2 The Shifting Spatial Logic of Tourism in Networked Hospitality

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Introduction: Mobilities and Post-tourism

For the burgeoning contingents of mobile societies, tourism is no longer an exceptional intermission in ordinary activities 'at home' (Cohen, 1974), a temporary rupture 'in established routines and practices (…) that contrasts with the everyday and mundane' (Urry & Larsen, 2011: 3) as posited in traditional, 'sedentarist' (Urry, 2000) social sciences, but rather an essential dimension of active life.

The articulation of professional and social networks on a global scale has pushed a substantial part of the world's population (skilled and unskilled workers, students, family members, consumers, criminals, of all social classes) to become 'place experts' in order to gain rapid access and to connect (physically or virtually) whenever and wherever they see an opportunity. Any place could potentially 'matter' for somebody, on account of the forms of territorial capital with which it is endowed (Servillo *et al.*, 2012) and the social networks that bind it, the knowledge about such opportunities. The capacity to plug into such places, and to use to the full the potential that such transits permit, are built on experiences of mobility.

Tourism as traditionally conceived – temporary mobility for leisure purposes – is an important part of this learning process (Jacobsen, 1997), and has had a paramount role in broadening modern society's field of opportunities. Yet it is pointed out in the mobilities literature how contemporary tourism, as part and parcel of postmodern developments in society, has come to challenge mainstream epistemological distinctions between leisure-motivated and professional or other types of travel (Urry, 2000): people travel for complex reasons where leisure, sociality, professional development and cultural yearnings are highly intertwined, and their mobility is

extricable from material and cybernetic systems that regulate and synchronize these now unfixed domains of human life.

Such blurring of drivers and contexts of human mobilities is reflected by an important shift in the processes of formation of tourism 'scapes': notions of strangehood and distinctiveness from everyday life are no longer able to explain the spatial and semantic characterization of tourism activity (Knowles *et al.*, 2008) and, conversely, *tourismscapes* (Edensor, 2006; Van der Duim, 2007) are no longer necessarily spatially and functionally separated from the mundane environments where locals experience their everyday lives. The development of modern tourism was driven by hierarchical, segregating and territorial organization principles (Minca, 1996; Wang, 2000), and by a paradoxical quest for authenticity in places constructed for and by tourism. However, recent trends – such as the flourishing of city tourism and of creativity as the focus of tourism experiences – suggest that such dichotomic logic is being left behind. From an epistemological perspective, the de-differentiation of these contexts which, according to Lash (1990, quoted in Urry & Larsen, 2011: 98), is one of the main traits of postmodernism, calls for a new approach to the study of the tourism geography, based on the recognition of tourism as a relational force-field between fixed and mobile elements of the space.

In this light, it can be claimed that modern tourism, founded on the assumption of mobility as *exceptional*, on the narrative of holiday as escapism, on the liminal nature of leisure and cultural consumption, on strong reliance on intermediation and authority in the selection of destinations and modalities, and on information asymmetry as a key characteristic of the tourist 'marketplace', has engendered a rational model of the tourism industry whose most characteristic facets are hotel hospitality (including resort-style accommodation), and the tendency to organize locally in clusters based on proximity to sights, operational cost efficiency at destination level, and coherent area branding; and whose main impact on places is the symbolic compression of landscapes and the development of dual spaces (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2004; Urry, 1990).

In contrast, global mobile denizens or post-tourists express a demand for forms of hospitality and place products that have the following characteristics:

(1) facilitate homing in partly unfamiliar environments;
(2) recognize and eschew the 'fictional' landscapes of traditional (mass) tourism in favour of everyday environments;
(3) are socially produced (easily accessible from everyday communication and professional platforms) and trustworthy (provided and/or evaluated by peers).

Thus it is not surprising that there has been a significant development in the provision and diversification of such services in recent years. In part, the

tourism industry has adapted to shifting consumer needs in terms of product design ('smart' and 'diffused' hotels, personalized visits and place experiences, tech tools like web and mobile apps to assist and advise visitors, etc.) and cultural contextualization, giving more attention to local customs and products, more diversity in place interpretations, etc. Yet, the evolution of consumer cultures and the opportunities provided by global connectivity have defined an unprecedented role for tourists as co-producers of place experiences, especially in terms of hospitality, which meets more consistently these demands.

The main claim of this chapter is that this shift, which the boom of the networked hospitality model encapsulates, may be repositioning the role and agency of tourism in place development. We thus investigate the foundations of socially produced hospitality networks and reflect on the geography of the mobilities engendered by that model. The text is organized as follows: in the second section we introduce the theme, proposing a typology of hospitality spaces and identifying among them a 'pure' model of peer-to-peer hospitality – house swapping – which we then address in the third section from the point of view of market development strategy. In the fourth section we analyze some data from homeexchange.com, the most popular internet platform for house swaps, to obtain some exploratory insights on the spatial logic at local level which informs new geographies of peer-to-peer tourist mobility. In the fifth and final section we discuss these results in the light of the objectives of this volume.

