: 53-54). This is to be understood as an inner sense of integrity that makes individuals reflexive and able to communicate with others as a chosen lifestyle. This is meticulously useful to the hospitality work towards guests (tourists) and customers, as individual resources and corporate lifestyles. The lifestyle performed in such a way illustrates the position the hotel holds, meaning that the Hilton Hotel, with its open mind and welcoming policy towards all the individual diversities and interests, is popular and represents some sort of human liberty. Such fullness provides visitors, guests and corporate customers with an extra bonus and is considered to be one of the Hilton Hotel's resources and a corporate advantage.

What is interesting though, is that *lifestyle* is very much connected to the people in present time, as a social and cultural perspective of living one's life, every day, through work and businesses. The *home* can be everywhere and how people belong and foster relationships and affections of belonging, may be more likely related to where they are raised or to places, which we might feel to be homeland and dwellings (Lefebvre 1991). This may possibly construct an *emic* dimension of the cultural practice to the employment, and a feeling at work that evokes good memories to some, but not all.

Corporate lifestyle is also related to people who travel the world and, as such, people become acquainted with places displayed, for example, on television, and they can be affected by an emotional awareness for places, captivating new interests for many and personal reasons. The cultural influences are thus reflected in everyday life. Consequently, both men and women, at various stages, choose the places in which to spend their time, as well as pick the social arena they find stimulating for this purpose. Hilton Hotel represents an alternative of course to many guests and corporate customers, as well as an international place to visit. Both guests and corporate customers have

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diverse facilities to select both for business and pleasure. While watching the world go by in between activities and partaking in the facilities of ‘dining and wining’ as their preferred lifestyle, people show part of their own identity. This is illustrated by female residents and frequent visitors to the hotel, who visit this business hotel in order to take advantage of the facilities and join like-minded others in the public area on Friday afternoons and on a regular basis. As stated here:

We enjoy the afternoon tea here and we are visitors Fridays after work, coming straight from the spa area downstairs today. Yeah, we do this on a regular basis. It is lovely [they smiled]. This place has really become us. We can be ourselves for a while, not feeling guilty or things like that... We really chill out here. After the treatment, we go straight up to the Waterhouse Bar and Terrace restaurant to enjoy the afternoon tea. It is such an open space and at the same time the interiors are arranged to give some privacy, too. The Hilton offers an International atmosphere in here. It is a famous hotel chain with an upscale quality. Very popular with champagne lunches on Saturdays, for example. No fuss around. We have time to enjoy it here, and that is what we want to do.

### **Conversation regular guests September 2014**

This expression is a modest sign of lifestyle, but it is evident during many observations that people coming to the Hilton enjoy the opportunity to act differently and to appear differently. To paraphrase Bell (2011), this is strongly connected to this hotel and is accepted as a ‘human state of mind’. Local guests and residents take advantage of exploiting the Hilton facilities on a regular basis. To many local guests, activities like these are part of the urban culture at Hilton. However, the social landscape is a dynamic process and in constant change in social situations. Thus, the employees must continue to focus on hotel experiences co-constructed in commercial destinations such as Hilton Hotel states:

We can host conferences for more than 2000 people. Back then, the industry was hosting. The managers were present and walked around greeting guests, talked to them and used to be very visual in the hotels. But as a host ...today I am more into accounts – and business orientated. But there is a difference working with corporate guests. They have different expectations when doing business with us. We work with loyalty programmes, which very many companies do. Our corporate customers like what we do for them and they go from being loyal and regular guests for three years into our honoured programmes, starting with the Blue programme, then to Silver, Gold and Diamond honoured programmes (*HHonour*). They can obtain different offers from us, such as to take a holiday here. One person recently achieved two weeks at the Seychelles ...for free.

### **Interview and conversation OM September 2015**

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For the operational manager, his focus on businesses from the host perspective is evident, and through his statement he illustrates the fundamental understanding of corporate lifestyle from his business perspective. The respect for the different aspects of the ‘mission’, in which Hilton Hotel hospitality is involved, supports the function of how specialised practices are carried out ‘the Hilton way’.

As mentioned above, the global and international hotel environment fosters a global workforce and individual qualities are important values to bring forward and stimulate. To appreciate, rather than avoid, *emotional implications* and the *personal touch* as contributions to co-construction, interactions and guest contacts, motivates employees with a native language other than English to feel included. Thus, they speak both English and Hungarian, as an example. The *stranger* is likely to become *familiar* when shared meaning and understanding are accepted, for instance, in the hotel (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007 [1995]).

The Hilton Hotel is involved in big events and conferences, which are organised and structured around the visions or concerned with leisure guests and corporate guests and customers. Many are looking for experiences and historical escapades in terms of hotel features through the lens of Brighton as a ‘cultural’ city. Pritchard and Morgan (2005) argue hotels are liminal sites of transition and transgression, referring to hotels as a sociological construct with a choice of opportunities for “transgressive” behaviour and “sexual” adventure. They discuss “metaphorical crossing” of some “imagined spatial or temporal threshold” and are spaces found to be “brief moments of freedom and escape” from everyday and common responsibilities (2005: 764). Considerations such as this can be related to the interrogation of tourism research and to the social consequences of such upon the impact on residents’ lifestyle and quality of life. What Cooper (2016) refers to as its positive side, “tourism can foster pride in local communities and enhance community spirit and values as well as assisting in community renewal” (2016: 108)?

Events and festivals increase opportunities for residents to enhance the quality of life in the local community. However, they can, of course, also be disruptive of the local way of life, although, some would say that moral climate of home might be worse than that found in the hotel. In other words, outsiders – potential and actual guests and visitors’

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encounters might have built up behaviour in hotels, morally and ethically. Thus, it depends upon the strength and confidence of the host culture. The corporate lifestyle at Hilton Hotel is likely to motivate the visit and also facilitate it, as being mainly a supportive facility, and a man-made and purpose-built mundane location. According to Cooper (2016: 331), motivations for travel are moving away from passive “sun lust” towards more active and exciting experiences, affective and sensuous activities, and tourism educational and “curiosity motives”. These ideas provide an anchor for both tourism and residents’ visits.

However, the corporate customers and conference delegates at the Hilton Hotel are not easy to contact, since their focus is on the conference and being there on time, being served and looked after. They are only seldom available for interactions, as they might not stay overnight at the hotel. The social and cultural distances between the corporate customers and the leisure guests mean a different approach to the hotel visits and are, therefore, research intensive.

The empirical world in a society has the interactive aspect that results in the practical in human life, and thus, the culture evolving over time (Miles 2001). Eriksen (2003) argues that contact with others is dynamic and unpredictable, and there is not always a recognisable pattern of behaviour or a culture such as one’s own. This releases ‘other’ ways of behaviours differently. Travelling, therefore, and visiting places away from home, will broaden the perspective of ‘seeing’ other people’s ways of life (Geertz 1973; Griswold 1994; Palmer et al. 2010; Delaney 2011).

In the understanding of culture as a social creation, there is a need to add the element of ‘subculture’, such as in this research. There are, for example, events with imagination, or portrayals of experiences, which are promoted in Hilton Hotel’s strategy, and into which people are resourcefully socialised:

We are always trying to do our best with the guests; either they stay here or use our conference and event facilities. I am privileged to be part of the management team.

**Conversation employees October 2015**

The two employees were also working during our conversations, and moved from the reception desk to assist with guests waiting for support from the concierge. Such

activities were one of the 'hotel commitments' and one of the expected initiatives towards guests. As such, they were a service duty to be performed and delivered. Additionally, this highlights an important point where the service practices, as hospitality culture performed by employees, move from being standby focused in the reception area to shifting roles. Employees become performers in the event sessions. Event leaders and corporate providers of 'Events with imagination', or as 'Showtime', are revealed through analyses and will be turned to next.

### *Showtime*

The current theme relates to co-construction within events and conferences as the everyday agenda and businesses at Hilton. The analysis will follow up and support the previous two sub-themes already illustrated. Hilton as an icon brand in the hospitality industry, and the possibility of implementing the hotel chain vision and values along with specific customisation on the current single Hilton Hotel's personal touch, become evident in the cultural sense of performing corporate lifestyles. In the third sub-theme, *Showtime*, a social dimension of hotel culture will be examined. Three extracted themes: *Putting on a show*, *Staged performance*, and *Hospitality as performance* are organised to highlight the overall theme to emerge from the research study and is further reflected on in Chapter Six, as being the co-construction of hospitality culture. In the following section, as was previously argued, an analysis conducted through the consideration of these themes, and through a focus on the empirical data, will illustrate their relevance.

### **Putting on a 'show'**

A big event - Rugby World Cup (18<sup>th</sup> September – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015) - has delegates/players and many supporters from both South Africa and Japan staying at the Hilton Hotel this weekend. The welcoming in-house committee includes the management, employees from all hotel departments, and regular hotel guests. They queued up to greet the players on their way into the Hilton, and on their way out to the bus to take them to where the Games will be played. Many of the hotel guests came down to Brighton to watch and enjoy the event and the cultural show, and the Hilton Hotel management made the most of this in a positive manner.

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The Hilton Hotel managers and employees were present in the lobby/reception in order to pay respect to all the guests and participants, as they were aware of the grand event hosted in Brighton at this time. The hotel wanted to demonstrate that they cared. They did this by forming a guard of honour at the main entrance of the building as a scene of hospitality performance and as a way of showing off. This was done to encourage the game players on their way to and from the stadium. It was possible to sense the excitement surrounding the public area, and one of the managers said:

When you see this hotel, the location... and today with this big event... Rugby World Cup delegates from South Africa and Japan, the days are never the same. The people who work here deliver, and fulfil the guests' expectation too.

**Conversation OM September 2015**

This illustrates the show the Hilton provides to *show off* their relationship to this international sports game and the interest they pay so as to provide all guests and visitors with something special that is taking place at the Hilton. The operational manager takes this seriously, and he illustrates that the Hilton takes on many different arrangements and events. Therefore, 'the days are never the same'; all days differ depending on the social situations that occur. This is a great event and is open to everyone who joins in and visits the hotel, and experiences his or her hotel product in such circumstances. He is proud of the programme the hotel provides to all the guests and corporate partners and he also told me that the hotel always does something special to spot the hotel, which often involves making an appeal to people to come and enjoy the show. He asserts:

Brighton is a popular place to arrange outdoor social venues and festivals. We always have many celebrations going on here, especially at the weekends. Particularly in this season of the year just before the businesses and conferences start up. We try to do the best and the city is full of synergies to experience as well...

**Conversation OM 19 September 2015**

This illustrates the significance of events to the hotel. Hilton also tries to arrange optimal experiences to all guests and the management are present during the whole programme. The operational manager sets an example by being in the surroundings to monitor the operations and to ensure that the greetings are handled and dealt with accordingly by busy employees. He also wants to support the efficiency by doing this. It is the high of service times that influences employees at the reception desk, which at this point is full of excited people watching the athletics and the game delegates entering the hotel. The

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check-in processes have become a little more challenging due to all the Rugby players flowing into the main entrance. The underlying message here is that Hilton Hotel has a unique location when it comes to access to the hotel, and many people arrived at this time. In this way, the longer service deliveries resulted in more interactions between guests and guests, and changed the social behaviour between employees and guests.

The Brighton appeal seems to have been embraced to a large extent, and did so simultaneously with the hotel attractions and atmosphere that mirror the social life and hospitality culture. During the Rugby World Cup, people who wanted the players' autographs had their photographs taken with them. Small children were lifted up in order to have their photographs taken with their heroes, the colourfully dressed and smiling Rugby players. There was a show going on at this time, which was sensible in the best meaning of the metaphor. Events and big conferences can be a way to display cultural peculiarities (Andrews & Leopold 2013). This materialises in the form of social interests and performances (i.e. local traditions, rituals and food customs) that individuals prefer and choose to identify with. In this research study, the social living and 'society life' (or hospitality life) include vital sub-themes. These indicate: relationships with others; performances similar to playing a role; making new friends out of strange guests; and shifts between roles, experiences, showtime, and interactions (Bell 2011; Lugosi 2014).

However, The Hilton Hotel is a commercial entity, which is willing to show the allowance of the hotel *make-up* (Hochschild 2003 [1983]) or *sell our personality* (Mill 1806-1873). This proliferates the usefulness by interacting and acting their business message as a *show*. Dikeç (2002: 236) puts it as 'hospitality as a gesture of engagement' and understood it to be a series of processes. Performance as a human activity is also tangible in the form of a theatre or a theatrical scene. The show must go on here, and it is delivered as events and guest experiences through, or appealing to, individual imagination. Hilton Hotel provides the scene and the *guests* tell their own story, often by acting in a public area (in front of the audience, meaning other guests and employees) as a *dream and fantasy* performance. As Mars and Nicod note (1984: 35) 'whatever the level of hotel, waiters must always aim to meet the expectations of their customers'.

... Like Hilton Hotel, where the expectations are high, employees and staff members must always aim to meet the expectations of their customers. Sometimes we are very much actors putting on a performance by showing a happy face and

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intending to have full control... the event themes and situations motivate us... and the roles can change according to that...yes...

**Communication employee September 2015**

The comments illustrate the co-construction between interactions and expectations, and between employees and customers. I tried to think about what social activities the employees engage in, by using terms from Goffman (1963). These include what are called social 'encounters', such as face-to-face interactions between staff and customers that make up much of the experience, and dealings with people in communications and responses. Nevertheless, not all the employees who deal with guests seemed to have the same opinion of activities or interactions, as was observed in the reception and lobby space. Such opinions are exemplified here:

I am trained in hospitality, so I have come to understand it. It is not an attitude, like talking to people, or interacting with them. They don't do that anymore. It is not social - it is a service performance, a way to deliver hotel service.

**Interview Waterhouse restaurant employee September 2015**

The illustration above reminds us how different employees understand what being playful means, and they stick slightly to the service as delivery. Thus, it might surface that showtime eliminates the intersection between people, places and commercial social activities. To echo Getz (2007), it is linked to the context of public events through event leaders and agencies. Different roles belong to different tasks. Therefore, the understanding of guests' opinions of service and employees' opinions of the same service is not the same, from some point of views. The formal service is delivered at the reception desk. It is precise and friendly, although it is conducted in a formal and speedy manner, whilst service across a table in public areas, as in restaurants and lounges and bars, opens up opportunities for informal behaviour, laughter and jokes. These have been observed as normal activities and take place in between serving food and drink and hotel operational work. From conversations with a female waitress, the quotation below illustrates the importance of time to communicate and interact with guests, and to put in a sense of humour. The relationship with *Putting on the 'show'* is the small *performance* she is putting on next:

She also appreciated being 'seen', she said, and 'I am so small... people never see me, they never look down ... you know'

Conversation employee September 2015

She demonstrated physically how people come into this public area with their heads held high. She did this by walking in front of me, lifting her head up as if nothing was of her concern, and imitating somebody of importance or with a significant position. She wanted to be seen herself or to be helpful, and showed her engagement by being supportive and entertaining. This was like putting on a performance. We had a good laugh together and she was always available and at service. The interaction somehow, raised the friendly mood in the public area. Her laughter was heard while she was dealing with different guests that afternoon.

