

L'HOMME

L'Homme

Revue française d'anthropologie

231-232 | 2019

Cumulus : Hoarding, Hosting, Hospitality

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lhomme/35525>

DOI: 10.4000/lhomme.35525

ISSN: 1953-8103

Publisher

Éditions de l'EHESS

Printed version

Date of publication: 21 November 2019

Number of pages: 13-40

ISBN: 978-2-7132-2794-3

ISSN: 0439-4216

Electronic reference

Giovanni Da Col, « The H-Factor of Anthropology », *L'Homme* [Online], 231-232 | 2019, Online since 21 November 2019, connection on 24 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/lhomme/35525> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/lhomme.35525>

The H-Factor of Anthropology

Hoarding, Hosting, Hospitality

Giovanni Da Col

«How can we make any progress in the understanding of cultures, ancient or modern, if we persist in dividing what the people join, and in joining what they keep apart?»
Arthur M. Hocart (1970 [1952]: 23).

THE RECENT exposure of hospitality in the public forum in relation to the 2015 refugee crisis has forced anthropology to return to hospitality, albeit from the disciplinary center. Now more than ever it is clear we must go further in the effort to de-localize and re-localize anthropology from its colonial heritage, and raise new questions for developing a nuanced ethnographic theory of hospitality. Why are certain parts of the world imagined as sites of hospitality while others are not? What is the difference between terms such as *hospitality*, *hosting*, and *conviviality* – that is, terms we take for granted in their extensibility to other cultures and which have not been subjected to the same analytical scrutiny that exchange or sharing received? What happens when hospitality leaves the safe realms of Kantian humanist universalism and cosmopolitanism and becomes a cosmopolitics that radically recasts the domain of the domestic and expands it to nonhuman domesticities and *oikonomias*? How are the domestic and the public connected through hospitality? Does hospitality only exist within one's own house or sovereign domain? *And which kind of conceptual character is the stranger?* «The fact that to a native every stranger is an enemy, is an ethnographic feature reported from all parts of the world», writes Bronisław Malinowski in the *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (2014 [1922]: 355). But is this really true? Does a universal law of hospitality toward strangers exist? Do the wide variations in evaluation of forms of hosting and hospitality leave any room for going beyond this variation, toward more general considerations?

This collection builds upon – and goes beyond – an earlier thought experiment (Candea & Da Col, eds 2012): imagine what anthropology might look like today if Marcel Mauss (2002 [1950]) had chosen hospitality rather than the gift as the subject of his *Essai*. What if hospitality rather

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than the gift constitutes the (cognitive, social, political) frame enabling and activating relations of sharing, giving, and exchanging? How would «relations» and «sociality» look like if the problem of hospitality had been isolated and treated before the problem of the gift¹? What if the host or the master as a field of influence and relational dependency within a social container (such as a house, generated by the acts of feeding and hosting) would be the focus of analysis, rather than the embeddedness of people and things elicited by the gift? Similar in scope to Mauss's original essay on the gift, this special issue aims to return to a broadly comparative perspective by proposing a heuristic experiment beginning with a «cultural zone», Inner Asia, before moving toward a transregional evaluation. Taken together, the contributors to this volume aim to elaborate a framework to enable future comparative research that would transcend the assumed boundaries of culture and regional studies and challenge in fundamental ways long-reigning anthropological paradigms premised on gift giving, exchange, and reciprocity.

Luc De Heusch once noted that «the phoneme that separates the English words “kinship” and “kingship” deserves to be known as the “g” factor in history» (2005 : 66). This collection juxtaposes three instances of practices – hoarding, hosting, hospitality – that have played a significant role in the development of the anthropological canon, from kinship terms to the interface between economy and religion from materiality to personhood and definitions of alterity. One could call this cluster the «h-factor» of anthropology.

The A Priori of Hospitality

The idea of hospitality, this all-embracing language – this anthropological Esperanto – seems to inhabit any concept of the «social», any aggregation, any human assemblage; it also constrains our capacity to comprehend it. Thus, Clive Gamble has argued that the Neolithic revolution (*pace* Lubbock, cited in Gamble 2015) that enabled global dispersal might not have been caused by farming and agriculture but instead by first experiences of containment, which preceded universal kinship and its later formalization in kinship classificatory terminologies. According to Gamble, «coincident with global dispersal we see a rise in artefacts which also *contain*: boats, houses, and clothes; imaginative expressions of going beyond yet staying in touch» (*Ibid.* : 159) For Gamble, the moment of hospitality has been

1. Cf. Giovanni Da Col & Andrew Shryok (2017 : XIII-XXIX), a set of reflections developed during the preparation of the workshop which gave origin to this collection.

essential to the formation of human kinship, enabling host and guest to reinterpret the social world they inhabit through encounter and then to move on, or to establish relations of a more durable sort. As Michael Tomasello (2014) has it in his study on the origin of human thinking, one can rethink hospitality as the first form of shared intentionality and asymmetric readjustment of cooperation arising out of the *development of containing spaces*. Peter Sloterdijk (2011 [1998]) espouses a germane argument in the first volume of *Spheres* by rewriting the history of humanity as an archaeology of intimacy, a relationship of *accessibility*, and a *visitation* of different *spheres of dwelling*: from Renaissance beliefs in love as a form of irradiation extending from the gaze, which was thought to contaminate the recipient's blood, to the problem of globalization, which is precisely a life without scale and genuine visitation of different *spheres*.