New Hospitality Networks

Among the many changes in contemporary tourism that have been produced by economic globalization and the increased 'connectedess' of the marketplace, some point to the progressive disarticulation of traditional supply-chain and distribution structures, and to an empowerment of the consumer. At the most basic level, technology-savvy travellers have been able already for a couple of decades to assemble tailor-made packages from products and opportunities available in the 'transparent' virtual mall of booking engines. More advanced developments enable tourism producers to personalize experiences to the extreme, establishing a one-to-one dialogue with the visitor which stretches from the preparation stage of their trip to its aftermath, thus 'mobilizing' places independently from the physical landing of visitors at sites, and turning their role from mere consumers into clients and ambassadors of a place or product.

The most remarkable shift, however, concerns the boundary between demand and supply. Travellers accustomed to navigating and buying online as essential stages of their travel experience more easily 'jump the fence', and use their IT and networking capabilities to enter a tourist sector with

increasingly low entry barriers. Evolving from 'lifestyle entrepreneurs' (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000) to straightforward businesses, and spanning from bloggers living of online ads and crowdfunding support to real global giants like TripAdvisor, these agents filled the needs of travellers in the era of the great financial slump. In fact, this hidden revolution goes beyond being able to find a great offer for a flight or hotel in a very short time, or to learn which restaurants are located within 100 square meters of their mobile phones.

It is rather the emergence of a number of products, platforms and languages that connect to a whole new philosophy of travel: travel cheap, get value for money, learn from 'friends' and peers, share your experiences and use them for personal and professional development, use what you have to boost your chances to travel, be aware and connected while you travel – features that are enhanced by the 'creative turn' in tourism (Richards & Wilson, 2006) and the search for experiencing a destination 'like a local'. Collaborative tourism products range from sharing car space on short- or long-haul trips, to hosting visitors at home for a 'traditional' meal, or accompanying them to all sorts of places and activities whose access is generally restricted to local knowledge. The most outstanding peer-produced services in terms of their increasing popularity and disruptive potential with respect to mainstream tourism (Farbrother, 2010), however, are arguably networked hospitality platforms.

The idea of coproducing hospitality services within travellers' communities is consistent with the notion of a new sociology of mobility; yet its conceptual foundations and practical implications have received surprisingly little attention in tourism studies and even in the young area of mobilities studies. In relation to the 'pure' peer-to-peer (P2P) model of home exchanges, Grit (2008) found, besides more than hundred popular articles in newspaper and magazines, only one contribution of academic interest: a master dissertation by two students (Arente & Kiinski, 2005) who analysed home exchange in terms of users' motivation, lifestyle and identity. More recently, Forno and Garibaldi (2015) analyzed swappers' profiles and motivations, and Andriotis and Agiomirgianakis (2013) offered a first conceptualization of home exchange with a focus on its economic nature. In regard to the wider debate on new forms of hospitality, since 2011 the *Hospitality and Society* journal has offered exhaustive insight and explores their connections with wider social and cultural processes and structures. Its first issue, and in particular the introductory paper by Lynch *et al.* (2011), laid the conceptual basis for the study of networked hospitality, in a stream later continued by, among others, Germann Molz (2012a, 2012b), Bialski (2012) and Veijola *et al.* (2014). Little else has been published at the moment of writing in leading tourism journals and almost nothing on peer-produced tourism products other than hospitality.

Germann Molz (2012b) introduced the term 'network hospitality' referring to the way members of a community connect virtually to search or offer

accommodation in places. In the same vein, Steylaerts and O'Dubhghaill (2012: 262) refer to web-based hospitality exchange networks. Among these, we find web communities such as CouchSurfing, arguably the most popular example, home-exchange communities, and hybrid models such as Airbnb. In spite of some differences, particularly in terms of host–guest relations, these models share important cultural and social assumptions, distancing them from the 'linear' rational logic of the conventional hospitality industry, such as the mistrust for third-party mediation and the importance of reputation and personal affirmation. 'Pure' networked hospitality communities are not conceived for interacting with pre-existing friends but rather 'to connect to strangers' (Germann Molz, 2012a: 218), admittance of whom in such private spaces as homes requires an 'immense amount of trust' in community members (Andriotis & Agiomirgianakis, 2013: 585), which requires a system of profiling and reputation (Germann Molz, 2007: 71) allowing a match with like-minded parties (Farbrother, 2010; Steylaerts & O'Dubhghaill, 2012). In this sense, Bialski (2012) proposes the concept of *homophily* to explain host–guest dynamics in the CouchSurfing community. Bialski's analysis of the Airbnb market and of the gatekeeping agency of the platform in her chapter in this volume, as well as the 'discursive deconstruction' of Airbnb carried out also in this volume by Arias & Quaglieri Domínguez, suggest that such a hybrid model rather uses 'connections' as rhetoric for marketing purposes. This can be an illustration of how motivations and supply models are fluidly interconnected, requiring specific research to unbundle the 'drivers' in this new arena.

While much of this scholarly production has insisted on the repercussion of networked hospitality on the industry itself, on travel cultures and on the ethical dimension of hospitality, the geographical aspects – the intersections of this new way of travelling and 'staying' with processes of place construction and agency – needs further development. In this sense we shift the object of our research from the intimacy of host–guest relationships to the quotidian encasing of 'homes' and its place in the construction and development of a destination, interrogating the forms and results of such interventions.