### **Staged performance**

Another example is the weekend guests. For instance, they were standing in a long booking queue and a flow of people came in and went out, while others used the time to *show themselves* to the audience, which consisted of the other people surrounding them and looking and watching each other like *spectators*. These performances took the form of flirting with their partners, doing some small dancing steps together, talking loudly about private matters, singing, while at the same time looking up and around to make sure that someone was watching or at least looking their way. Some of the guests were dressed in fancy clothes and big colourful hats and, thus, became *attractions* or *actors* themselves. These small entertainments seemed to be joyful and amusing; there was much laughter around, and comments across the queue of people. The six receptionists working behind the checking desk, and a large troop of people sojourned at this time in the reception area made this open public area floating. Some of the guests also caught my eye, and it has become a habit, due to many years of hospitality work, to smile back, as if I were also checking in and standing there for the same purpose as the guests. This is important and characteristic at Hilton. The significant elements of employees and guests putting on a show, made everyone put on their own performances. This represents and evidences that through performances, the hospitality culture is manifested. It is hospitality culture with a fascinating consequence.

Moreover, I recognised that the guests performed their activities, such as talking more loudly to be certain of being heard, glancing at other guests standing nearby, in order to make sure to be seen. It was possible to hear what was said and see what was done

bodily, which is similar to being part of an audience in a theatre. This reflects Goffman's (1959) research of perspectives of the 'dramatic performance' and how people can adopt 'discrepant roles and communicate out of character', or just 'put [ting] on the show' for the benefit of the audience by using one kind of communication in terms of 'expressions given off' (1959: 6). In a similar vein, emotional behaviour can be *transformed* into spontaneous interactions just by observing that other people are looking at 'you'. This may stimulate the personal feeling of being in the social world, surrounded by other guests who are there to observe the same experiences. This is like a society looking for amusement or wanting to share a common scene of activities. These activities continued for as long as the Game players stayed at the hotel and they seemed to be highly welcomed and applauded. In this study, performance is a metaphor (Rojek & Urry 1997; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Goffman 1959) and this concept also bonds the gap between hospitality delivery as a hotel practice, and the co-construction of hospitality cultural engagement.

Such activities and interactions are characteristic of the Hilton Hotel in terms of how the hospitality culture adapts to the everyday life in the hotel and adjusts to it by operating between work and emotions or, for example, between obligations or duties and personal feelings, which are respected in the realm of the overarching theme – Corporate leisure. The contrast between the corporate effective, formal behaviour finds a cultural balance in the friendly encounters with relaxed leisure guests who are interested in human contact and relationships. Engagement and entertaining interactions often go hand in hand with the consumption of food and drink (Lugosi 2008: 140, drawing on Hanefors & Mossberg 2003), and at the Hilton, the people socialise, and construct their own world of sharing and performing where co-constructions implies a conscious awareness of doing so. Interactions with people one does not know, and with hotel guests from another culture, make sense. It is not *staged performance* in the public space as such; it just happens because individuals contact and speak to each other. According to Pritchard and Morgan (2005), hotels stimulate the imagination and provide performative stages of drama and role-playing. Such *stages* are places where the meaning and the fluidities of our personal identities, the 'many selves' that we are capable of drawing our performance from, are shown. These are multiple, multi-faceted, reflexive performances (Giddens 1990).

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The social activities that are being performed are co-constructed through these acts of representation and presentation. It is related to a good performance that might be political, and which moves people to action, reflection, or both. It is also a staged performance that, as argued by Denzin (2003 [1989a]) is educational and meaning making, as well as being a *co-performance* that creates a field of shared emotional experiences. One of the corporate customers said loudly, when passing me outside the venue setting:

I really look forward to this time... being here this year, I think I might be able to join in some of the activities if I feel I can ... and support my colleagues. It's about time, don't you think...

**Observation and overheard field notes corporate customer October 2015**

The comment is important and was given to a colleague next to her. It illustrates the extent to which the event feels comfortable and triggers or pushes the willingness to join in and contribute in a shared, useful corporate performance. Such seems to be the point and a significant activity in some conferences and venues.

### **Hospitality as performance**

It is guests, corporate customers and employees who enjoy and participate in performance and social activities; hospitality as performance also occurs *between* the corporate customers, particularly when they are 'hotel guests' and stay over nights at the Hilton Hotel. Since the Hilton operates with two guest segments, the performance and hospitality culture relate to, and convey, what the different segments want and expect from the hotel, and why they choose to visit the hotel in the first place. Because the management acknowledge that not all the customers or guests view Hilton Hotel through the same social lens, some corporate customers have a clear opinion of the hospitality culture and its co-construction. As a corporate business customer stated:

We as corporate partners come here every year and we have spent lots of money at this hotel ...yes, we have a good relationship. Hilton is professional in the way they deal with business and corporate engagements. The hospitality is impeccable, ... great ... and we look forward to this event every year. But there are always some small details that we report back. I think this is useful. We always write a note to the management about things we find disorderly or wrong, either big or less important details. And the hotel appreciates this, but we do not go to TripAdvisor with our task!

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### Conversation corporate partners September 2015

This illustrates the corporate, professional relationship between the Hilton Hotel as the architect and the corporate partners as contributors. This kind of hotel co-construction goes further and includes the repetitive need for annual events at this hotel, and the reciprocal attitude that shapes and directs conferences in the future. Participants define this by looking at some aspects of the organisation of events and social arrangements, and by adding a personal touch that provides the encounter itself. One conversation was had with an event leader, and her thoughts of the questions about her own role in this setting and the meaning of co-constructed performances are interpreted and exposed here:

I am an agency, like a company outside which the hotel hires when they need me, and others, to arrange conferences and events. It feels great to work here, although it is time consuming and can involve late hours. We have different criteria we work towards, which help us to achieve our goal, do a good job and create a memorable event and a good experience for the customers ...I work for many other hotels ... horserace enterprises ... so yes, I have lots of experience and we do come up with crazy ideas if needed.

### Conversation Event leader October 2015

This is the hotel agenda mentioned earlier. The hotel management makes a point of the *crazy ideas* they draw on to come up with a 'Hilton way' of doing it, but they rely on trained individuals, both internal and external. As stated here:

If you have a big group outside the house, a convention group, and they want to do something, you have to be creative, and start thinking, thinking, thinking. You have to appeal to their imagination, what you would like to do except for the costs. We can do lots of things, discuss it ...ok, this is easy, and we can do this. But others can be more difficult, but they have a high value in the end.

You know... it will have a return on our investment, so we will do it, ...and others can be wacky crazy, so let us keep them in the wacky crazy box until the time comes when we can use these things and ...

So, we involve the employees with the guests to ask what they want. And the team will come up with lots of alternatives, many crazy ideas...our speciality on events...

### Interview GM September 2015

The statements above illustrate the conscious and persistent awareness of performance as the hospitality culture at Hilton Hotel. In many ways, the general manager performs his message himself, by explaining ideas and conference activities as metaphors. The relation to Goffman's (1959, 1963) suggestions is that the social role-play by individuals is not a

constant one, but is dependent upon interactions in an encounter and the character of the particular encounter, as well as the social situations in time and space. There are also complex relations of display and the motif of performance.

Therefore, there is an explicit corporate aim to 'put on a show' in this hotel. So, in what is representing liminal space like that of the hotel Pritchard & Morgan (2005) noted that the guest here is free to enact whatever performances s/he wishes. From a corporate viewpoint, the excitement over the opportunity to choose crazy ideas to initiate performance or to *show off* or *imagine* the hotel business becomes the key in Hospitality as performance. The hotel loyalty illustrates the consequences of just being loyal. The guests contact the Hilton Hotel through the hotel website and honour programmes. This is the hotel strategy and it belongs to the branding of Hilton Hotel. Interesting examples of 'crazy ideas' are not easy to come across, since these elements are the particular resources the Hilton constructs and moulds into their events and special arrangements. The facilities come in many forms and occur inside the Hilton locations, and they utilise the designed public meeting rooms and halls, separate houses, the Hilton sport arena, corporate facilities and theatres. They include combinations of food and performance, dance and entertainment, and interior decorations and uniforms, which provide special effects and have emotional impacts in order to fit into the system available to the corporate strategy.

## **5.6. Chapter summary**

As argued from the start, this chapter has analysed and examined the concept of co-construction of hospitality culture as it relates to the Hilton Hotel. The particular culture conveyed at Hilton is related to the two visions this hotel works with and the general awareness of *Corporate Leisure* as the main finding. The focus on culture, interaction and performance in public areas revealed patterns that need structure and discipline at deliverances and this turned out to be relatively demanding. Thus, the research study attempts to develop insights into the members of the hotel society in terms of how they contact and communicate through interactions and performances. This reveals imbalanced opportunities to represent the hospitality culture for employees, and is divided between the corporate part and the leisure part of the daily culture. Based on the empirical evidence, the interpretation of complex interactions in corporate business

## CHAPTER FIVE: FIELDWORK HILTON HOTEL

relationships between trained employees, outside agencies and guests and tourists, observations, informal conversations and semi-interviews, revealed significant findings that brings this hotel further in its current position of professionalism among the business hotels in Brighton.

The Hilton Hotel is part of an international hotel chain. First of all, in the hotel in general, there is a strong focus on hospitality. However, in terms of the way the different hotels in the hotel chain practise and operate, the Hilton worldwide loyalty program and the employee training system are different in design, organisation and are tuned in to ideal guest-segments. The illustration of key findings is presented in Chapter Six, which follows next. The significant findings related to the three concepts in Figure 1 page 4 are reiterated on page 221. These emerged further through the interpretive hermeneutical analysis, revealing elements of ‘belonging’ in the hospitality culture, through the feeling of meaningful work and contribution to a large hotel chain with focus on hospitality as the Hilton Hotel core vision. Such *words-of-mouth* are spread through the hotel society, betwixt and between the hotel workforces and emphasise the purpose to their guests and corporate partners, the way hospitality culture can be meaningful to those who take part in the co-constructed performances of it.

# CHAPTER SIX

## **6.0 CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **6.1. Introduction**

The two distinctive cultures that have emerged in relation to the overall aim of the thesis, and the key concepts, invoke ontological overtones and associations with everyday life in these social settings, analysed in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Whilst such relations and connections are examples of meanings and individual interpretations of hospitality, they also represent contrasting views of reality that reflect variations in values and sensitivities. They remain, however, according to Geertz (1973: 131), “fundamental ingredients” that include a society’s “world-view”.

The identified findings in the research study are motivating co-constructed performances of hospitality culture in Hydro Hotel and Hilton. Following on from this hermeneutical analysis, the aim of Chapter Six is to critically discuss these interpretations and findings. The rich data captured from the participants provide significant material relating to their understanding of the meaning of hospitality culture, and/or their contribution to the co-construction of such a culture. Many of the employees, like the front staffs at Hilton, described interactions as being useful and self-developing in their work, also on a personal level as individual and social resources. While at Hydro, the employees felt that they co-constructed hospitality culture towards a family-like togetherness at work, as reciprocal in guests relations, and indeed, this behaviours and encounters with guests made their daily work meaningful in terms and being valued as human beings.

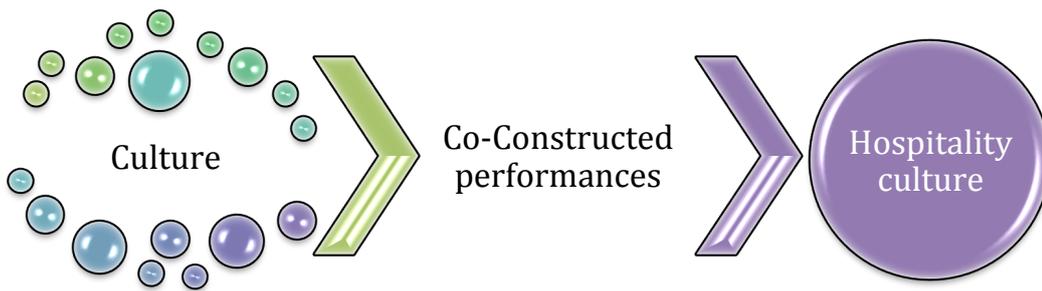
As a result, the overall conclusion that must be faced from the hotels’ management standpoint is that certain hotels may possess distinct appealing advantages for a larger percentage of actual market segments than others. However, no one hotel can hope to attract or host all types of guests and visitors, but must rather develop programmes targeted at those most likely to value their appeals and benefits. The guest segment of probable interest, and also the media by which they are most likely to be reached are, thus, essential to most hotels. Therefore, the cultural and social characteristics of hotels play significant roles in determining its market appeal. The hotels’ social aspect in hospitality culture is vital in such context. These elements have rarely been given the recognition in hotels they deserve. The subsequent discussion will now follow.

### *Discussion of Findings*

As outlined in the previous chapters, this chapter seeks to draw together the overall view of the hospitality culture of the two hotels through the key themes that underlie co-construction. Moreover, this chapter reflects on everyday interactions between participants from the exploratory study, and the reasons of what exist as *motivational push* towards the actors, and in this way to interact with the ‘other’. Through the overarching themes: Second home / Extended family (Hydro Hotel) and Corporate Leisure (Hilton Hotel), the dynamic interactions are imbued with views and behaviours from both the permanent and the ephemeral encounters. The aspects included here are not the only to emerge from the hotels public places, but are simply those considered fundamental to the research aim, namely, the co-constructions and performances of hospitality culture. The closely interrelated concepts of culture in co-constructed performance are vital in hotel everyday practices as activities performed in hotel context, which frames the understanding and the meanings of the dynamics that characterise the social co-construction in terms of culture. This culture ‘happens and goes on’ every day. It is related to what the hotels both prioritise in their fascinations of guests segments and customers, to be able to sustain their positions in the local environment, and more – to provide the platform for their endeavour and business.

The approach will now consider the findings by reference to the key concepts. The chapter reflects on culture and the research process, and provides a snapshot of the particular lived worlds in each hotel. The chapter then goes on to discuss interactions that have emerged between a wide range of people, such as those hotel employees and guests, guests and guests, corporate partners and members of the management in the two hotels, respectively. These interactions are then assessed. The next section is linked to the social aspect of hospitality as a significant means of exploring and understanding society in public space. Furthermore, and as it is put by Lashley et al. (2007a: 186-187), ...”it clearly demonstrates that as a field of study hospitality is vibrant, dynamic, exciting and exhilarating, the boundaries of which are as limitless.” Finally, the chapter ends by moving closer to the understanding of distinctive hospitality culture in each of the hotels in this research study. Consequently, the concept of culture leading towards hospitality culture includes Figure 1 (reiterated here from page 4), which indicates the research path and key concern in order to remind the reader of the conceptual concepts drawn upon:

**Figure 6 - The key concepts and their interrelationship**



These theoretical concepts, in turn, provide the framework within which to study the daily life, interactions and social encounters in a hotel.

As noted in previous chapters, hospitality is important as the act or practice of receiving and entertaining guests, visitors and strangers, and this has meaning to those involved in the cultural processes. Social living or modes of civilised living in social situations are linked to subtle rules and social norms of behaviour. However, different elements of culture appear somewhat differently to those involved, for example, as in the current research, where at Hilton, Service as discipline is ‘drilled in service of deliveries’. This has become an attitude and has developed as hospitality culture. The visions and missions place high demands on the employees. These exert a substantial influence on the hotel leader and the management when choosing the right people for the right tasks. Employees are alerted to their possibilities of working in a large hotel chain and are able to move within job training amidst the different Hilton Hotel global segments. The strong Brand on the corporate model<sup>27</sup> indicates the hotel attitude and the culture that the Hilton wants to be identified with, as well as the direction in which the brand should be experienced and understood. The way the Hilton displays this is important as each hotel segment provides different services. Service as brand, thus, inform and train how to understand the meaning of the hospitality culture and what the consequences are if they fail or make mistakes. Employees and guests view the Hilton Hotel with respect, as a branded hotel that stands for quality and one which provides security to the participants. This understanding has

<sup>27</sup> American model to produce luxury *efficiently*, with relation to Henry Ford and his established technologies and labour practices of mass production in Michigan 1913-1914, which turned relevant principles into practice in new hotels 1923, noted by Annabel Wharton, in Lashley et al 2007a.