If our ontogenesis as persons emerges out of a direct embodied engagement with the world (Pina-Cabral 2016), then Lévy-Bruhl was rudimentary-yet-right when he argued that beings are not given beforehand and then enter into form of « participation » with other beings and « without participation they would not have been a given of their own experience: they would not have existed » (1975 [1949]: 251). One hosts because hosting – beginning from the relationship between mother and child – constitutes the transcendental field of human dependency. Such arguments find fertile ground in Marshall Sahlins's (2013) contribution to kinship studies; he argues that much is gained by privileging instances of intersubjective being as a state that unfolds in particular events where singular subjectivities become mutually shared and lived. Mutuality of being could thus be nothing other than an amplification of the « law of hospitality » (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977]), a classic example of *we relate as human, thus we host and cooperate*. By the same logic, people who have shared food, or the symbolically most convivial kind of food, are forbidden to damage one another: for example, consider an anecdote from *Arabian Nights*, where a house thief happened up a lump that revealed to be made of salt. Since had now eaten salt at the owner's table, thus becoming his guest, the thief decided to return all his booty.

The alleged omnipresence of a practice such as hospitality can be defined as a human propensity, a « mental disposition », a « psychological complex », a « cultural schema » (Ortner 1984), a « partial recurrence » (Bloch 1999), a « cultural form » (Adam Yuet Chau, this issue). We could easily continue to find traces of the omnipresence of the concept in anthropological literature, an operation that one of the guest editors already attempted (Candea & Da Col 2012). If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail; *if all you have is a vocabulary of hosts, guests, and strangers, there is nothing beyond hospitality*.

In order to compose an ethnographic theory of the social phenomena falling under the category of «hospitality» in its contrasting variations, one can hardly begin without a schema of hosts and guests. By the same token, one cannot explain hospitality only by invoking actions of welcoming, hosting, departure, and the related material and symbolic transactions. We need to invent a new lexicon of hospitality. To paraphrase Martin Heidegger, if language is the house of being, we need a language for the being of the house; the hosting of being requires a new language for being hosted. Or, recall Jean Pouillon's famous reflection on «belief»: «How is it that multiple meanings do not require diverse expressions» (2016 [1982]: 486)? This collection rises to this challenge.

Cumulus: A Negative Strategy

Marilyn Strathern (1990) once poignantly wondered how some regions of the world seem to provide locations for the pursuit of particular problems in anthropological theory while others do not. The purpose is to take invented concepts in different ethnographic contexts to rearrange, negate, or invert a relationship between familiar terms. The «gift» proved to be the egregious anthropological construct to be subject to such «negative strategies». This is the case in inquiries such as Jonathan Parry's (1986) transposition of the Maori gift in India; he showed that the status of Indian gift (*dana*) is not predicated on an ideology of reciprocity but rather a soteriology: the gift that is returned is not a gift. Consider also or Yunxiang Yan's (1996: 147-175) presentation of the *xiaojing* gift form in China, for which no reciprocity is expected and a return is not effective in shifting the hierarchical relations between the donor and recipient. The purpose is not so much showing that «others do what we do not»; rather, it is to negate or rearrange a relationship between familiar terms by creating an *externalizing referent*, a mediating concept that then becomes the intrinsic source of the new idea².

This collection pursues a similar negative strategy. The term «Cumulus» has been adopted by the guest editors as an arbitrary and externalizing heuristic to move beyond hospitality, to indicate a polythetic category (Needham 1975) that is *capable of summoning instances of accumulation, crowding, encompassing, and aggregations of people and things, humans, and nonhumans* normally contained yet not exhausted by the category of «hospitality». The heuristics emerged out of a regional comparison – that

2. A notable scrutiny of Strathern's idea on negative strategies may be found in Harri Englund & Thomas Yarrow (2016).

is, rather than, say, superimpose Julian Pitt-Rivers's theory of Mediterranean hospitality in a different geographical region. We have been pondering why, for example, in a geographic zone that runs from the Himalayas to Mongolia to Siberia a diverse range of ethnographies have highlighted a surprising so-called propensity for social practices related to hoarding (material as well as nonmaterial «things»), hosting, and hospitality (involving spirits as well as humans); sacrifice to gain favors from a host or spirit master; and subjective concerns for accumulation, storage, hoarding, containership (with the notion of «house society» working on different scales, from the Mongolian tent to the Buddhist monastery); and related preoccupations with leakages and parasitism. Could Inner and East Asia serve as fecund generators of anthropological theory, much like Amazonia and Melanesia previously did in the history of the discipline? In what ways does the Inner and East Asian region constitute a «cultural zone» unified by shared cultural logics surrounding ideas of hoarding/storing, hosting, and hospitality? What broader theoretical implications and conundrums may be brought out by this new paradigm (*vis-à-vis* James Scott's notion of «Zomia» [2009] and Jack Goody's [2010] pioneering work in comparative history and his notion of «Eurasia» [cf. also Hann 2016])?