It can be claimed that any form of hospitality, as part of a tourism landscape, functions as a relational force-field which bends the practice and performance of space. To discuss that, we propose a classification of the forms of tourist hospitality, discussing their spatial embedding and hinting at elements of approximation or divergence between them in this regard. This is sketched out as a two-dimensional diagram (Figure 2.1), which classifies and maps out forms of hospitality according to their physical setting and business logic.

Looking at the physical dimension of hospitality establishments, these can be situated between two extremes, represented by the traditional forms of collective establishments, like conventional hotels or resort complexes, and the model based on a private dwelling, like rental apartments and mansions.

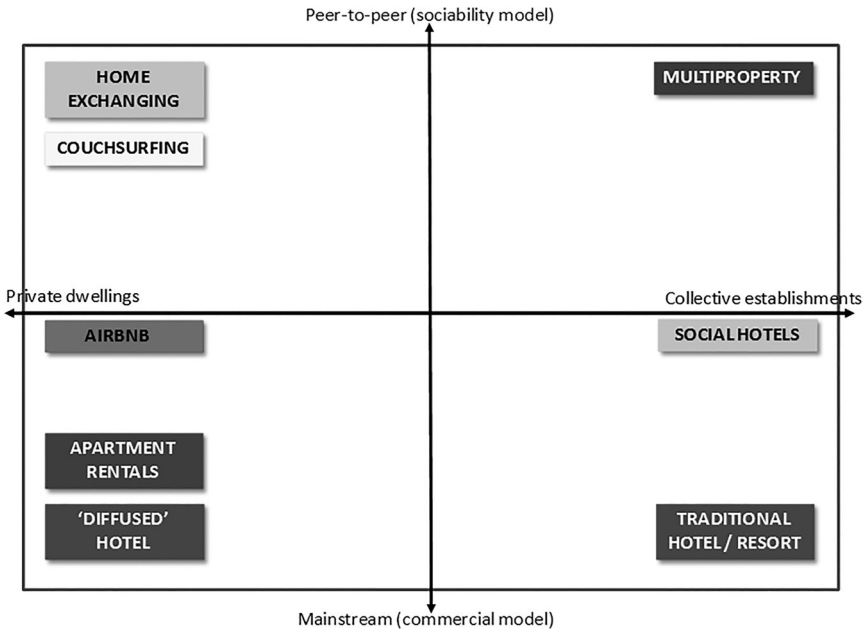

Figure 2.1 Hospitality models

The foundational logic of the collective form of establishment is the optimization of profit-making, but also the orientation to a travel culture that considers the state of mobility as exceptional, and coherently looks for an experience of place founded on exclusivity and on the access to elements that transcend the sphere of everyday life (spas, lavish breakfasts, room service, lobby cocktails, resort activities, etc.) and on a sense of anonymity granted by the 'neutral' design of hotel spaces. It is a segregating logic: the physical form of the establishment and the practices that are engendered by it mark a semiotic separation between the hospitality space and the quotidian environment of the destination.

Contrasting with this, the singular dimension of homes emphasizes the opportunities of meddling with the quotidian character of the surroundings. Although not always 'domestic', as in the case of apartments rented on a seasonal basis or short term (generally equipped with standard services and essential decorative elements), such environments can be freely adapted to the daily routine of the guest: cook, watch the television, play with the kids, meet the neighbours, etc.

Because of the increasing demand for opportunities to extend domestic practices to the state of mobile life (no longer perceived as exceptional), emerging hotel concepts have developed tools and services that facilitate the connection with the everyday (especially in terms of internet connectivity

and physical activities). This distances them from conventional large-scale operations towards more intimate settings which define a continuity with the mundane landscape of destinations: charm and boutique hotels in historical buildings, family-run guesthouses in former 'home' spaces, design hostels in bohemian neighbourhoods, etc. However, the most remarkable innovation in this sense is the development of diffuse structures (*hotel diffuso* in its original Italian name – see Gilli and Ferrari's contribution to this volume), which use a network of individual houses, often inside historical urban areas (Tagliabue *et al.*, 2012) to stress the genuine elements of the surroundings, emphasizing in their organizational model the value of relationships and horizontal alliances as characteristic elements of the destination value chain (Russo *et al.*, 2013), and decentralizing the business environment of the establishment towards the social and economic fabric of the city.

Regarding the second dimension, this ontology takes into consideration the nature of the exchange, ordering hospitality models between the 'business profit' of companies and the pure model of peer exchange of network hospitality. The first form foresees the existence, on one side, of a customer-guest, and on the other, of a supplier-company; it is a business model generally characterized by asymmetric information, and subject to the agency of economic capital for the development of the dedicated infrastructure, as will be further elaborated below. The forms of network hospitality, instead, are based on the encounter of two parties with reciprocal interests within a community; the 'transaction' depends on trust between the parties and on the value attributed to their knowledge and properties. The logic of networked hospitality can still be 'selfishness' (satisfaction of individual utility), but this does not involve a transaction or a financial profit, and also conforms to the needs and personal aspirations of the two parties, such as comfort, curiosity, or the wish to extend the network of social relations.

When both dimensions are considered, is possible to map out the different forms of hospitality as in Figure 2.1. In the lower right quadrant we situate hotel establishments and resorts: exclusive and segregating spaces, as argued above, in terms of the practices and processes that they engender, and typically exerting agency on the surrounding space through physical development (which normally takes place as expansion of hotel functions and the clustering of other activities targeting hotel customers), which is generally associated with an emptying out of original (residential) functions. Other models of commercial establishments based on an approximation with the 'home' environment are placed in the lower left quadrant, like apartments for rent and diffuse hotels.