## CHAPTER SIX: CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

been built up into an overall image. The symbolic imagination of the Hilton as a strong Brand has been raised to the level of lifestyle and in many ways this explains or is illustrated through the efficiency in which way the front staff deliver their hospitality service at certain times in the reception and lobby area. Before and after those hectic hours, these public areas are empty. The employees are ‘performing’ in other roles at these moments in time. With respect to the New York Hilton, and as argued by Annabel Wharton:

The rising cost of labour requires the deployment of new technologies; a hotel’s profitability depends on eliminating workers.

**Wharton 2007: 111**

The Hilton Hotel investigated here has moved away from this “banal modernity” (Wharton 2007: 112), and taken on the dreams and history of hospitality related to this study, through the two visions presented in Table 6 – Hilton’s Strategic Framework in the analysis (on page 182). The hotel’s use of technology and videos shows and uncovers their employees’ and general workforce’s perception, in person, of how the ‘Hilton’s hospitality culture’ just by making use of employees’ skills and personal characters can change the hotel’s hospitality culture. In other words, the hotel practices have changed employees’ self-confidence and self-respect into something useful for the employees and the hotel business, as to a mutual benefit both to guests and hosts. Aspects of their working environment and professions have been influenced through empowerment. Employees have experienced a meaningful working environment, and an atmosphere of targeted, sociable and respectful attention, as articulated in these videos. Such actions strengthen other possible jobseekers’ motivation to apply for hospitality work. The opposition understanding as a contrast is also exposed by promotional video. The employees who stand forward here *witness* on film with the intention to articulate (by word-of-mouth) the selling point of Hilton as a working place. The including working environment endorses individual meaning and personality, which again evokes engagements that generate and initiate the hospitality culture at Hilton. Hydro, on the other hand, reveals employees with emotional commitment to their job as well, where affect and commitment are significant elements. Yet, in this hotel case those elements in behaviour are coming more naturally with cordiality rather than learned.

## 6.2. Culture as process

However, as already stated in Chapter Three, culture, in this study, also includes etiquette. Etiquette, the protocol code of polite behaviour in hotel society, illustrates service behaviours and disciplined culture on the one hand, and hospitality as a gesture of personal engagements (or not), and familiar attraction between *host and guest* (Bell 2011; Lashley et al. 2007), on the other.

While re-considering those who have investigated the cohesiveness in hospitality [and tourism] (Eriksen 2003; Oswell 2006), and, in particular, hospitality being regarded as lived, embodied and, thus experienced both as society and culture (Lugosi et al. 2009; Anderson (ed.) 2010; Burns et al. 2010; Delaney 2011; Duncan et al. 2013), the knowledge of hospitality culture as *social explanation* clearly has a contribution to make in wider social debates. Indeed, Goffman (1961; 1963) helps us in the characterisation of hospitality. At the centre of all his work on presentation and performance lies the notion of reciprocity and exchange. Visitors to a hotel are not only passive observers of employees' attempts to provide them with hospitality. The visitors and guests provide the conditions and perform the hospitality by *colluding* with the presentation. They have, in other words, their own interest in the performance being successful, in that its breakdown creates an embarrassment, (even havoc as in *Fawlty Towers* with *John Cleese's* ineffectiveness to perform the role of hotel manager). The moments of hospitality in the first encounter can be sensitive or cannot be done again. This aspect is interesting from a hospitality entertainment point of view, where the amusing effect plays a role as a lens found in commercial hospitality settings. Hospitality shares its origins with the provision of caring and is often related to domestic environments, as found in *Hydro Hotel*. However, in this analysis it was found to have moved into a social and welfare context, and in hotels, hospitality has gradually become more commercialised both in supporting and enhancing guests' well-being, and fulfil their expectations and contacting guests in a more informal way. This has been achieved through caring, and providing a language of shared values in which, having a sense of humour is considered a state of mind: it is personality embedded. Humour has potential as "lubricant to hospitality work" enabling jobs to be done and the organisation to function, with a smile and laughter (Ball & Johnson 2000). Personal skills and innate personalities are central roles that are often played or showed through humour in the restorative, relaxing and well-being process or through the provision of hospitality.

## CHAPTER SIX: CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the *Showtime* and *Playtime*, the amusing characteristics and behaviours of individual employees increased the ‘fun factor’ in social situations, generated warmth, openness and, not least, trust. The conversation processes contained a great deal of such warmth and openness and, therefore, have resulted in relationships and bonding of friendships at Hydro. Such processes have also been the pivotal element in bringing hospitality *acts* that change a stranger into a friend - or business partner, as in Hilton. Regarding hospitality behaviour in such a vein is fundamental and adds to the sense of well-being and relaxation, and regards laughter and entertainment as important ingredients in hosts and guests’ friendships. Furthermore, such hospitality cultures strengthen the social relationships to any collective atmosphere of hospitality spaces. Echoing Sir Brian Wolfson, Wembley plc:

I think the skilful manipulation of atmosphere – because it is manipulation to some extent – is what creates an atmosphere for people to give their best, for people to feel good about themselves, for people to feel comfortable and warm. Laughing together is among the most agreeable and binding of human activities (quoted in Ball and Johnson 2000: 205-206).

The ‘welcoming ceremony’ has often been interrupted and taken place before guests and customers who show up at the Hilton. Regarding the hotel introduction and having a good website, enhances the hotel’s image and supports the interactivity with both institutional and individual customers. When asked how employees connected to the hospitality culture, the most common answers related to the busy moments of ephemeral encounters when the guests came to collect the key. They had already booked in at the hotel via Internet. There was no time to serve them properly, or to be friendly and give them a welcoming feeling in the first encounter. The structured receptionists were disciplined and they knew that at this point of the day, it was the most intensive business period for the Hilton. Some employees regretted and lamented the lack of welcoming hospitality they were trained to provide. They told that this is most important when dealing with guests and visitors. However, they had to follow the hotel strategy as part of their loyal commitment.

The time is an issue for guests, and, although they appreciate the effectiveness and speedy delivery at Hilton, guests sometimes used the reception area in order to just sit down and watch other guests, and to communicate with each other while passing by, queuing up in booking time or taking the elevator in company with other guests. The hospitality culture needed to be monitored in different times and places, from the employees’ point of view.

Often the guests and customers have familiarised themselves with the hotel from the websites, which include a wide range of content, usability, navigation, and interactivity issues. The guests and customers are motivated to become honoured members, an electronically organised service previously introduced. This means that the employees and reception staffs exchange ephemeral greetings, following etiquettes and disciplines of Hilton structure, as the *Hilton way* of welcoming.

These ‘lifestyle’ variations provide different hotel experiences to their guests and customers, and both guests and employees are aware of these offers, where distress and commitment are significant elements. However, due to the high focus on corporate customers and partners, the website is important as it enables both guests and corporate customers to learn and have a snapshot of the Hilton world and how the hotel creates their hospitality structure, and what they, as a hospitality company, expect and emphasise as a ‘social building block’, to further be able to provide to their guests. Human roles in these settings act both as co-constructors and performers, as well as being an audience in the reception and lounge area - when guests and customers are queuing up for booking *in* and checking *out* sessions. Sometimes the large, open reception area becomes a social theatre where individual guests and visitors perform and artistically present or show themselves (Goffman 1959; Ritchie & Zins 1978; Lugosi 2014a). This is a significant finding and meaningful activity that makes sense in Hilton Brighton, as Brighton is a flamboyant city in which the hotel plays a central role, and is dedicated to the Brighton community policy of “open mind”.

### **6.3. Co-construction of culture**

This study of two different hotels has revealed significant sub-themes that have some commonalities. In this chapter, these sub-themes are discussed in order to gain deeper insights into how they influence and stimulate to co-construct culture through hospitality. The excerpts and passages are drawn from all the participants involved in the research study. The assessment now turns to focus on co-construction – the interactions and activities between employees and guests, guests and guests, and corporate partners and members of the managements that emerged from both hotels.

## CHAPTER SIX: CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Actions and activities such as co-constructed performances are common at Hilton Hotel, but not when ‘time is money’ and service deliverances must be efficient and prompt. Such have resulted in a sort of professional service discipline, and are strongly present related to the brand and ‘image’ of Hilton Hotel. The ‘drilled’ culture occur among the employees in conjunction with fun and entertainments actions among guests, as a co-constructed performance where business goes on while *all* are having a good time. However, it was also evident that contradictions occurred. Employees expressed frustration over not having time to serve and be ‘hospitable’ to guests in these moments at work, but hurried to claim that they could compensate for this with personal engagement when socialisations become more convenient and relaxed, as often occurred in the Waterhouse Bar region.

During the investigation and the fieldwork at Hilton Hotel, the observations and communications led to contact with two different employees: one Italian female and one Spanish male. The female employee was encountered in the Lobby Bar, and the male waiter was serving in the Waterhouse Restaurant. The dialogues developed in both cases in a natural way, and they told me (they knew who I was and I had told them both about my research study earlier that week end), about their commitments and their type of work and service roles at the hotel.

Later, after the conversations had finished, they both came over to where I was sitting writing my notes (independent of each other) with questionnaires they wanted me to fill out. This was a small, standardised form where the researcher as a ‘guest’ should give back to the hotel management some positive comment. The female employee explained this and referred to a strong need to ‘be seen’ within the hotel organisation and, particularly, within the Hilton Hotel organisation. The male employee was also very grateful to receive comments (endorsements) in this way.

In turn, these are significant findings and an obvious way in which the Hilton encourages and pushes its employees and staff members to co-construct a friendly mood, to contact and communicate with their guests and visitors, to establish a good atmosphere in which to relax, and to enjoy the time spent at the hotel. Thus, it seems to fit in with the connection between ‘guest and host’ as being not only possible, but also anticipated. Elizabeth Telfer (2000, 1996) has, among different aspects and in the philosophy of hospitableness, also spoken of hospitality as a private affair. This is based upon a private home, and is given,

## CHAPTER SIX: CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

not sold, to chosen or selected guests. Many of the observations and short communications in the summer fieldwork of Hydro illustrate the feeling of home:

*The glass doors out to the garden stood fully open during the summer fieldwork this year (2014), and guests went in and out bringing drinks and coffee/tea with them. The employees had more time now to speak to the guests and they went over to some that they obviously knew well and had a talk about private matters, smiling and engaging in the conversation that was going on. The friendly environment feels safe and well taken care of. They 'have all the time in the world' to help guests, serve them and talk to them, is what some of the employees tell me. This is a particularity that has a strong position among the guests. It is easy to observe the friendly atmosphere, and it seems to be honest by the way the employees approach their guests. They give women compliments for their appearance and a friendly 'pat' on the shoulder to some men, as a sign we understand how friends behave towards each other or feel comfortable together. Indeed, this is a daily activity at Hydro.*

### **Observation/field notes June 2014**

One of the key themes emerging from the research study is the service dimension in both hotels and its relationship to individuals in the hotel societies. The different members of the management at Hilton Hotel have more than 20 years of experience within this hotel. They feel comfortable with the established culture, and have been given the task to support their service with a *personal touch*, some of the employees told, which is the co-construction. This means that the manager is acquainted with the corporate effectiveness, and it is necessary for this effectiveness to be performed and maintained as the hotel core business. It relies on the management trust and a type of service as discipline, and learned.

As the hotels revealed hospitality that refers to various practices (Pantelidis ed. 2014), the operational part is the emergent outcome of the welcoming encounters and interaction experiences between the guests and employees and between the employees and guests and customers. These interactions counterbalance togetherness in a bridging pattern of contacts and communication that adds values to the individual bonding that is taking place - in a friendly and caring way at Hydro, and more business related and drilled at Hilton. At the Hydro, using an informal and friendly language the hospitality delivery and services were performed. It is very much through the daily communications the senses of relationships

## CHAPTER SIX: CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

emerge. Several social and cultural elements are involved and as Jacques Derrida (2001) argues, 'host-guest' relations are always accompanied by tensions and calls concerning discipline, efficiency, position, status, expectations and satisfactions that have a bearing in this context. Reciprocity between those involved depends on the actually giving and taking of interactions and this process is complemented by the common social situation and the daily, enthusiastic manifestations of the hotels hospitality operations - the welcome and how the guests are reached - and their work assignments - how each hotel wants to be associated.

Accordingly, the everyday interactions between the people from the findings represent the 'permanent population', meaning the frequent, visiting guests and residents (Müller 2002). Such interactions are reflected through the understanding of the *second home / extended stay*, and the familiarisation that emerged due to lifestyle and demographic trends and components. This means that service, as the caring aspect of relationships and *friendships*, but also service as brand through *friendliness* and *second family*, as employees told, plays a central role in many of the employees' lives both in the Hydro and the Hilton hotels. The way of coming into closer relations with other people in order to initiate or construct social encounters are both intentional and welcomed. What the guests *do* concerns togetherness and this affects experiences of hospitality culture with others. The guests and employees jointly constitute these cultures. The way they conduct such activities is through eating and drinking together, being together in the same preferred environment, playing games and cards, enjoying cinema evenings together, and through companionship with other guests, visitors and employees. As some of the frequently visitors and guests at Hydro told, that they always invite friends and family to join for a cup of tea or a meal, just like they used to do earlier in life when their 'homes' were more fitting. The guests are looked after in many ways here, served and waited on, assisted and supported, and in relaxed situations where everything appeared to be under control and safe. Such is accomplished without becoming pretentious, rather by being naturally interested in the well being of their customers.

The responsiveness in the welcoming rituals underpins the sense of 'coming home' and what this metaphor signifies is what matters. As Lowenthal (1975: 6) argues "...we feel at home with new experiences [products] when their camouflage evokes the old". The experience of hospitality becomes the memory of hospitality, which those involved would

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like to achieve repeatedly. While the cultural process is complimented by the common life situations, every day is revealed as dedicated to pattern of contacts and communications. It happens when guests and employees mix within activities that suit relationships with likeminded others, such as endeavours that can be shared. This represents a caring and cordial relationship to guests and employees at Hydro.

On the other hand, this is fostered through the learned skills and work identity at Hilton. The guests' and employees' statements of *belonging* have been evidenced and closely bound up with work environments in which they spend more time than at home, and that the hotels represent 'second home' and 'second family', respectively. These influences enable the participants to establish assort of bonding. It is worthwhile to work in such places, and it means something to either guests or colleagues, or both these social groups in the hotel. Through friendships it is possible to construct long relational contacts illustrated in the analysis of Hydro Hotel, and that friendliness reveals *happy moments* and constitute better life.