The 'pure' P2P model of networked hospitality, which supposes an exchange of private homes without transactions, is placed in the upper left quadrant. The 'CouchSurfing' model is also in that area, because while hospitality does not have to be simultaneous or reciprocal, it still eschews the commercial motivation. Airbnb is a de facto facilitator of non-regulated

rentals, which therefore represents a 'hybrid' in terms of incorporating elements of sociality (a marketplace based on reputation, social mediation and the protagonist of particulars as suppliers) and of a commercial business model involving transactions with the platform as financial – and social – mediator. Finally the P2P logic can also apply to collective establishments, as in the case of proprietors' communities with participations in a residence, situating it in the top-right quadrant. Another 'hybrid' model is the social hotel, which generally uses collective establishments but is guided by the logic of social benefit above profit.

We now argue that the model presented in Figure 2.1, ordered through these two dimensions, is encased in specific geographies. Places (or destinations where these different models are offered, according to a distinct logic, and spaces within them) attract specific mobilities in terms of connections between origins and destinations, or travelling communities characterized by specific cultural and social features, and are co-constructed and transformed by such mobilities in different ways which hint at the agency of the economic and physical form of the establishment.

While the patterns, processes and impacts of 'mainstream' hotel development have been extensively addressed by the literature (see for instance Fainstein & Stokes, 1998; Jansen-Verbeke, 1998; Shoval *et al.*, 2011), in this chapter we peek into the 'alternative' models and, specifically, pure P2P hospitality as encapsulated by home exchanges.

Home Exchanging as Networked Hospitality: Sociocultural and Geographical Drivers

Exchanging homes is a relatively new, and steadily growing, phenomenon in tourism. Friends, relatives, or even members of special interest groups and associations have been swapping properties during their vacations since the early 1950s (Forno & Garibaldi, 2015). However, the diffusion of advanced internet functionalities in the last 20 years has paved the way for a rapid growth of swappers' communities who advertise their property online and search for desired property locations and features.

The largest swappers' website, www.homeexchange.com, was launched in 1992 based on the founders' 'belief in home exchange as a comfortable alternative to high priced hotels and typical tourist vacations, and a way to experience an area as a local, not a tourist' (HomeExchange.com, 2014). It hosts at the time of writing some 43,000 listings, but has hosted throughout its period of activity more than 240,000 listings, gradually integrating various pre-existing national platforms. For a moderate annual fee, subscribers can upload information and pictures about their property, mostly first homes but also second homes or sections of a larger property. The information in the listings includes the location, type, size, sleeping capacity and facilities

of the houses, plus the main features of the areas or neighbourhoods where they are located. Cars and other transport means (bikes, boats, etc.) may also be offered or swapped together with homes. Members may indicate their 'want list' for swaps, which can include a specific place and/or period, a more generic indication of a region or city and the season or, as frequently happens, leave all that open to any proposals.

Visitors can scroll through large lists of listings in a given region or city (even at neighbourhood level in big cities) to seek the best matches, but the advanced search utility of the website also allows users to filter for the various property features. Subscribers only may then use the messaging service that puts them in touch with the selected members. Most exchanges are simultaneous, but if second homes are involved, there is more flexibility with dates. Unlike CouchSurfing or other home-stay communities, home exchange does not necessarily involve direct offline host–guest relations.

There are all sorts of practical reasons for choosing to be swappers, like the obvious economic convenience over commercial establishments, but also the advantage constituted by the availability of the full range of facilities that are normally found in houses (cooking utensils, apparatus and toys for kids, books, music, etc.). Apart from this, swapping is more notably a cultural fact. First of all, house swappers are arguably tourists who, as could be read in the tag quoted earlier, want to 'experience an area as a local, not a tourist'. That distinctively recalls Feifer's (1985) description of a self-conscious, educated tourist who, aware of the commoditization of tourism places (Rojek, 1993), disapproves of the degree of fictionalization and segregation involved by large-scale tourism operations, and is prone to reject that in favour of the more authentic landscape of the quotidian represented by the locals' livelihoods and way of life. More in general, it arguably involves a certain 'libertarian' attitude in relation to one's own possessions and some degree of trust in peer travellers which, together with the 'explorer's attitude', and a certain literacy in web technology, is typically associated with upscale jobs, liberal thinking, a highly schooled background and a penchant for low-impact and fairtrade products (Forno & Garibaldi, 2015). Thus, cultural and economic reasons for home exchanging are intermingled. Open-minded tourists think that they can save money by swapping homes, and be more comfortable during their stay in a place, but also that in this way they would enjoy a different, unusual and more authentic experience of place.

An exploratory research, analyzing information proceeding from 1041 listings[1] published in May–June 2012 on the www.homeexchange.com website (2.8% of the total listings at the time of writing), gives a first insight into the structure of the home exchange 'marketplace', focusing on the global flows activated by this form of travel. This study aims to examine the factors influencing the geographic organization of this marketplace, including fixed factors (the availability of property for exchange) and cultural factors (the likeliness of exchanges between matching parties). We also argue that

the agency of compensation and development work in different ways from in the 'mainstream' commercial industry.[2]

Commercial accommodation turns out to be especially common in 'destination regions'. Rather than a tautology, this should be seen as the result of a process by which specific regions go through a stage of discovery and infrastructure development, responding to a market opportunity determined by both demand pressure (with important variations determined by agency in the tourist industry) and political and entrepreneurial initiative. Yet in the case of the house-swapping system, the parties demanding and offering accommodation are part of the same global community and there is no commercial intermediation involved. This means that the location of supply represents by and large the spatial distribution of the community of swappers, rather than portraying places where people want to go. This tends to overrepresent the most populated places and, secondly, places where the cultural attitude towards swapping is more open, whereas it under-represents 'tourist peripheries'.

Thus, Europe, North America and Oceania offer a relatively frequent supply of swaps relative to the supply of commercial beds, whereas destination regions like Latin America, Africa and Asia offer relatively few swaps. In this sense, the Asian case is exemplary. In fact, this continent concentrates one-fifth of the global commercial supply, mainly in the two economic powers and regional tourist giants, Japan and China, while their representation in the homeexchange.com network is marginal. It is likely that these regions offer a lower proportion of properties (and neighbourhoods) which may entice the sense of 'homing' of the international, 'white' community of swappers; however, there might be a cultural dimension involved, as these newcomers in the tourist market in Asia and Africa are places with an arguably more complex (and certainly different) social sense of hospitality towards strangers, and might be less open to house swaps than their image as tourist destinations suggests. However, looking at the distribution of 'wants', it appears that the geographical distribution of house swaps adheres to a higher degree to the distribution of commercial accommodation capacity. The most solicited destinations are Europe, and especially West-central Europe (France and the UK), followed by the Pacific West and California. These are followed at some distance by Australia, while South and Central America, Asia and Africa get only a small share of preferences.

As for the main associations between destinations (available supply) and wishes (requested destinations), the results indicate a significant appeal of Australia among swappers from several Western countries and, in general, a higher appeal of 'far away' destinations (USA and Canada for Europeans; central west and southwest Europe for Americans and Australians) with respect to the 'revealed preferences' of the commercial market.

This analysis is refined when the demand for a given location is considered in terms of the number of past exchanges. A priori, this indicator would

depend on the quality characteristics of the property (both in terms of its features and amenities, and in terms of location in a specific destination) and on the relative 'scarcity' of properties on offer with those same characteristics. All other things being equal, however, this might be a proxy for the 'realized attractiveness' of places (as opposed to an ideal, a priori attractiveness as expressed by users' declared preferences with respect to destinations). The results confirm the strength of the main destinations detected through the analysis of the swappers' preferences, although some differences concerning their ranking can be singled out. Western-central Europe confirms its primacy (27% of all prior exchanges considered), followed by southwestern Europe (16.3%) and the West-Pacific area of the USA (10.8%). At country level, the USA (26.2%) and France (18.2%) confirm their leadership as tourism destinations (respectively second and first world destination in terms of international arrivals in UNWTO, 2012). Particularly significant is the popularity of Australia, which attracts 5% of swaps, while the country is not even among the 40 top destinations in the UNWTO ranking. Instead, China, third in that ranking, confirms its marginal role in the swapping community.

In addition, if the international arrivals data from UNWTO show in several cases higher travel rates to closer destinations, as is to be expected; the analysis of preferred swapping destinations highlights a comparatively high demand for faraway destinations. This is not necessarily strange in tourism: people long for exotic and iconic places, but not everybody has the resources or the time to actually travel there. Apparently home exchanging allows them to compensate to some degree for the cost of distance through saving on accommodation. As a matter of fact, it can be claimed that intercontinental destinations are relatively more valued among the specific community of swappers than the actual distribution of 'commercial' trips may suggest and, among these, some qualitative patterns in origin–destination flows emerge.

There are various possible explanations for this. One is possibly due to cultural proximity and flows that relate countries like France, Italy and UK to their colonial or diaspora geographies, which to some extent the home exchange systems facilitates, establishing a dialogue between parties who may share a common linguistic or cultural domain. Other reasons (especially for the stratification of origin–destination flows) appear to be related with the characteristics of the exchanges that are proposed.

In any case, it could be argued that the assumption of 'compensation' in distance runs against some of the evidence presented here and elsewhere in this volume – a supposed preference for the 'local' feel of the tourist experience. However, proximity should be understood in cultural and environmental terms above the 'physical'. In this sense, we observe that, while the features of properties offered and of the offering party do not vary appreciably across the sample, cross-analyzing origins with the type and location of

places offered yields some useful insights. Hence, unsurprisingly, the large majority of properties on offer are located in metropolitan areas (65% in terms of prior exchanges). Within macro-regions, 'urban' properties are more frequent in western and northern Europe, as well as in the US northeast and Canada, whereas southeastern Europe, the US South and Pacific West are frequently feature coastal and suburban developments.

Interesting matches in flows can also be observed between types of places exchanged. The data indicate a general trend: if somebody wants to stay in a seaside resort, when he/she cannot find a perfect match in terms of location he/she is likely to conclude a swap in a similar type of destination elsewhere. Eventually the law of supply and demand produces a sort of 'evening out' of property levels by which swaps are approximately in the same quality range, although properties in top destinations are more likely to swap with those of a higher standard in less attractive places, and vice versa. This pushes up the supply from popular destinations, as residents there may expect to have relatively high chances to swap for a better property.