The interactions at Hilton reveal sociocultural relationships of control. Such social patterns alter between shared understanding and mutual respect within a social group. Furthermore, there is a dynamic and exciting business programme between the two *Visions* presented in the analysis at Hilton Hotel. The hotel social groups, thus, vary from one big event or organised conference with negotiated themes to another more leisure related entertainment. This reflects the dynamic human behaviours and human distinctiveness as dedicated and with personal skills in the cultural co-constructions. Guests and employees are inspired to make contact with each other. The culture provides the tangible and intangible space for interactions, personal conversations and business exchange, which are useful to people visiting these two hotels. As such, this reflects the findings in relation to the literature review and the key concepts. The everyday life in the two hotel cases, therefore, represent the hotels' practices together with the participants from the hotel societies that co-construct and share this sociocultural world. It also conveys the meaning of culture and what hospitality culture do with hospitality societies in hotels, although in different ways and through individual experiences of what hospitality means to them.

Literally, theoretical scrutiny and the interpretive analysis have provided interesting insights into the hotel societies. Again, these two hotels, through the collections of empirical data, revealed characteristic, customised practices at the Hydro Hotel and at the

## CHAPTER SIX: CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Hilton Hotel. Aspects that were pointed out at the outset in the *Introduction* of this research, hint at to what to expected to be found, and therefore, required and looked for in the literature from the start of this research journey. Close relationships and individual lifestyles are evident too. Guests enjoy their time at these hotels. They find the social life both interesting and relaxing and are regular guests and customers. The hotels' organisation and infrastructure both connect and divide the participants as members of the hotels' societies. The friendliness and inclusivity provided different activities, which sometimes also included the researcher:

*A younger woman came up to me to bring with her the two gentlemen who were talking to me about where I would go or if I could join them. "We don't know where we are going. It is something about a train and it is very exciting," we all laughed. He looked happy and went quickly out with his companion. She happens to be leader of this group, and she said:*

**Observations spring 2015**

We have a special arrangement for these people today. We bring them down here from a charity care organization and in here to give them a week of holiday, and then we take them out in the daytime to give them some good experiences, let them see something else, have a good meal and feel that they have a relationship with others. They really enjoy themselves and everybody is happy, as you can see...

**Conversation with event leader Spring 2015**

Such activities happen on regular basis at Hydro Hotel and the 'add fuel' to diverse performances and offer the opportunity for guests and visitors to the hotel to meet old friends as well as make new ones. As such, the social living and the cultural life entail the continuation of individual life. Activities like these are popular and highly recommended by many guests here. Furthermore, it is possible to go on living just as 'home', as stated by guests, or continue a corporate belonging where benefits go beyond commercial issues to affiliate business values through co-constructions of common cultural experiences. In this way, these co-constructed performances add values to daily lives. Visiting hotels confirm the wish to relax, to enjoy and be taken care of, and at the same time to experience local traditions, 'see the social world', be in the world, and take part in social activities between guests and employees, as vital parts of their own social life.

In the Hydro, the guests and visitors find common interests in the socialisation that occurs, and it evolves a sense of affinity with the hospitality culture of the Hydro. The guests and employees have established an environment with feelings of shared culture that support a

## CHAPTER SIX: CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

meaningful life to both groups as they have things in common, and stories to share and recall. The flow of people in the hotel, guests constantly coming and going, underlines the dynamic of life here and visualises human lifestyles and snapshots of particular lived worlds in public spaces.

Moreover, culture is a context (Geertz 1973), and is, therefore, something within which the social processes are understood to be concerned with empirical meaning and content. The cohesive range of types of guests in hotels, and the relationships further moulded into friendships with employees and the friendliness supported among employees as a work force, bring harmony and give rise to personal involvement and individual growth. Such is the cultural match where most guests fit in, as the following situation highlights:

*I was told when I ordered a pot of tea that Hydro holds Weddings nearly every Saturday during the summer. Two of the niche lounges are reserved for the wedding guests and the employees have now supported the spaces with wine on trays ready to be drunk, and small bites, nibble and chips. The main lounge is full of hotel guests and visitors, as the Bride and Groom came down the stairs from the first floor wedding ceremony. The duty manager of the evening suddenly walked by my observation spot with a hoover and went upstairs. The floor was covered with some glittering bits, and some of the guests had them glued to their legs. Both the DM and the GM were carrying down the special wedding decorated chairs from the first floor, where the wedding ceremony had taken place. People are sitting down now and spreading around in the reserved lounges and a separate part of the Conservatory into the garden. Many other guests are entering and all are moving around through the main lounge, into the Bar and Crystal Restaurant. Employees are rapidly walking to and from inclusive the Restaurant manager Rose and the GM. The GM also spent some time with the visitors whom he seemed to know, sitting down for a while with them in the main lounge.*

### **Observations from field notes Spring 2015**

According to Cameron et al. (1999), who claim that by any definition neither identity nor cultures are single concepts: “they both evoke a group context” (1999: 226). Consequently, culture implies a sharing with others and may also be seen as shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, and expectations that knit together a community, society or group, as manifested in the two hotels. Hofstede & Hofstede (2005: 48) speaks

## CHAPTER SIX: CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

of the term ‘the collective programming of the mind’ as being similar to Bourdieu’s (1987) concept of ‘habitus’. It evolves as a system, which is collective, orchestrated, permanent but also transferable in this context. So it bestows something positive. The service system constructs bonding between employees. Even more, it stimulates teamwork and work identity as the excerpt from a member of Hilton management illustrates below.

KL: *How important is the hospitality culture and how is it important?*

OM: Yes, it is important. Hospitality, it is a part of human life. It is a part of society and social life if you think of societies, the bible, yeah, of the distinctive tread they all mentioned as of the kindness and politeness and taking care of other people, distinguishing a person from the animal, not...the fact that you are there to be open and to receive other people in terms of giving hospitality and not expecting anything in return...

I think there is a sense of safety in it because we think of hospitality as having an element of shelter in it, right, but also providing food for instance, it is a broad concept is it not...

The true thing is that it is more than giving and receiving, it is giving without expecting anything in return. It is also national, it is a broad aspect. I am talking very big now... thinking of hospitality from a national aspect of interactions, but also from an international level, acceptance and tolerance... in other words ...

I think hospitality is an instrument that contain peace – world peace - I am thinking big now, I think it is that important ... yeah...

**Semi-interview with OM Autumn 2015**

This does not mean that employees at Hilton Hotel belong to a group identity, but it might suggest that the group, through the strong focus on branding, connect with the image of *who we are and what we stand for* as in the identity thinking. Excellent illustrations are provided in literature, for example, with group identity of chefs and their self-esteem, waiters and out-groups (Palmer et al. 2010; Cameron et al. 1999; Mars & Nicod 1984). These ‘illustrations’ point at culture as also included for those who have their work within. For example, like Chefs in kitchen culture, but also in other hotel operations, such as events and conference areas. Personal involvement and engagement acquire personal skills and genuine interests and thus, might include and exclude. The language used within groups might divide other groups in the same working environment.

Logically, individuals affiliated to a group have a stronger attachment to that group, either a trusted staff member or an employee’s emotional attached to work. As a result, whether

the hotel practice is felt as commercial, a theatre or co-constructed culture, it also permits brief encounters that handle characteristic social situations with the public world that shape and create new hotel experiences in the moment of co-constructed performances. This is the synergy of hospitality culture.

#### **6.4. Co-constructed performances**

Moments of ‘togetherness’ in both hotels revealed a ‘sense of home’, and this part will draw on analytical diagrams that illustrate the overarching theme and sub-theme in both hotels. These are presented earlier in this research study in the analysis of Hydro and of Hilton and, in reflection of the hotel findings they accentuate the *spirit* of hospitality (Brotherton 1999; Botterill 2000; Molz and Gibson 2007b; Pantelidis & Wrobel 2008; Enz 2012; Lynch et al. 2011; Bell 2011). Throughout the thesis, the focus has been on the social process of co-construction and where, in the public spaces in the hotels fieldwork, it had the necessary conditions and the facilities to initially emerge.

For some of the employees, the pride of being valued in order to support the individual service to and with guests is highly appreciated among the front staff at the Hilton. Use of native language (other than English) in interactions with international guests was acknowledged as a hotel resource. Because the interactions with guests at the Hydro were given more time, the contacts between those involved became easier and more personal to initiate. However, both hotels have an equal understanding of the employees as vital hospitality ‘constructors’ and are valued by the hotels’ managements.

Still, within the practical hotel teamwork at Hilton Hotel, the social processes also include challenges, and it is clear that emotional operations (Hochschild 2003; Goffman 1959; Turner 1974, 1987), such as performances related to who we are and how we present ourselves to people we do not know (Pine and Gilmore 1998; Delaney 2011; Lugosi 2014), personal engagements (Dikeç 2002) and commitments (Lugosi 2009, 2014), are not always straightforward. As once argued by Mars and Nicod (1984) that public places, as hotels, are suitable for social interactions and cultural encounters, which represents a vital part of modern social life. Similar statements have been noted by Bell (2007; Pantelidis and Wrobel 2008; Duncan et al. 2013), that hotels function as a commercial space and as a collection of mundane moments of togetherness. According to Dregen, ‘public places are

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the physical locations where we learn to live with strangers' (2008: 23). Places are thus the medium, the communication and meaning of cultural life (Anderson 2010). People can come and go in *public areas* in hotels, as they please. Correspondingly, hotels are not assumed to be public places where people only live their lives, although in this investigation, some do just that.

It has been argued here that the hotel as such, is known as the icon of the hospitality industry, and there is a different and new 'opinion' of hospitality, as stated by Botterill (2000). As previously noted, this includes the hospitality industry as a working place with justifications of hospitality as a social construct. Many social structures and traditional working practices in hotels have changed substantially. For instance, they are considered here in conjunction with cultural lifestyles and the way guests and visitors want to go on with their lives for personal reasons (Anderson 2010). The meaning of experiences becomes an everyday experience in a public space. In public places like hotels it is possible to walk in and sit down for a while (Oswell 2006). It represents the sociocultural behaviour that emerges influenced by people one does not know. They are adjoining each other in hotels and also visitors for a while. These activities, behaviours and ephemeral encounters constitute the social culture. It is also possible to imagine and behave differently from home, because you are and due to the fact a 'stranger', other people do not know your identity, or who you are. So one can act, play or perform another self.

The employees revealed that the working environment had become *them*. They belonged here, had bonded with their social work and teamwork, and with the culture they co-constructed with guests and colleagues. Employees, particularly the front staff, who aim to create a shared attitude and coherent experiences in the Hilton Hotel, share the culture of effect, efficiency and discipline. The cultural attitude is also learned through teamwork as a socialisation process in itself. Thus, their self-esteem and self-respect is strengthened and have developed alliances and social balance between them.

These social 'constructions' contribute to personal identity and affect the employees. Underlining the point that characterises the way in which hospitality culture is co-constructed, (in terms of the comprehension of representing a well-known hotel brand) it is not about how employees position and understanding themselves that is important, rather it is how the brand is understood by '*Others*' that is of more concern. Being dedicated to the disciplined service of *co-construction* work in this way strengthens the image of the hotel,

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and so the satisfaction of being part of this work and culture increases too. It is the teamwork, then, that sets the premises of control, and reveals how joint work, supportive work within the work force, emerges during everyday encounters with guests and individual behaviours.

The Hydro effect of the interactions and social contacts with guests revealed its own characteristics. Yet, just as valuable as it is related to the passionate caring service the employees perform and deliver every day, it also has a strong influence on relaxation and well-being with the guests and visitors. Evidence shows that relationships and close friendships with guests over time have established an inviting comfort to many people visiting this hotel. The tangible and sensible hospitality have become the socio-cultural symbol of this hotel.

Co-construction in terms of interactions between the employees and guests was the most obvious activity identified through observations. All the participants involved in the research at Hydro agreed to the emerged overall theme that service provided here, has a strong bearing on human caring. This hotel is a relatively small and independent hotel, and as a contrast to the Hilton hotel, the employees and the discrete management provide time, a lot of time, to guests and visitors, in order to interweave the social bonding and connect with the hotel's location and social space. The concept of co-construction becomes purposeful to the service and hospitality culture – to the hospitality society in this hotel. In other words, co-construction of hospitality culture has turned out to be purposeful to both guests and employees and that is especially true during the interviews with local residents and was evident when there was a chance to communicate with the regular guests who have used the hotel for many years.

The bases of personal contact occur as a part of normal everyday life and they influence how the Hydro, as a hotel, handles its guests with a personal engagement similar to the 'home' culture. This gives the guests the time they need to carry out the tasks they came for in the first place. For example, eating and relaxing are central activities during the day, and this is a pattern that takes place every day in all public places in this hotel. The employees are alerted and they take care of the guests as in a private home, when, and in the way, they arrange the afternoon of game activities and playing. They perform this in a manner that is friendly and engaged and in the way it relates to conversations between the parts one finds in more private spheres. It explains why guests feel comfortable and further

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allows guests to be themselves, to sit down as long as they please and be served whenever they choose to have a meal or a cup of tea, either inside or outside in social situations. The hotel guests and visitors join in the diverse hotel programs, and the selection and opportunities vary from early afternoons with movies, to modest piano ‘concerts’ held by one of the guests. As a supplement to this, there is entertainment ranging from dinner music from the ‘old days’ in the main lounge to bigger arrangements on the house ... ‘it is our favourite days here’, as stated by many guests. Films and movie sessions take place where the employees sit or transform one of the large niche areas connected to the main lounge into a cinema space. The film menu is displayed on a stand in the main lounge and it is possible to choose when to watch and enjoy films.

These activities are popular for guests staying at the hotel for a longer period of time too. They have something to look forward to, and they come together with other guests for joint pleasure and interactions with common interests. This also attracts local residents to enjoy afternoon tea and finalise the visit by watching a film together with friends and relatives before they leave. Activities can, on many occasions, take the form of excursions, such as a day trip by bus with their own guide to visit attractions external to the hotel. Hence, guests’ behaviour leads to contacts with other guests and, even more often, communication with the employees as the most common routines. They share everyday experiences as mutual values of togetherness, and sometimes they keep their conversations going for hours, both with other guests and with employees joining in between working duties. Since the majority of the guests at Hydro are retired people from the whole region, as well as from abroad, activities are suitable for some although, it appeared to be a sort of entertainment to others. Activities in this hotel (Hydro) must be understood as an *active* form of engagement joining in play, game and conversations with others. While entertainment relates to *passive* behaviours and attitudes like sitting and watching other guests and be waited on.

Some guests are offered special care and treatments in order to establish well-being conditions and a safe and comfortable zone for them. Others are more in need of assistance with aid instruments, like wheelchairs or walking chairs, and still others stay at the hotel on a permanent basis. Behaviour between employees shows that social and cultural consciousness has a relational influence regarding employees working together in teamwork, and age play a certain role in the co-construction of hospitality culture at

Hydro. In spite of the challenging work and emotive social elements, the hospitality work is meaningful work, and the employees behave by showing permeating perceptions of satisfaction, and with the opinion that it is significant work to them. The relationships are so strong among many employees and guests that the sense of being 'home' comes naturally. Consequently, these conscious social activities reflect one important part of the service as being that of caring, and the process of hotel practices that manifests the hospitality culture in the Hydro.