Thus, swappers offering (and mostly residing in) central city locations are consistently (also in a statistical sense) looking for urban destinations elsewhere, whether in large urban areas and national capitals or in heritage towns, while advertisers in suburban communities and resort destinations are more likely to seek exchanges in coastal and island resorts. Similarly, swappers offering rural, island or isolated settings are more likely to be looking for similarly non-urban locations. This, again, is not a banal finding. Traditional compensatory theories of tourism indicate that tourism is likely to be associated with escapism in term of locations chosen as well as destinations: a 'break in the routine' for urbanites means a holiday in coastal resorts or rural settings, whereas people with properties in such settings are expected to long for an experience of life in the city. Although we do not dispose of comparable data in the commercial market to match with our analysis, it could be argued that in the community of home exchangers, experiences of place and tourism cultures seem to be rather related to an extension of everyday consumption and leisure routines.

A further qualitative enquiry is provided by a direct online survey with 91 home exchangers from a consistently chosen sample of some 700 members among those who, in their ad, state they have already successfully completed at least one exchange (Russo & Quaglieri Domínguez, 2014). Regarding motivations for home exchanging, the survey indicates that convenience in practical terms, as well as expectations of a different type of experience, prevail slightly over crude economic motives with, remarkably, no significant variations across different socio-economic profiles. Regarding the value attributed to home-exchanging as a hospitality model, interviewees mostly agree that visiting places as home-exchangers 'gave them a greater appreciation of the destination', but the other two statements proposed, 'brought them to visit areas and sights at destinations which they would not have

visited if staying at commercial establishments' and 'brought them to meet local people and/or to take part in local sociocultural activities' also had high levels of agreement.

Finally, interviewees were asked about the factors that they take into consideration in their search process and agreements with third parties. The most valued criterion appears to be the location of the property, referring to the degree of matching in terms of country, region or specific place sought; following that is the situation of the property (having a good location on the coast or a city centre, proximity to sights and amenities, a good view, etc.); while less important criteria are the quality of the property in terms of size, décor, facilities, etc. and the profile of the offering party.

Home-exchange Geographies in Urban Destinations: Insights from Paris and Barcelona

This section looks at the finer scale of destinations, addressing the hypothesis that home exchanges engender a different organization of tourist activity at the local level. We focus on two global urban destinations in Barcelona and one in Paris, and consider all the listings published on www.homeexchange.com in these three areas both at city and at provincial or metropolitan level, with a detail on districts within cities.

In Barcelona, the Eixample district, the 19th century middle-class extension of the historical city centre, concentrates more than a quarter (27.2%) of all house swap offers, followed by the upscale district of Sarrià-Sant Gervasi (13.6%), off the city centre proper. After the core tourist area of Ciutat Vella (15.2%), a significant concentration of properties is located in two areas that are particularly popular among the cosmopolitan 'creative class': Poble Nou and la Vila de Gràcia (see Figure 2.2). The latter neighbourhood is emblematic in terms of the geographies of house swapping and other non-conventional forms of hospitality. Indeed, there are very few hotels in Gràcia, and none in the historical core of the district; thus home exchanges provide a unique opportunity to reside in this area, together with informal accommodation with friends, a few guesthouses and the widening presence of Airbnb rentals. To some extent, it may be argued that the charm of Gràcia owes much to its genuine feel, somewhat related to the absence of 'iconic' tourist sights and dedicated mass-tourism infrastructure, and on its peculiar blend of grassroots 'local' narratives and cosmopolitan urban taste, where traditional small-scale activities intermingle with sophisticated independent shops, bars and restaurants.

The same can be said for the Eixample, the city's most populated district, which does feature a large and widespread hotel capacity, especially at the top end of the market, while its tourist attractions are mostly concentrated along the central avenue of Passeig de Gràcia or at its edges, as in the

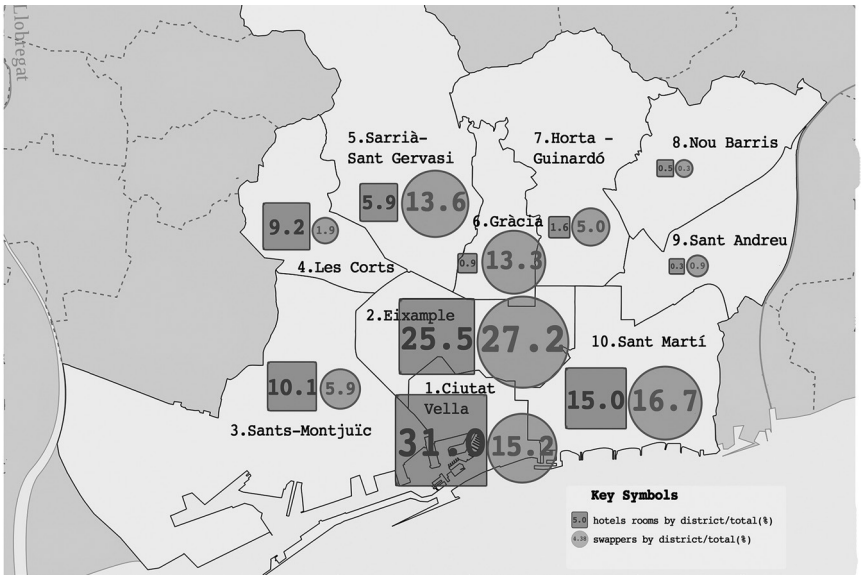

Figure 2.2 Comparing hotel accommodation in Barcelona and houses on offer on home exchange.com