This is what the employees provide. In this way, it is observable that employees understand their work as well as the hotel practices, and understand what kind of challenges their work might confront. It also is believed that it is vital to put oneself at the service of others, as found in the earliest forms of hospitality (Santich 2007; Hochschild 2003). Guests and visitors that come to the Hydro Hotel seem to like to join in with 'strange' others, sit down with a cup of tea and listen to conversations while waiting for relatives or friends, or just enjoy the feeling of 'being in the world'. The hotels with employees that want to work in an establishment operating within a social richness (a constant flow of guests and visitors) normal to hotels, and with people offering a hospitable mind and personality and diverse levels of hospitality (Bell 2007; Lugosi 2014), mirror the explosion of urban lifestyles witnessed in recent years.

Hotels, particularly through their service, social programs and growing focus on food traditions, are attractive meeting places. Likewise, Hydro Hotel represents the way hotels and attractive hospitality venues are ranked as desirable, and based on the lifestyle designs offered here. In many ways, they are displayed as a cultivating part of the modern social life we are currently witnessing.

### **6.5. Hospitality culture**

Many aspects of social co-construction of hospitality culture have emerged through the analysis; however, regardless of this impact, the key thematic elements central to the conceptual framework of this research, namely culture, co-construction and performance, will proceed and reflect the meaning *behind* and *cause of* the making of hospitality culture.

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As an essential concern at the Hilton, language and ways of communication bring about the ‘personal touch’ among employees and appreciated as a way to change roles within the hospitality deliveries. This is what Hilton Hotel is looking for through their high quality and compulsory training of employees. The front staff, and especially the one full-time male concierge, were consciously aware of this matter and, during one of my interviews with him, and mentioned ‘flexibility’ as being a vital employee resource. The flexibility permits the non-native speaking English employees to interact and be more supportive of foreign guests and corporate customers in their own right, and call attention to indirectly join in themselves more personally with guests, and to share the same language (for example the ‘voices’ employees from Spain, Italy, Mexico, South Arabia, Finland offer). Providing diverse languages was ‘an issue’ at this hotel among the employees participating in the research, and was, thus, practised, if needed, because of the social effect and the mutual, cultural benefit it generated, in general, within the hotel society.

The *flexibility*, therefore, which these cultural dimensions provide, captures the essence of the ‘personal touch’, which the employees understand and are able to utilise and draw upon when delivering or performing individual skills. Arguably, it also serves as an added personal, cultural process appreciated by guests and valued by the hotel management. The *Co-construction the Hilton way* means that the individual way of speaking to guests becomes unique through the provision of the common language they share, and are therefore, a special and extra preference the guests highly cherished.

The hotel general manager had no problem in characterising the mood and the atmosphere of the hotel values that the employees co-constructed with guests. The reported findings also reflect the fact that the employees involved hold strong views of what is important to their work, and had significant, influential elements that affected employees’ behaviours. Some felt valued and were proud of being trusted and empowered to make their own decisions on behalf of the hotel when dealing with guests’ matters. Due to the ‘open cultural mind’ the Hilton Hotel strives to practice, and very much so through the vast informative ‘online journeying’. People are able to ‘familiarise’ themselves with the culture before they physically visit Hilton Hotel. But it is also possible for employees to be challenged by the ‘relentless march of technology’, as was reported in The Times (2016) weekly newspaper. Here, it was said, “guests want remote control of their stay,” (Ellson 2016:17). Possibilities like these are good for the guests and corporate guests likewise;

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however, they are challenging for the employees, particularly the front staffs, as they lose the possibility to be hospitable and perform ‘the best of themselves’ in the ephemeral encounters, which often occur in large hotels, as noticed by the management.

The hotel reveals the importance of rituals as routines, for example, communication forms, repeated outlines and social sayings. In contrast, the discipline stresses the more or less controlled (in contrast to spontaneous) interactions at the reception area where time and the situation play a vital part. The social bonding between employees and guests or customers is related to the Hilton hotel’s ideas of ‘diversity’. This occurs through the employees and the hotel experience providers and performers of personal touch at deliveries and it is to be expected in international hotel chain like the Hilton Hotel. They try to bring the hospitality culture beyond the commercial point, and move away from the metaphor of delivery into the process of hospitality as social encounters. Thus, the hotels rely both on hospitality service skills and genuine hospitableness, and following Telfer (1996, 2000): “one without the other isn’t enough”. Both are recommended for providing unique hotel experiences, but just having the right skills or right individual adjustment does not mean that one is genuinely hospitable. Indeed, knowledge about both hospitality as a service culture and hospitableness as personal skill and individual characteristic would be helpful to the co-constructions and performances of hospitality culture.

Hospitality encounters with a sense of willingness to co-construct, to consume and enjoy the sociocultural environment, give the Hilton Hotel a position of place identity in and belonging to the city of Brighton. Furthermore, within the context of belonging and place identity, as noted by Andrews & Leopold (2013), are the narratives and stories that festivals and events bring to the fore. These bring people together to share experiences and activities that are easy to remember and recall as meaningful to the community, or, in this case, to the hotel society. As such, public spaces should enable hotel guests and corporate customers to aid the development of place meaning.

Additionally, public spaces are not pre-given but come about, or are co-constructed, through the dynamic interplay of core elements (social interactions, personal engagement, locations of places and the time of occurrence) that give insights into the nature of social and cultural relationships (Lefebvre 1991). What matters is the current form of co-construction at the Hilton Hotel and the everyday behaviours and human activities as vital and which bond the gap concerning service delivery as the hotel practices and the socio-

cultural co-constructed performances. The hotel sets the stages and the roles are handed out to ‘those’ who want to partake.

*Social scenery and characteristics of playtime and showtime*

The cultural influence is particularly visible in the co-construction of hospitality as well as in its performance, when, to borrow a term from Goffman (1959), the image of ‘self’ appears. Goffman (1959) suggests on the one hand the self is entirely a social product, with no underlying personal core. On the other hand, he presents a dualistic image of self, when he argues that there is an unsociable component to the ‘self’ that drives the individual into and out of social intercourse and sometimes urges the individual to behave in ways outside social norms. Social situations, also in many ways described and developed by Goffman (1959), link the self to others’ impressions of themselves, shaping themselves in much the same way as they would with a character or putting on a role in a theatrical production, supported by relationships, an audience, and within acceptable social orders.

This is a passion for hospitality as a culture that goes well with the one found at Hilton Hotel, where the hospitality culture conveys a civilised, cultivated and learned experience. At the hotels, the Hydro Hotel revealed that service deliveries and hospitality performance aim to provide happiness for guests and, therefore, place the social emphasis on pleasure. Here, the happiness is not related to moments of hospitality, rather it concerns a lifestyle, meaning a relaxed and comfortable life in a caring establishment, where it is possible *to go on with one’s life* without frustrations. Whether the hotels are experienced through service as discipline in a cultivated form, or service as caring where social relations are part of the hotel practices, it comes in different and often passionate ways. These hotels illustrate the uniqueness of the meaning of hospitality culture on their own terms. Though, hospitality as a social process can be performed in co-constructing, creating and moulding modern life and attractive social lifestyles for people who wish to join or participate.

The social scenery comes forward as the ‘field of actions’, and counts as a metaphor of performance in *Showtime* at the Hilton. This is represented in various forms of consumption and is closely related to events with imagination and special conferences with a theme. It is a way of going beyond its commercial image as mentioned earlier, by offering performances as a way of hosting. The attention includes services to guests during

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the events, and combines educational experiences and important social business issues in a message-form that have an emotional and entertaining appeal significant to corporate customers present at venues. As such, performance as a hosting process also bonds the gap between hospitality deliveries as this hotel practice. Moreover, it co-constructs hospitality culture engagements using the spirit of the hospitality society. Performance as social activity also occurs between and amongst the corporate customers, particularly when they are hotel guests (they stay over night(s), have more time with employees and other guests), and spending personal time during the conferences within this hotel. Activities that happen and emerge during large conferences and events stimulate acting out of normal behaviours, and, as such, picture *Showtime* as the social situations at any time in public space here. This is also illustrated in the analysis among arbitrary guests and, therefore is evidenced.

In addition, being professional encompassed a range of activities. It involves wearing the right clothes at conferences as a code or form of socio-cultural etiquette. The differences in the costume of front staff are different from that of waitresses and waiters. Normally, the event leaders at Hilton Hotel are young females, either trained as employees and front staff members or hired from outside as agency leaders for special conference occasions. They all wear dresses, high heels and discrete makeup as the correct costume for these arrangements. This clearly illustrated the idea of an informal context of performing and showtime in combination with ordinary formal structure and corporate business arrangements. Seen from another vein, it signals a patriarchal system where corporate partners and conference delegates mostly are middle-aged men. The co-construction between the hotel management and the corporate customers affects the whole event and practices limited access to those other than conference delegates and business partners involved in the *showtime*. The social situations found at the Hydro included 'everyone' and *all* guests who wanted to join in with *Playtime*. It represented daily interactions at the hotel and the relaxed activities staged for these purposes. In the hospitality society, all the guests and visitors were welcomed to join in.

### *The search for meaning in hospitality culture*

The previous section has critically discussed the different hotel practices and different management structures through the concept of co-construction. Thus, distinctive

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hospitality cultures have emerged during the analysis in the two hotels in the research study of Hydro Hotel and Hilton Hotel.

This section will reflect on public locations of performed and role-shifting characteristics, and also here referring to the findings in the two hotels. However, it is now clear that through the interviews with general managers and trusted employees in both hotels, they are enthusiastic with the social aspects in their everyday practices that move toward a consciousness of co-constructed performances in English hotels. A forceful and convincing culture is manifested in the passion for hospitality as a culture verified every day. It also seems that hospitality is somehow inherent in human nature, as it pertains to work that offers dedicated and mindful hospitality. It also looks obvious that the hotel societies, which are involved and concerned, also are addicted to and dependent on such human behaviour and empathy that support this 'life-quality'.

Employees perform this through their interaction and by seeking engagements and activities at work. In public places like hotels, where sociocultural actions unfold and where the complexity of culture related to hospitality is *civilised* in terms of the process of hospitality because of what happens with the people as a result of reciprocity in hospitality culture (Delaney 2011), - are expected and accepted. Participants involved in this research study are transformed through its co-construction. The social situations affect those who engage in social scenery as a way of social living. Sometimes these situations were observed and sensible. Hospitality culture is intertwined with the nature and the hotel architecture. The design of hotels social surroundings, cultural materials and artefacts attract some individuals and, as such, they become their window out into the social world they like to be in. Social places like current hotels, as expressed by the guests and employees themselves provide the opportunity to connecting oneself, also to the status and culture that reflects personal status and showing one's identity. The hospitality society and the characteristics support the 'self' and the civilised moods play a dominant role in attracting, bonding and constructing the culture of favourite to those who visit such selected hotels.

With regards to employees, working as team and supporting each other as a good hospitality strategy ensured good contact with the management through the daily information given to employees. Based on such activities tied together, the right attitude and things to do to bring the hotel practice forward. The findings show that making of

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friends from ‘strangers’ or people you do not know in the first place (Selwyn 2000), are in line with the understanding of hospitality that serves as one means of articulating social structures in this context. Which again means that social activities negotiated and voluntarily entered into, are designed to enhance the mutual well-being among employees at work and are further ‘sprinkled down’ to guests, visitors and corporate customers as evidenced in this research.

Public areas at the Hilton obviously stimulate the activities of acting and showing the ‘self’ and infringe the sociocultural public order by using the ‘open mind’ policy at the Hilton. The hotel’s allowance to enter the stage of performances and dramaturgical scenes are linked to the wide range of social and cultural diversities that are appreciated as one of the sociocultural resources at this public place. The diverse nationalities the employees bring to the fore, and the languages they are able to provide to guests and corporate customers, are highly valued and sustain the feeling of co-construction in a wider sense. Because of this, these findings bind the employees together in teamwork, where they can perform service and deliveries they are alone required to do, meaning that each individual employee adds unique value to their hotel workforce and is consciously respected. Indeed, based on such hospitality, the *personal touch* brings added value and becomes beneficial to the hotel experience to the guests too. The interactions are memorable, worthwhile to be remembered as experiences that are alternated in the guests and corporate customers’ mind, and they come year after year to join in with events and conferences of different kinds in this hotel.

In addition, the findings of the analysis point to the importance of conceptualising the co-construction and performance of hospitality culture, a social construct that is reflected through the responses from the participants dealing with the dynamic culture and through the corporate leisure encapsulated in the everyday operational life in the Hilton Hotel. Based on performances, this comes into everyday life through a spectre of ‘languages’ in interactions and engagements, as discussed in the present chapter. The central group of themes implemented in the sub-themes illustrate this relevance by accentuating the employees’ relationship to the Hilton hotel’s organisational strategy.

In consequence, the management at the Hilton hotel practises a training program that is mandatory to all the employees in the first year and comes in the form of a commitment between the single employee and the management and as a code of conduct in the hotel

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that separates rules and mutual agreements. The willingness to involve the front staff into feeling empowered, identifies a feeling of motivation for work itself, and gives them the courage to make their own decisions in everyday challenges with guests and visitors. Furthermore, this is a bottom-up way of leadership that values trust and reliability between the parts, rather than coming from top-down frameworks (Lugosi 2003).

As far as the Hydro, the management and all the employees know and understand how to be responsible for a guest's happiness. This means understanding the guest's requirements, not only what is appropriate, but also how it should be presented and delivered. The staffs at the Hydro hotel know this. They offer service and relationships with guests that give great pleasure to the guests because they deliver it generously and flawlessly, they know how to please the guests and are aware 'when guests are paying for hospitality, generosity is what they are willing to pay for' (King 1995, Santich 2007).

Thus, the hospitality culture is distinct for each hotel because both hotels cater to different needs and wants. This explains why the meaning of it is synonymous with lifestyles and worldviews, as well as to the metaphorical elements that represent the stages in life the user and visitors of the hotels belong and/or feel devoted to. Such is identified as the caring aspect that attracts so many retired people to the Hydro hotel.

At the intercommunicating level in the single hotel, the social behaviour amidst employees and the guests has developed into relationships and, in some relations, into familiarisations, when employees have a genuine respect for their guests as if in close friendships. Hospitality culture is distinct and to quote Telfer (2000), where "pleasure and welfare, for its own sake, is predominant." What the guests are looking for and have come to experience is highly appreciated at Hydro Hotel, and are the intangible values associated with human exchange. These are values such as having time to interact and communicate, enjoying the friendly and comfortable surroundings, and having the time and abilities to be oneself and go on with your life, as if in your own home.

The daily pattern identifies that employees are predisposed to work together in terms of supporting each other and operating as a team in relation to the emotional involvement with guests and individuals that actually live in the hotel. Current practices manage different tasks at the same time with respect to an open public space that includes access to all public area is, thus, one in which it is convenient to move around and monitor the

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safeness and well-being of the guests. This is one of the main characteristics at the Hydro. As such, the hospitality as a culture is sensed and felt in the form of social behaviours that influence the way people live their lives, what they prioritise and where they want to spend their time.

The differences between the guest segments are obvious, and hotels are ideal for observing hospitality culture in public areas – where we acknowledge that the flow of people is dynamic and constantly shifting. Hilton, with such a challenge as working with two visions, illustrates how the hotel would like to appear and be perceived, and how it sees its own position as being related to the value adding that is so important in the social world. The management takes these perceptions and interpretations seriously and this has a strong bearing on employees, work performance and their interactions with employees and guests, guests and corporate customers.

The initial observations were challenging to grasp in terms of how to write down the ‘feel of the place’; the contrasts between the crowded and busy periods, with the constant flow of guests and visitors, and the long hours with no guests, and empty public spaces was quite confusing. The ‘inviting comfort’ clearly felt at Hydro, which is very much related to the soft carpets in the public area that resulted in soft sounds, became totally different in the hard-sound setting of the Hilton. The floors in Hilton public areas, for example, are of stone and polished floors and those result in the echoing ‘noise’ of shoes and the wheeling of luggage carts meeting the hard surface as people walked through the hotel. Interesting here, is the tangible confirmation of effectiveness. Others just sit down in the bar area for a drink and relax for a moment. This is characteristic of Hilton hotel, and it is illustrated here through the design and logistics how the hotel is arranged around the effective service delivery in the reception area. This business hotel, and the brand within Hilton Hotel & Resort, represents a hotel that communicates to people who come to this hotel through the use of open space and literally open doors, and place where you can experience and also *sense* the historical atmosphere of ‘grandeur’ architecture combined with modern design. One visual part of the ‘welcoming taste’ is also young employees and apprentices alike in formal dark blue suites, helping each other out with daily operational activities at the reception desk, positioned directly inside the main entrance, where the disciplined service is delivered and is the first meeting with the hospitality culture. The glimpse of fresh flower arrangements and artistic furniture (art nouveau chairs with velvet colours and

abstract patterns) in the background brings about the mix of social materials underlining the diverse impressions the hotel brand stands for and signifies. For all these associations, the human side of hospitality is at least as important as the material components: the provision of food, beverages and accommodation. Hence, they also expose their genuine and sincere hotel *message* within various training options to employees.

### **6.6. Chapter Summary**

Chapter Six has examined the findings presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five with the aim of making sense of the meaning and the complexity in hotels related to co-constructions and performances of hospitality culture, in two different hotel societies. The investigations were carried out in two different locations on the Southwestern coast of England. The interpretative approaches adopted in this research study reveal two significant themes and six vital subthemes.

In the research study, the concern of co-constructed performances in sociocultural interaction was the most important activity that provided significant hospitality culture in both hotels. However, it took form in characteristic ways and with different purposes, and must be seen as a unique social form related to each hotel. More specifically, an overarching theme that emerged in the two distinct hospitality cultures: *Second home/Extended family* at the Hydro Hotel and *Corporate leisure* at the Hilton Hotel, made this co-construction observable and sensible. Both the main themes are fundamentally related to the visions and missions presented online at the Hilton. The strategic actions and messages delivered as corporate actions and collaborations provide a strong culture of commitment and work possibilities to employees, and business opportunities to corporate partners and customers at the Hilton. The Hydro Hotel operates their hospitality practices as a caring and emphatic culture, which includes the employees and guests, visitors and permanent guests, as a way of social living in this friendly hotel, as meaningful lives. Personal engagement is a key term in gaining the desired hospitality culture aimed for in both hotels.

In terms of consent and ability to individually handle and solving guests needs and wants on the one hand, and to ‘see’ the guests and be engaged in the daily encounters on the other, personal skills and innate characteristics have significant meaning in recruiting

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employees and in training and taking care of the workforce. Many of the employees felt proud of being part of the management team at Hilton and being trusted employees at Hydro. These co-constructed performances, which resulted in friendships and relationships beyond the usual, reflect a high focus on hospitality culture that is closely connected to the passion of their service deliveries in these two hotels. Such has been revealed in this chapter, through the six subthemes of *Service as Brand*, *Service as discipline* and *Showtime* at the Hilton and *Service as caring*, *Playtime* and *Inviting comfort* at the Hydro Hotel.

Indeed, the hospitality culture either disciplined or emphatically governed the need to be rooted in certain amounts of passion and meaningful working conditions, which both the hotels provide. They 'see' their resource, the social human influence, as the strongest influence when it comes to making the hospitality culture as valuable to 'others'. After all, it must be useful and serve the purpose of the guests. In terms of the familiar ways of relationships between employees and guests and the caring aspects as illustrated in the analysis as meaningful work, and from an emphatically point of view, the Hydro hotel governs their guests and visitors. The well-being perspective in public areas has a central function to guests and visitors as a window out into the social world. It is also illustrative of hotel managements' reflections that the public mood and the public meaning, the flow of diverse guests and visitors, search for and want to enjoy hotel experiences different from elsewhere. Personal emotions at work are not unknown to hospitality workers, namely, being there for others, serving, helping and doing so with a smile. This has been recognised as some of the most valuable components in this industry, if not the most valuable.

The Hilton Hotel has a complex set of missions and operates with two visions that are quite complicated and demanding to employees and members of the management. The Hydro Hotel has a different vision, however: emotionally challenging work; dealing with guests and visitors of demographic relations; and regarding local residents and regular dwellers as being in need of extra services. In spite of the stressful tasks mentioned here, employees and guests find the hospitality culture attractive and worthwhile to work for. To conclude this thesis, Chapter Seven provides this study's contribution to knowledge and mentions further areas of research that this research identified.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

### 7.1. Introduction

Based on the co-construction and performance processes of hospitality culture, the daily practices conducted in the hotels convey particular forms of hospitality culture that are visible to guests and customers, understandable to employees, and acknowledged by the hotel managements. The conclusions from this research study reveal hospitality culture in the hotels to be a social co-construction. It is the result of both enduring sociocultural relations and hotel practices over time. From a coherent pattern of public encounters, such hospitality culture ends up enabling and facilitating strong relationships between employees and guests. The important and major findings are related to the general perception of the hotels as being either *second home/extended family* or *corporate leisure*, as well as involving the hotel societies with respect to both Hydro Hotel and Hilton Hotel, correspondingly.

The way to understand hospitality culture and what constitutes its meaning have been of interest here. The aim of the research was, thus, to explore and analyse the co-constructions and performances of hospitality culture in English hotels. Therefore, also of interest are the spontaneous and varied social interactions and social activities that took place between guests and visitors and the employees in two selected hotels. How hospitality culture is co-constructed and comes-into-being is very much a relationship between employees and guests, between corporate customers and members of the managements, and between guests and guests, and their willingness to contact each other for more than just booking in at the hotels and checking out of the hotels. Thus, the core of co-construction is the ‘nature’ of interactions. Furthermore, as argued throughout, the people involved are termed *participants* – and they represent the hotel social groups – the societies in this thesis. The researcher will briefly repeat and reflect on the initial research questions in the following section.

### 7.2. Reflecting on the research questions

Within the current academic debate that views hospitality as a social phenomenon (Lynch et al. 2011), there is still limited knowledge and understanding of how this culture through

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hospitality comes into being, as previously discussed in Chapter One. The fascinating insights do provide two distinct, socially constructed hospitality cultures, which emerge due to a motivational 'push' from 'conscious management, are understood by the hotels' society. In addition, the thesis aimed to reveal deeper insights to the social aspects of hospitality and to understand more broadly the meaning of hospitality culture in public settings like hotels. The empirical findings illustrate not only the nature of the hospitality culture, but also the ways of engagement in which participants find it natural to contact 'others' and view their choice of public areas as meaningful places in which to enjoy themselves and to be seen. The research questions set out at the beginning of this thesis are:

- *How is hospitality culture co-constructed?*
- *How do the interactions between people contribute to the co-construction of hospitality culture in hotels?*

As specified in the *Introduction and rationale* in Chapter One and as is reiterated here, the aim of this thesis is to explore and analyse the co-constructions and performances of hospitality culture in English hotels. As I have already set out in the introductory chapter, there is a potential discussed by scholars and the need to raise the status of hospitality through the social lens (Lashley et al. 2007a). This has been done in order to offer a wider appreciation of the worldview related to social science and to understand the social world of hospitality culture. This investigation has focused upon two hotels in South East England and the public areas of Hydro Hotel and Hilton Hotel, and it is these hotel cases that have revealed the co-constructions and the performances of hospitality culture through empirical explorations and interpretations in this investigation. The research has offered a hermeneutically interpretive analysis of both hotels. This means that the human interactions and activities between and through the participants provided significant social behaviours that result in a comprehensive understanding of the issues involved. The methods employed in the study have concluded by giving responses to the two research questions.

Employees involved in service work and interactions are the co-constructions - the sharing and performing of culture that emerged through hospitality. These actions are more often than not, dedicated to caring and empathic behaviours related to permanent encounters with guests at Hydro, and has become a strong element of this hotel hospitality culture.

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Hydro Hotel stimulates and cause activities of engagements, where individual dealings in the co-constructed processes reflect the Hydro hospitality culture through their service as a caring performance, which results in high levels of comfort for guests and visitors. The employee practices the traditional nature of its friendly ‘yet professional service’ (as promoted in Hydro Hotel brochure (2014 page 115), and guests take part in activities and join in companionships like family members. The employees have time to talk and provide personal comments and kindly greetings in such daily encounters. These insights form the basis of the contribution to knowledge. Such interactions illustrate a deeper understanding of the value of the many relationships between employees and guests and thus, the meaning of hospitality culture. The Hydro Hotel management rely on their dedicated employees, which the management support, encourage and motivate through daily meetings and dedication to their service work. The relationships have developed into friendships in many cases, strengthening the social and cultural bonds into a sense of belonging, and thus identity. Such bonding also evidences the strong relationships through guests who have become permanent guests – for example, they live their lives at Hydro as a ‘second home’ the guests uttered in interview and informal conversation. From the literature review and emerged in the analysis home is related to personal understanding of feeling comfortable and secure (Mallet 2004), and with a benevolent touch to it. The Hydro represents an ‘extended family’ to them, and this underline the feeling of dwelling the way a home also includes a space inhabited by family and people one have established relationship with. The need for home feeling demonstrates the guests’ lifestyle choices, particularly for retired residents, and single individuals with regard to Hydro offering a better quality of life as an alternative way of living. This means that social and economic alternative found at Hydro Hotel provides a complementary quality for them to go on with their life as a ‘home’ of their own. As a result of the analysis and the research findings sketched in the previous chapter, it is now clear that the hotel provides more than a home. Employees assist and aid when necessary, they care without any worry, and they serve and wait whenever needed, which the guests, particularly those who lives in this hotel, find meaningful. The employees have and use time with hotel guests, and they find such ways of behaviour significant to themselves, feeling certain of that they really mean something to guests. Some have already been friends for a long period – in fact for years.

This is in contrast to Hilton Hotel, where the most intensive service work is efficiently performed. Control and formal dress codes are in-charge here, as a fundamental element in

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the Hilton hospitality culture. Such is encompassed and partially revealed in the ‘self’ being seen by an audience consisting of a ‘social world of strangers’. Employees are trained; know what to do, and when to do it. In this hotel, the strong commitments to the Hilton Brand perpetuate the efficient handling of guests and visitors. The hotel websites propagate Hilton hospitality culture through their *Visions* and *Mission*. The study also concludes that co-constructions as communications operate in a wider sense, and might be correct and formal in busy times, whereas more friendly and pleasing (in ways of keeping the promises as ‘being a part of the guests life’ page 161) to customers and guests alike.

Hilton’s service works comes out and performs a polished service culture, but is well understood and appreciated by the hotel society. The hospitality culture is manifested and follows through work schedules and through the type of work at the Hilton. The corporate leisure that constitutes much of the hotel’s daily life, is both appropriate and entertaining, and sometimes affects all public areas with the including social living.

The management here is strongly connected to the general manager’s skills and experiences, but is also based on trust and reliability towards the community within which the Hilton Hotel operates its business. In that respect, the Hilton GM has been given the task to put on his “personal touch” as the Hilton’s way of doing hospitality. This hotel operates with two visions and the differences between the guest segments are quite clear: The corporate customers are hotel partners and their attendance are business related, while the leisure segments visit the hotel to enjoy and experience the open hospitality space and the social acceptance offered by the hotel, combined with the complex service function and sense of freedom that goes with it.

These issues are significant and derive from employees’ personal ambitions and skills, combined with the pride of being trusted with the emerging feeling of being part of the Hilton Hotel as place-personal identity – a sensitive feeling of belonging and more than just ‘fitting in’. The employees spend extensive time at the hotel and their working team have become a ‘second family’ to them. In given situations as events, they seem to have the idea to perform in public areas, an experience between the real and the imagined, both metaphorically performed and surprisingly provided. The cultural activities are brought into being through the co-constructions as such, and argued by Andrews (2016), so engrained in the understandings of how people interact with the world.

Hilton hotel utilises these events, and thus, in many ways, addresses the fascination and *imagination* observable through the diverse population of the city of Brighton attracted to this hotel. The Hilton operates under an ‘open mind’, like an unwritten law so as to follow the social possibilities that shape and lead the social structures in the community the hotel society play a part in. Both hotels revealed hospitality cultures as contribution to ‘the good life in actual facets of social life’ suitable to most of their hotel guests.

### **7.3. Contribution to knowledge**

The contribution of the study lays first and foremost in the combination of multi-discipline theory within sociology, anthropology and geography, and with social constructions, a complementary philosophical and methodological framework that emphasises meaningful, contextual, and non-linear socio-cultural dynamics in the setting of tourism and hospitality. Second, it improves the understanding of the different roles of human spectators (guests as audience) and performers (employees as role players) of hospitality culture as a *public service work* in both caring and emotional labour and a commercial dramaturgical context. Finally, it employs the awareness of co-construction as an imperative to explore relations between different groups of the hotel society’s interactions, communications and shared activities. The confined but dynamic group of diverse individuals represent the hospitality society in each hotels, and these hospitality societies both ‘take and make’ the public social milieu and the unique culture through hospitality. This fascinating framing of people constantly flowing in and out of the hotels, change and challenge the public spaces revealing a contour connecting the mission and social condition to be balanced at each hotel.

In doing so, this research study contributes to the existing body of literature both in tourism and hospitality culture on two levels: firstly, regarding behaviour and social encounters in public spaces as a culture through which, hospitality can be experienced; secondly, in terms of hospitality culture and its development through performance and service deliveries, and hotel practices in the form of social constructions and hotel belonging. This endeavour has contributed to a deeper insight of hospitality culture and a greater understanding of the distinctive nature of co-constructed performances as significant yet underexplored. The socio-cultural public places of dwelling, experiencing

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hospitality spaces in daily life and commercial moments of leisure (Delaney 2011; Lugosi 2003; Lashley & Morrison 2000) need further investigations.

The findings reveal that the management in both hotels have a strong concern for employees. The working environments include training on a general level, depending where the employees are positioned in the organisation. Responsible employees, such as those dealing with service and guests' comfort and special needs, are particularly trained to handle emotional situations and to be able to aid and manage guests and visitors in demanding operations. However, both hotels employ dedicated employees that are skilled and who possess personal characteristics suitable to their service roles, and who are appreciated by the hotels management. This affected the management with greater willingness to support and trust responsible front staff in their general work. Several employees' merit so as to deserve and bestow working possibilities within different hotel brands in the vast hotel chain of Hilton Worldwide (2016a). Such socio-cultural behaviours are highly appreciated among apprentices in Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel's workforce.

Thus, this study should be located within the socio-cultural field of hospitality where co-constructions of sharing and 'performing' culture for 'others' have emerged. These form part of an important and interesting research field in hospitality and tourism and are seen as a social construction in the context of hotels. Research within this area is limited in terms of empirical research studies (Cockburn-Wooten & Brewis 2014; Duncan et al. 2013; Laerdal 2012; Lynch et al. 2011; Lugosi 2011, 2014a), and this investigation fills this gap. In this respect, the cultural particularities of both hotels' everyday life reveal what it is that takes place in public areas and shows how the hotel societies employ, and put into practice, the co-constructions, the contacts and communications, and the many activities that foster and manifest the hospitality culture in these settings.