Source: Authors' own analysis of data from sampling listings in homeexchange.com (June 2012) and Ajuntament de Barcelona (2012).

case of the Sagrada Familia Cathedral. The remarkable number of house swaps in this area is arguably due to the larger availability of good quality properties than in other districts, but its bourgeois residential feel, the sophisticated commercial infrastructure and the offer of high quality restaurants and bars may also be significant factors. In general, Figure 2.2 indicates that the supply of properties for exchange is more widely spread than the commercial one.

In Barcelona we also analyzed the spatial features of completed exchanges to identify which areas attract more swappers. For this we sampled 100 users among those listed in the web page under Barcelona Province. Unsurprisingly the majority of the exchanges occurred within the city boundaries (78.7%). However, a significant 21.3% took place in the rest of the province of Barcelona, which has very little weight in commercial tourism. This includes mostly including suburban towns in the metropolitan area of Barcelona (12.7%), such as the exclusive residential area of St Cugat del Vallès and the cosmopolitan gay-friendly tourist resort of Sitges, which comprise a sizable share of the swaps; and the rest of the province (8.6%), which has a fair number of seaside resorts, heritage towns and rural communities with a certain concentration of second homes.

These data illustrate a certain interest in swaps outside (but close enough and conveniently connected to) the centre of Barcelona, while enjoying a stay

in a quieter and greener environment. In other words, a sizable minority of those swapping in the Barcelona area seems to prioritize aspects other than centrality, like the environmental quality of the surroundings or particular features of the property itself, such as swimming pools, gardens, yards or decks, and other architectural features that provide distinctiveness. Unsurprisingly, private swimming pool accessibility is available only in a few (6%) properties in Barcelona, while it becomes almost commonplace in those located in the metropolitan area (46.15%) and in the rest of the province (40%).

Compared to Barcelona, the case of Paris (see Figure 2.3) shows a more balanced spread of swaps on offer over the 20 districts of the city. Nevertheless, indications of spatial concentration can still be detected. Unsurprisingly, the most populated districts – the 18th (Montmartre) and the 15th – have the highest number of swappers, while more central districts record smaller numbers in absolute terms. In relative terms (density of properties for swap), historical areas score higher. In particular, the 1st district – the Louvre area – and the 4th are the only ones rating more than two swaps per thousand inhabitants (respectively 2.67 and 2.39, against 0.87 for the 18th). These very central areas concentrate a significant part of the cultural and historical heritage of the city; hence they are frequently visited by tourists, are already endowed with a significant share of the city's hotel infrastructure, and have undergone an intense process of 'tourismification' (Jansen-Verbeke, 1998).

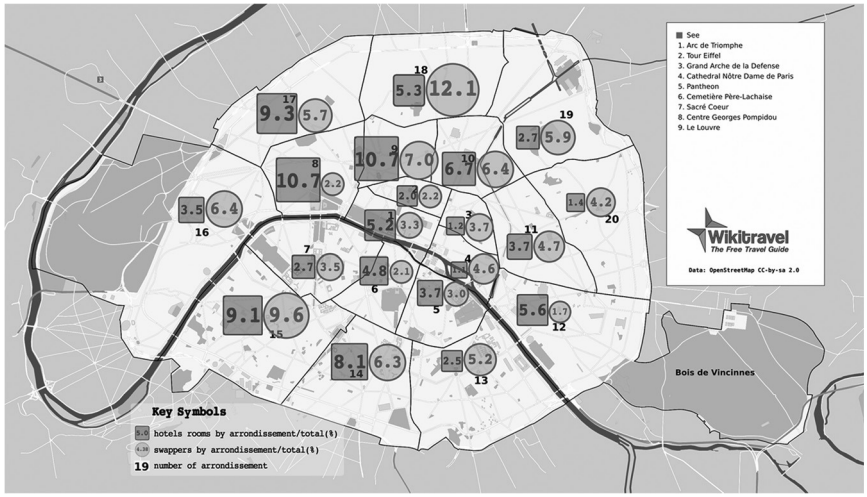

Figure 2.3 Comparing hotel accommodation in Paris and houses on offer on homeexchange.com

Source: Authors' own analysis of data from sampling of listings in homeexchange.com (June 2012) and Office du Tourisme et des Congrès de Paris (2012).

Outside the municipal borders, the concentration of swaps is particularly significant in the more affluent western suburbs of Paris, like Nanterre, which accommodates a high concentration of students and university workers. As in Barcelona, we also sampled 210 users located in the Île-de-France region to analyze rates of use. We distinguished between swaps offered within the municipality of Paris (165 users; 78.6% of the sample) and those located in the rest of the region (45 users; 21.4%). This distribution reflects approximately the share of completed exchanges (77.6% against 22.4%). Thus, as in Barcelona, more than one-fifth of the swappers in Paris chose accommodation located out of the municipality borders, where smaller towns, well connected with central Paris, feature a charming and relaxed ambience away from the downtown buzz. Other than location, property characteristics could explain the appreciation for swapping close to, but outside the French capital. In fact, the higher number of bedrooms on average – 3.6 rooms versus 2.2 in the Paris municipality – make it more suitable for larger parties, particularly families. In addition to this, a significant number (15.6%) of houses offered in the rest of the region are equipped with swimming pools against almost none (0.6%) of those located in Paris.

Nevertheless, the majority of swappers are still more attracted by the idea of an experience completely embedded in the Parisian landscape. Thus we focused on this group and analyzed the spatial distribution in terms of concentration rate for the 20 districts of the city. While none of them reaches 10% in terms of prior exchanges, some spatial patterns can be seen. The six most central districts (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th), including the historical core of the city and most tourist sights, concentrate together just over one-tenth of all the exchanges considered in the sample, while residential areas – the 15th (9.5%), the 12th (9.2%) and the 10th (8.9%) – score the highest rates of exchange.

These data can be used to test empirically whether the geography of tourism activity nuanced by house swaps is significantly different from that activated by commercial accommodation. A chi-squared test of the distributions of hotel accommodation and swaps on offer in terms of district locations in the inner cities shows that only in the case of Barcelona are the distributions significantly different, with a significance value of 0.036, while this hypothesis is rejected in the case of Paris (0.220). This result seems to indicate that in the case of Barcelona the supply of houses for exchange fits a spatial logic that leads swappers away from more 'touristed' areas and into quarters with greater property amenities, also in less central areas. However, this result may be influenced by a scale factor, as the number of spatial units considered is notably larger in the case of Paris. The detail of this analysis could be improved, and possibly its results reverted, looking at the very fine level of attractions, which we leave for further research, and including in the analysis the surrounding municipalities in the metropolitan region or province.

Conclusions

This exploration of the home exchange marketplace – both at the global scale as patterns of origin–destination flows and at the local scale in Barcelona and Paris – is intended to contribute to the theoretical discussion on networked hospitality provided up to now mainly by sociologists, and to bridge the field of geography. Although further research is certainly needed, observations at both scales suggest that we may be seeing an important new development in terms of tourism as agency and its cultural dimension. There is indeed evidence that the mobilities of home exchanging lean away from the conventional geography of tourism, which is still strongly framed into a model which attributes an important power of agency to the travel industry in the construction of tourist places (Miossec, 1976). This echoes a postcolonialist rationale by which people from the 'core' (hard-working, surveilled, urban, cold, industrial) travel to 'peripheries' (hospitable, 'exotic', sunny, tolerant, leisurely), carrying with them their hegemonic cultural models and imageries – colonizing them and transforming them, according to a predefined geopolitical structural order.

Contrasting with this model, globalization has mobilized middle classes from all over the world and has imposed a travelling culture which privileges the urban sphere as receptacle of landscapes and services favoured by the cosmopolitan consuming class (Fainstein *et al.*, 2003). This has stimulated a new global tourist system in which everybody (who can afford it) travels everywhere; and that everywhere tends to be urban in nature, and of a type of urbanism which rapidly loses its vernacular, authentic attributes under the transforming pressure of the global mobilities which transverse it. The pure P2P model of networked hospitality thus challenges traditional concepts of the internal organization of the tourist destination as pivoting on attractions and sights. Social and cultural features of 'community' enter the stage more decidedly and seem to influence the cognitive and relational processes that make a destination known to visitors, with both central gentrified neighbourhoods offering enticing opportunities of relationships and consumption that become encased in narratives of the 'local' everyday life, and suburban districts featuring a high degree of housing and environmental quality. Both types of areas are familiar, legible landscapes for expert travelling communities, and stage the convergence with the local 'cosmopolitan consuming class'.

The transformative power of home exchanges is still very limited, given the small size of this community compared to the hundreds of millions mobilized by conventional travel modalities, although increasing. It is also remarkably different from that of other forms of networked hospitality with a larger geographic spread, as shown in the current volume by Arias and Quaglieri in relation to Airbnb, or with regard to CouchSurfing and other forms of non-reciprocal and altruistic hospitality (where, arguably, the

profile and social networking capabilities of the host have an even greater influence on the spatial and relational practices of guests).

In any case, on the premise that the collaborative economy is here to stay, as recently suggested at Catalonia's World Tourism Day,[3] and that travel is among those domains of human life which are most likely to take profit from it, we can argue that both research and destination management practice need to look beyond consolidated models framed in conventional theories on the agency of tourism. Today and in the future not only do tourists strive more than ever before to be 'locals', but they can also count on the basic element of local landscapes which allow them to intervene as locals in processes of place construction, which is also 'home'.

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Notes

(1) A stratified random sample was drawn to reflect the breakdown of listings by region of origin (location of the offering party) so as to allow statistical inferences by regions in our analyses based on the sample without the need to adjust it to the entire population. The information covers selected variables (classified arbitrarily by the authors) such as the origin regions and requested destinations, the type of places, experiences and properties offered and sought, the number of exchanges already conducted and the profile of the parties.
(2) For full results and methodological details, see Russo and Quaglieri Domínguez (2014).
(3) See https://rosagarriga.wordpress.com/2014/10/17/the-collaborative-economy-debated-during-catalonias-world-tourism-day-event/

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