Hotels are widely recognised as a convenient and preferable place to conduct arrangements, big venues, significant meetings and conferences, as well as weddings and unique 'happenings' for the same sexes. The co-construction of hospitality culture is, thus, an open process, meaning that the hotel and the employees focus on interactions as the way of life within their social groups and hotel societies. This can be seen at the reception areas and is organised, cared for and monitored through commitments and control by employees and managements, respectively, to make sure a coherent hospitality and good reputation.

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Such aspects highlight the importance of hospitality performance as these activities provide and influence the hotel practices as the culture with which the two hotels believe it important to associate their hospitality.

In line with the purposes of this research, what the co-constructions and performances of hospitality culture are understood to be, the hotels' practices are brought to everyday life in the public spaces that have been designed and become appealing for such purposes. In both hotels the employees described the hotel culture as a mostly positive process that affected their work, often in forms of friendly relationships conducted with pleasure. However, sometimes the social situations involved emotional challenges of different characters in the co-construction processes, simultaneously at the Hydro hotel as it came through, and the way it emerged at the Hilton hotel, respectively. Based on every society has developed a set of rules and human order, and through these structures, fundamental concepts such as family, familiarity, belonging, security, care, and lifestyle are all constructed and explored by individuals and groups as they experience the world around them (Goffman 1959; Van Maanen 1974; Cohen 1986), particularly the social world one shares in public relations. Indeed, this brings personal content and common understanding of hospitality meaning to their social and cultural lives.

As highlighted in the above, my endeavour to bring out the importance of my own engagements in the fieldwork, my own experiences and understanding of hotel practices, I have sought to illustrate the significance and methodological usefulness in interpretative processes and reflexive aspects employed in this thesis journey. On the one hand, hospitality is concerned with the obligations, duties and interactions between guests and hosts, in an array of settings that are principally, but not exclusively, domestic in nature. Yet, on the other, the topic of hospitality is broad in that it has been universally used to describe a cluster of commercial activities covering hotels, restaurants, bars and other organisations that provide food, drink and accommodation largely as profit-making businesses. Thus, this definition does not include the imperative human aspect as the socio-cultural platform that co-constructs hospitality culture. In the existing study, and following on from this, hotels do train and prepare people to manage hospitality businesses. According to Lashley (2014), 'it can be said to embrace both the study *of* hospitality and the study *for* hospitality occupations' and is therefore supplementary and contribute to hospitality practices but also to hospitality as a culture in this research study.

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Employment in the two hotels has consciously drawn on both the private domain as well as the commercial, public area, and in the perceived sense of commonality and harmony that ensures *togetherness* ('second home' at Hydro - 'second family' at Hilton). However, hospitality is not necessarily to be seen in terms of the total experience. The hospitality culture is context related and occurs as moments, is situational and/or design sensitive in terms of arranged social environments. Conceptually, the usefulness of the approach is the focus on the processes of co-constructions and performances as the nature of human interactions in hotel context. This research study asked how these co-constructions were performed, how these interactions between participants contributed to the hospitality culture and are found as distinct hospitality cultures in the two hotels. The case studies have been able to illustrate their hospitality cultures by the researcher's observations, informal communication and semi-structured interviews with hotel guests, employees, corporate customers and partners, and agencies as well as key members of the hotels' management, and so, answered the two research questions. Furthermore, the study of hospitality and hospitableness extends the study beyond the commercial provision to include private and 'cultural' arrangements, even if it could be argued that genuine hospitality only appears in the private space, while the commercial hospitality is limited because hospitality always comes with a cost.

However, to engage in hospitality investigation in public area in hotels, where the interactions between many different guests and hotel hosts emerge and occur every day, different culture and historical context show that the social situations for employees to protect and respect guests (strangers) is a natural 'feature of human societies throughout history and across the globe' (Lashley 2014: 3-7). Whilst I acknowledge that this research is highly interpretative, aspects drawn from other thinkers and scholars have been endeavoured and brought together to form a useful avenue to what I wanted to study.

As such I have implemented certain points to flesh out concepts, for example co-construction and performance of culture through hospitality and explored more closely related to public areas in hotels, to be able to understand new meaning and bring the research study to new insights in this context. Being conscious about this research journey on the foundations of socio-cultural approach, I have contributed to a greater clarity and a better sense of research direction, at least the depth of understanding hospitality culture than I would otherwise have done.

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Considering all this, the current study in hotels is strengthened through theoretical debates and novel critical thinking (Lugosi 2009; 2010; 2011), and these are explored and analysed for the sake of how hospitality culture is co-constructed and for the 'hidden' meaning of these social performances that have emerged. Because of the setting and the frequent guests and visitors flowing in and out of a hotel, the co-construction will continue, and new people will engage in the social conversations and activities or initiate new and shared actions. According to Hofstede, cultures do not consist of individuals; 'they are wholes' (2001: 25 [1994]). Culture, society and hospitality are all concerned with people and the everyday life in hotels.

These three aspects amalgamate with the way people socialise and why they socialise, and with whether people make contact or not. They also have an influence on the communication and exchange of cultural meanings, with networks, the establishment of relationships, and with how business is conducted. Even more, the combination or the conflation of the three aspects have an impact on the provision of different levels of service and the fulfilment of expectations, as well as on the experiences and personal interests of the guest in these settings. Hopefully, the host and guest feel a mutual embrace within the hospitality relationship. Following Lugosi (2014a) and having used hospitality as a focal point permits us to consider how themes surrounding the co-construction of hospitality culture came together, such as embodied performances, relationships, interactions, the creation of intimate space, power and inclusion/exclusion, eating and drinking together, and the ways these intersect and overlap. Thus, the co-construction is a form of communication, a process that is never completed, but is one that regenerates and goes on every day and beyond.

Grounded on the findings in the present thesis, it will be concluded in the main to favour conversational outputs and multiple conclusions (Botterill and Platenkamp 2012), in order to provide a nuanced, hermeneutical, understanding of how interactions contribute to hospitality culture in hotels. The way it is presented here is in the findings as a series of separate 'voices', and as joyful deliveries, performances, and the 'metaphors and stories' they convey. They involve the employees with the guests, and close relationships between management, employees and corporate customers as frequent businesses and community constructions (hospitality partners). The co-construction is evidenced through the bonding between key people in the hotel society who have an explicit corporate aim to 'put on a

show' or to provide a 'showtime' in which to partake. Truly, the analysis reveals motivated employees, stimulated and encouraged to keep alive and encompass the cultural values that emerge from these significant hospitality cultures.

The independent hotel is much less affected by hotel image as by Brand rules and controlled standard. Here, likeminded similar interests are enjoyed, and lack of social impediments bind the hotel society together like family members. The chain hotel is concerned with teamwork that results in corporate performances, language as a verbal hospitality resource for the hotel, and work opportunities for the employees. This leads to a feeling of usefulness and a sense of work identity and belonging. The rather dynamic processes conclude the importance of fitting in so as to be successful, and also to reflect further of this small part of understanding the meaning of hospitality culture explored and analysed as co-constructed performances in hotels.

#### **7.4. Contribution points**

Two distinctive cultures have emerged in relation to the overall aim of the thesis, and the key concepts, have invoked ontological associations with everyday life as the hotel practise in these sociocultural settings. Whilst such relations and connections are examples of meanings and individual interpretations of hospitality, they also represent contrasting views of reality, different yet interlinked elements of social processes that reflect variations in values and sensitivities in the hospitality cultures revealed in this doctoral work.

##### *Culture*

The contributions to knowledge of culture through hospitality are the symbiosis of individual co-constructions and performances of hospitality in daily social interactions revealed as togetherness in hotel societies into an appealing hospitality culture. These activities, which resulted in friendships and relationships beyond the usual, reflect a high focus on hospitality culture closely connected to the passion of service deliveries in these two hotels.

### *Co-construction*

The contribution to knowledge of co-constructions are linked to the time and social situations that occur at all times, whether planned or spontaneously acted. The co-constructions between individuals are moments of conscious human contact, which are socially significant, presenting another lifestyle or permit a form of hotel activities, which are enjoyed by others in and through sociocultural processes. Interactions illustrate a deeper understanding of the value of the many relationships between employees and guests and thus, the human meaning of hospitality culture.

### *Performance*

The contributions to knowledge are the interactions of sharing with others and performing services or social actions of empathic or dramatic behaviours related to hospitality encounters with high levels of comfort or enthusiasm to a public audience or personal expression and display.

## **7.5. Limitations, recommendations for further research**

Looking forward, there are several obvious paths for expanding upon the approach taken here. This thesis focused on the social perspective in hospitality, the issue where humans are the vital part in how co-constructed performances influence culture through hospitality. The qualitative research approach has made it possible to come closer to the participants in fieldwork and personal engagement. The limitation here is related to the case study with only two hotels in terms of the scale and scope. The recommendations for further research include an extensive approach with more hotels and different types of hotels in future studies.

Moving away from concepts often dominated by hotel-metaphors, there exists a rich stream of opportunities for future investigation that embraces host-guest relationships or various cultural perspectives. These issues and research tasks could be motivating in further projects in order to try to improve the understanding of different aspects of hospitality culture. As emphasised by Lynch et al. (2011: 4), the term ‘hospitality’

historically referred to ‘different codes of etiquette to ethical treatment of strangers to the provision of food and drink’.

Today, this is expanded into a wide series of studies examining hospitality as a culture from diverse perspectives (Lugosi 2014; Cuthill 2007; Lashley et al 2007a; 2007b; Cameron 2004), and the fact that the ‘moment of hospitality’ has the potential to happen around the dinner table in every day life. These are very interesting issues and need further investigations in order to broaden thinking and contribute to new knowledge.

### **7.6. Concluding remarks**

The traditional host-guests or service provider-consumer metaphors are replaced by a theatrical metaphor outlining a performer-spectator or actor-audience relationship instead. I would like to advocate that the social side, as well as the commercial and economic aspects, are present in the theatrical metaphor, and are bound to and interlinked in, the roots of our western civilisation. Therefore, more research needs to be provided within the cultural perspectives of hospitality studies, such as to improving ‘hospitality domains’ both commercial and public with a focus on sociocultural elements of human presences, interior designs, hospital workplaces, corporate culture, elderly homes and hospitality, and many more and different typologies of hotels. Such research studies’ approach will aim to open up the social understanding even wider, and explore the relations between: living with strangers, negotiating social ‘inclusions’ and ‘exclusions’, and the social influence of hospitality societies and diversity which, might affect public situations in hotel.

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Available at: [www.tripadvisor.co.uk](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk)

**Home-away-from-home** Available at: [www.homeaway.co.uk/](http://www.homeaway.co.uk/) (HOMEAWAY)

**Planet Earth** Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planet\\_Earth\\_\(TV\\_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planet_Earth_(TV_series))

**NatGeo Wild** Available at: <http://natgeotv.com/uk/shows/subject/wildlife>

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A – Introduction letters Hydro and Hilton

Letters made individually to each hotel with the purpose of gaining access to a meeting, presenting and discussing the research provided in the following, starting with Hydro Hotel April 2014, followed by Hilton Hotel March 2014.



**University of Brighton**



Hydro Hotel  
Mount Road, Eastbourne  
East Sussex  
BN20 7HZ

Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Att: Elaine Ward  
Personell Manager

Dear Elaine Ward.

My name is Kirsti Laerdal and I am a doctoral student at the University of Brighton. My PhD looks into the culture of hospitality and hotel spaces. My study includes a number of case studies and with your permission I would like one of these to be the Hydro Hotel.

Hopefully I will be able to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss my research and my request to focus on Hydro Hotel. In which case, please can you confirm whom I need to contact in order to make an appointment? My email adress is below.

Sincerely

*Kirsti Laerdal*

Kirsti Laerdal  
PhD Candidate  
\*\*\*\*\*

University of Brighton  
School of Sport and Service Management  
Darley Road, Eastbourne, BN20 7UR  
E-mail: k.laerdal@brighton.ac.uk  
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**University of Brighton**



**School of Sport and Service  
Management**

Professor J Doust

Head of School

Hillbrow

1, Denton Road

Eastbourne BN20 7SR

United Kingdom

Telephone ++ (0)1273 643707

**The Hilton Hotel Metropole**

Kings Road,

Brighton,

BN1 2FU

Damian Meadows

Operational Manager

Tuesday, March 4, 2014

Dear Mr. Meadows,

My name is Kirsti Laerdal and I am a doctoral student at the University of Brighton. My PhD looks into the culture of hospitality and hotel spaces. My study includes a number of case studies and with your permission I would like one of these to be The Hilton Hotel Metropole.

Hopefully I will be able to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss my research and my request to focus on The Hilton Hotel Metropole. In which case, please can you confirm whom I need to contact in order to make an appointment. My email address is below.

Sincerely

*Kirsti Laerdal*

Kirsti Laerdal

PhD Candidate

University of Brighton School of Sport and Service Management

Darley Road, Eastbourne, BN20 7UR

E-mail: [k.laerdal@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:k.laerdal@brighton.ac.uk)

Mobil: +47 93440204

## **Appendix B – Observation guide in a hotel situation**

Displays of participants/co-constructors/actors: what type of people can be identified, among guests, among employees, gender, age, nationality signs and symbols of differentiation, uniforms and particular clothing

Behaviour: How do people behave towards each other? Are they kind, concerned, attentive or caring/impolite, selfish, not interested or curious

Social interactions: who is interacting, guests and guests, guests and employees, guests meeting friend, family, blending in with other hotel guests

Body language: Ways of taking contact, smile, eye contact, gesticulations, waving hands and nodding heads, greeting and talking

Flow of people and activities: Where do guests sit down, do they move between different public spaces, do activities create spaces, when does it happen, indoor, outside, during the day, evening

The hotel design: the interior, décor, atmosphere, the organisation of public areas, the access and logistics, the size of the hotel, the number of employees

Technology: the tools to increase the 'hospitality' mood, stimulation of the senses, fireplace, food smell, flower arrangement, candle lights, background music, soft carpet, good sitting chairs

Professional (attitude) and skills: the different roles and work status, the length of working periods for employees, who are working where

Hospitality: reveals or expose societies, stories, communications, sharing, inclusions, relationships, friendship, care, safety, second home, lifestyles, knowledge, understanding, respect, politeness, memories, adventures

## **My own early reflections about the research process that goes on in hotels in Eastbourne and Brighton**

What kind of activities belongs to co-construction and culture?

The literature points at ...

Which leads toward... and participants that want to contact one another

These activities are performed and acted as a theatre with audience, that might change every day in the hotels, and might be conscious, may be with a

Purpose or not...

It can also be unconsciously and as a play or behaviour that is natural, taken for granted, and not reflected upon,

Public places are the physical locations where we learn to live with strangers' (Dregen 2008:23). Conscious hospitality culture manages just that.

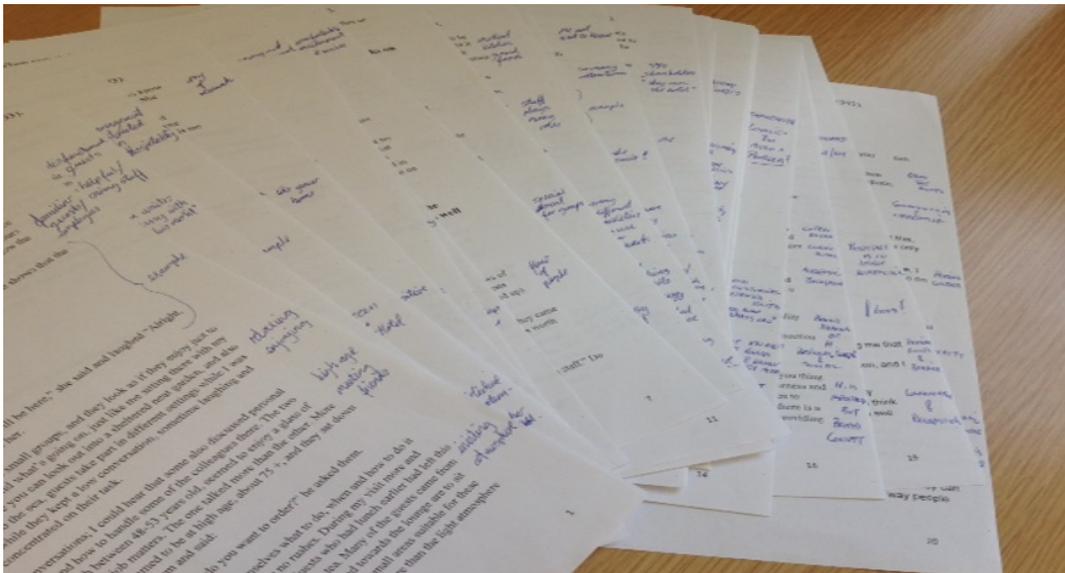
And as such informs and co-construct hospitality culture, or as a meaningful social world to work in

Hospitality is a human state of mind (Bell 2011). It manifests itself in the friendliness in human relationships and between individual encounters

This needs a method that involves a flexible, open-ended opportunistic process (Jorgensen 1999)

I did this through observations, informal conversations and open-ended questions, and the fieldwork includes four basic sequences to take further.

## Appendix C –Early coding sheets a and b



*Sheet a - Excerpt from field notes showing observation data written down and data from conversations and interviews, verbatim transcribed and early analytical sentences and memos. My analytical approach is handwritten in the margin (to the right hand side) of the sheet.*



*Sheet b - Expanded preliminary findings in terms of repeated pattern of words and sentences as meaningful statements from participants. The sheets show five different colours painted out on the early analytical themes between the observation, conversations and semi-structured interview session and on typing out (in green, pink, yellow, orange and blue).*

## **Appendix C – Early interpretive coding**

### **Early interpretive coding: extracted /abstracted concepts from empirical materials**

HYDRO HOTEL

#### **Co-Construction**

Familiar interactions

Hospitality focused management (service minded)

Established relationships

Guests live their life here

Guests take a nap just like home

Comfortable environment

Relationship (staff and guests)

Friendship (way of social contact and use of language)

Take care of guests

Friendly staff

Events simultaneously with daily activities

Guests can go on with their lives

Parallel social settings

Staffs know what a regular guest wants

Popular for club- and small events

‘Second home’

The staffs like their jobs

440 shareholders

Shareholders run the hotel

Many live here

Hospitality is an important part of human life

Like to deal with people

Hospitality only experienced through your guests

Many types of guests  
Hospitality comes from committed staff  
People make the difference  
Treat the guests well to return  
See the guests  
Hospitality is more than service  
Create good experiences  
Understand people's need  
Read the guests  
Our guests know us, and we know them  
Regular place for locals  
Welcoming and repeated visits  
Both social and serious  
Big family  
Home feeling  
Initiative interaction from staff  
Good communication  
Daily operational meeting with all staffs  
Some staffs have been here too long ...  
Loyalty  
Staffs know what guests wants/ know who they are  
Positive also towards new staff  
Hospitality is training and braining brand  
Staffs have team spirit

### **Public Space**

Elderly people mostly need room  
Attractive architecture  
Dysfunctional guests  
Easy access for guests

Constant flow of people and splendid location  
Safe environment  
Special arrangement  
Staffs play many roles  
Many different facilities  
Main lounge most attractive  
Staffs have full control over public areas  
Can look like a hospital  
Good logistics  
Easy to go about  
Room and space to move around  
Not so mobile (mobility, immobility, moorings = hospitality)  
Hospitality – important to feel safe at work  
To feel comfortable  
The design and organization of the place is a lifestyle  
Hospitality is to enjoy  
The interior is to conservative, need refreshing (from guests over 90 years old)  
Places like this attract hospitality people and staff  
Friendly staff  
Meeting place  
Service minded  
Recognition of problem area  
Bar less important  
Good infrastructure in terms of parking, views, garden, games  
Hospitality is the size and architecture of the hotel  
Hotel size matters  
Bar as meeting place creates business  
Design and architecture matter

## **Performance**

Positive attitude

Wonderful memories

Interactions in the lounge bar

The social aspects in hotels is also to make money

Regular guests

Relaxed and no risk

Informal

Young and charming employees

Safe environment

Employees with emphatic attitude

## **Culture**

Meeting place with friends

Helpful staff

Caring staff

Hotel culture Events

Special social settings

Full service all the time

Meeting friends

Excellent Kitchen

Not pushing guests

No fuzz from staff

The smile most important

Prepare for every day performance

Helping and caring

Always know what's on

Good information

Eat anywhere

Lots of locals

Always parking  
Convenient and nice  
Different programs  
Homely  
Relaxed  
Our hotel policy  
Overview 'zones'  
Regular guests and more wealthy guests  
External special arrangement for charity care (personal policy)  
Elderly guests  
Smile  
Wrong image (not only for old and sick concern)  
Good info – “what’s on” display at the Reception  
Important place in their lives  
Recommend to friends  
Feel taken care of

### **Atmosphere**

Relaxing atmosphere  
Friendly atmosphere  
Lovely atmosphere  
Hotel architecture determine the kind of atmosphere  
Big hotels are like factory  
Pool area people can relax  
Small hotels good atmosphere  
Hospitality must be inside you  
Hospitality is to be interested in your work  
Hospitality is sensed, it is around you  
Welcoming atmosphere

## Appendix D – Site interviews and informal conversations

### Personal semi-structured site interviews and informal conversations with participants and related individuals at the hotels

#### Hydro Hotel Eastbourne

28 interviews and conversations with members of management, employees, guests, visitors and residents

#### Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel

24 interviews and informal communication with members of management, front staff, guests and corporate customers

#### Participant Observations

Fieldwork was carried out in four seasons approached in social situations where the researcher fits in, utilising Descriptive, Focused and Selective Observations  
(Spradley 1980)



**Interviewees with key persons and other members of management including guests, employees and corporate customers / partners, and agency representatives available in public areas**

## **HILTON HOTEL**

### **Interview themes / issues questions:**

1. What does it feel like to work here?
  2. What do you want the guests to feel?
  3. How do you create the experience to your guests?
  4. How important is the hotel brand for businesses?
  5. How important is the hotel brand for choosing this hotel?
  6. What does the brand 'stand for' to the guests?
  7. Strategies for hotel activities and/or entertainments
  8. In what ways are you able to influence the culture here as management?
- These are themes to be communicate with an open end, or leading to other arguments and probes
  - whether the hotel is inviting and attractive and has a meaning to Brighton?
  - The hotel plans into the future, if any?

## **Interview 1 with GM (key person) using the 8 themes for Hilton Hotel.**

People care. It is not really about the building but the people who work here, that tell you how successful you are.

**For me it is exciting to work here.** It is so bustling, so busy, we have so many facilities to arrange for events and conferences every day, and you know, to prepare for this everyday, to see them, to serve them and obviously, ...people from 200 to 2000 you know, and all these people during the events and dinner and everything else... that is one element, and then there is the leisure element I do weekends like today, it becomes busy in here, the terrace and we have different lines coming. There are families like to day, with different expectations, groups and ...so for me what I like working is about that I like the diversity, every day is different you know, so you can prepare as much as you can, there will always be something new.

**For the employees** that I would like them to feel, is that the value is that they feel empowered, you know if, for example, Antonio serves you it is different compared to Stephan and it is about their feeling of doing it right. You know, my management trust me, I can make the decision I feel is right it is our 'make it right commitment'.

You know some have an issue that they can solve an issue, if there is a big issue you know; they can deal with it and compensate ... just like I would do. I put my trust in them; give them the confidence they need. You know, I cannot be there every 24 hours, you know ...and a guest should not have to escalate, and escalate, and escalate, because that is just aggravating, let's face it. If you are staying in a hotel and you are experiencing an issue, you want it solved. At the end of the day, you don't want to wait for the manager of the manager of the manager. That's just tiring and the employees want to have fun at work and that they are trusted.

**But then again, to feel** ... you know we have a vision at this hotel ...actually we have two; One is for groups and their expectations of event imaginations... and...look at the big space that we have, the convention areas, the little church, ambassador rooms over to the big chart well room, over to the big conference room that can hold over a thousand people, and I want them to think that they can have any event they can imagine, so I want them to know that we care for them that our team look after them, from the moment that they

acquire with us, you know we want to arrange for hundred people, be confident that we can do that, until they step through our doors ...you know, for sight expectations. You know, this is depending of the money and what you want to do, eh ...this is a blank canvas go ...and do what you like. That's our *Events with an imagination*.

**And for the leisure guests**, we want to portray Brighton inside out. You know Brighton is quirky. Brighton is not perfect. Brighton has the spirit. The walks through the lanes, the small shops, you know we want to be like that. It's that 'cooking' without a recipe. It is not a hotel where every room is the same, because we are branded a Hilton hotel. No, we want to, now let's see ...with all the facets from the local community really, we are completely open. We do not look at you, are you highly, are you super looking, are you this, are you that, we care about the personality, just that, and not the formal position that one's has. We want our guests to experience Brighton, just those diverse moments. Do we always succeed, no! That is about everyday life in hotels.

**The corporate guest is different.** He doesn't want to stand in the queue, he wants to get a room that he has ideal checked in at beforehand, that he can just pick up the key. He may want dinner and a drink in the bar, and he wants his breakfast before he goes to work. That is a typical corporate guest. The group and convention guests like to be looked after while the convention is going on.

The leisure guest they have different expectations. They have children, they want to use the pool, they want to go to the, they will spend more time at the breakfast, they want to have information about what to do in Brighton, and you know ...I will, I want us to give them different perspectives. Because there is no point in giving them the same information or an overview, because they will never experience it the same way, it is never going to happen. People are different.

**How we create the experience to guests**, you know I would like to describe that through our thinking of diversity. An experience with Antonio at the bar, are different from an experience with John, as it will be different with Louise in the bar. Again, that is what we want to give our guests the personal touch at delivery. And that means that they have to spend some time with the guests, and you know that is not possible on a busy day like today. But people do short cuts, to manage queues, you know, try to avoid the busiest times.

If you have a big group outside the house, a convention group, and they want to do something, you have to be creative, and start thinking, thinking, thinking, appeal to their imagination, what you would like to do except from the costs. We can do lots of things, discuss it, ok this is easy, we can do this, but others can be more difficult, but has a high value in the end. You know, it will have a return on the investment, so we will do it, and others can be wacky crazy so let us keep them in the wacky crazy box until the time comes where we can use these things and ... So we involve the employees with the guests to ask what you want. And the team will come up with lots of alternatives.

**You know, we are in an early stage of management perspective** and the hotel with refurbishment and so. It is a long way, so this is not something that will be completed in two weeks or two months.

Yes, you are right with the hosting perspective, visual for guests, care and safety, it is going much more now into running a big business and revenue management. You know, we turn over £ 15mill a year, you know, and food costs and revenue, a lot of it happens behind the scene. So you know, if you want to spend 18 hours and more every day, it will be existing, you know, so I try to plan for every day what I should do. So I try to put my schedule from day to day, I am in the hotel four-five hours every day, but I will not touch the computer, but I will be with the guests. What I try to do is to be in on busy days, you know on Tuesday's events, I try to be with the guests some hours in the evening. What I try to do some days in the morning, I try to stand in the reception, and you know, just to be there. Sometimes I am using the computers, just to see what is going on. The rest of the time I am with my team, in meetings, dealing with conferences and conventions, and the like. I also have to work with myself, to do reporting and strategy work ...etc. etc. It is not so much walking around; I am the manager sitting down with the breakfast, reading the newspaper kind of style.

**I have been given the task** to put on my personal touch to my work. It is very much Hilton way of doing hospitality. So, when I am doing the Tuesday evening event, as you have seen, I am not the same as other manager would be, and my guests or corporate guests are also different. So, if the management try to dictate too much, you are not going to achieve what you want. So, for example, my job in Brighton is also very much involved in the community. There are so many network events, so many people you should like to

meet, you know arrange for charity works, for Balls and dinners for events like this, so I spend quite a bit of time outside Hilton as well, quite a bit of networking, if you will.

**Hilton as a brand** stands for high quality, it has a great reservation system it stands for security and it means we have obviously deals with ... you know we have so many brand and they all stand for something that guests will experience. In that perspective, it is great... Our customers go in to the net booking and pick a brand they like and our loyalty customer return to the same brand. Here, you know on Tuesday evening, our loyalty companies meet at the events and they are Hilton honoured members that have used us for a very long time, and obviously will come back to any Hilton. So, they think, if I want to go to the south coast, where can I go, Brighton, thank you, and they book in to this hotel; Hilton hotel.com. They don't have to pay commission, we get the line directly; we know the guest profile, who he is, what he likes, and that's great. So that drives a lot of business our way. And also, the sales force...you know we have hundreds of people outside the hotel, selling us, sales office in Norw... Well they have closed in Sweden now, and ... well we have in the Iberian countries; Portugal, Spain, and Amsterdam in Holland... they all sell us. So, in that case we get important information from them, details about our customers, which are, you know, important to us.

## **Interview / conversation guides at Hydro Hotel**

A conversation with participants, a face-to-face dialogue, must be followed closely and be monitored both logistically and emotionally. The theme questions from fieldwork used are presented:

### **Research themes a: Semi-structured Interview with employees (hotel frontline staff)**

When did your hotel become a shareholder organisation?

What does it mean that you have 440 shareholders, how do they influence the hotel product/culture?

How do you follow up your employees when emergencies occur?

Do you have any immediate treatment that you offer? Are they special trained?

Charity and welfare – is that part of the hotel culture, and in what way?

What kind of culture do you want your guests to experience at the Hydro?

### **Research themes b: Interviews with hotel guests**

You visit this hotel frequently you told me. What is most attractive with Hydro Hotel?

Where do you normally sit down? You are very positive about the place?

You said you know the employees, how do you explain your relationship?

Hydro does not have separate owners but shareholders, what does this mean?

Do you think this has an influence on the hotel culture? Can you describe hospitality?

### **Research themes c: Conversations with Duty Managers**

What is going on in this hotel? What is the hotel vision or aim? Can you tell me about it?

What is the strongest element or factor that influences the creation of hospitality?

How can you take care of the hospitality you have established with guests?

How do you think the guests experience this environment? How is it organised?

### **Research themes d: Conversation with Duty deputy assistant**

I have observed for some time your guests are older people. Can you tell me about your guests? Do the guests need extra service?

Do the guests stay over night? Are they permanent guests?

So, you are familiar with the guests, you know them? Is this your hotel practice?