Taken together, the papers develop to a number of reconfigurations of what normally falls under the umbrella of *hospitality*. The collection will show, among other things: 1) many of the social instances traditionally encompassed by anthropologists within the category of gift-giving are rather manifestations of hospitality and hosting situations and events; 2) hospitality constitutes a transcendental field eliciting value creation and relations of exchange, a metacommunicative and subjunctive framing peculiarly and paradoxically similar to play, joking yet involving the deference and trust (Bloch 2004) implied in modes of ritualization (a modality that David Sneath [this issue] calls «enaction»); 3) following Philippe Descola (2012 [2005]), hospitality toward strangers can be conceived as a «forms of attachment» to keep alterity in abeyance. Like *sacrifice*, to which it is often compared (Angela Zito, this issue), hospitality is an irreversible operation with a view to establish a connection between two initially separate domains (Lévi-Strauss 1966 [1962]: 225). Contrary to other cosmologies (*e.g.*, Judeo-Christian), several of the contributions show that «hospitality» toward strangers must be often «constructed», to say it with Roy Wagner (1977). It is neither an innate form of sociality or a customary one; when hospitality is not constructed, it is tantamount to predation (Da Col 2012b).

An important goal of this special issue is the reconfiguration and articulation of the category of *hospitality*, hitherto an umbrella term unable to analytically accommodate both symmetrical relationships of *conviviality* and *commensality*, or the complexity of asymmetrical relations and that authors in this collection gloss as *hosting*, *visitation*, *masterhood* (or mastery, cf. Luiz Costa & Carlos Fausto, this issue) as well as localized properties of *guesthood* and *strangerhood*. In China and Inner Asia, for example, these terms display sociocosmological variations that fall well beyond the cosmopolitical and Judeo-Christian precept of ethical obligations toward the Stranger-Guest.

Similar but unsystematized reconfigurations of the lexicon of hospitality have been already attempted. Edward E. Evans-Pritchard noted how *home* in English and *cieng* in Nuer refer to entities of different sizes depending on the context: to an Englishman, «home» may be England when he is in Germany, or Oxford when he is in Cambridge (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 115). Michael Herzfeld has argued that hospitality is a language shifter that draws on and helps to establish, in other words, an «essential homology between several levels of collective identity – village, ethnic group, district, nation. What goes for the family home also goes, at least by metaphorical extension, for the national territory» (1987: 76). Herzfeld finds the same correspondences in various Mediterranean contexts. For example, he notes that for Pitt-Rivers (1971 [1954]) the Spanish word *pueblo* refers both to the village and the district; in the south of France *pays* maybe used to refer to the country, the region, and the village; the modern Greek word *kseni* could apply both to outsiders from other villages and to «foreigners». James Hevia (1995) has pondered the equivocal nature (to Western eyes) of the notion of «guest» during the extremely ritualized reception (Ch. *binli*) on the arrival of the Macartney Mission at the Qing imperial center in 1793, which included the obligation of kneeling (*kowtow*) in front of the emperor. The notion of «guest» as someone with whom a host has foreknowledge and has been invited could not be applied to the imperial context: a «guest» had to ask permission to enter the imperial domain and the emperor could not be considered as a «host», as he was the head of a household among many others (*Ibid.*: 380ff.).

Or one could take Émile Benveniste's (1948-1949) discussion of the evolution of the language of hospitality in Ancient Rome: 1) *hostis* denoted both the foreigner and the guest: *hostis* was not *any* foreigner but one *pari iure cum populo romano* (who enjoyed equal rights with Roman citizens); 2) there was an inherent compensatory gesture contained within the semantic field of hospitality, represented by the association of the terms *hostire/hostimentum*

and *aequare/aequamentum*, also reiterated in the term *hostia*, which denoted victims intended to compensate for the gods' anger; 3) hospitality was thus conceived as a reciprocal relation of citizenship. The reciprocity element was abolished when citizenship was more rigorously defined and the moral order of hospitality was superseded by the *civis* imposed from the state. From foreign-guest, *hostis* became the «foreigner» (and later the «public enemy») with the codification of the law of *civitas* (hence the famous association of *hostility* and *hospitality*, made famous by Jacques Derrida). And what about strangers? Are they all the same? Commenting on the relationship between statecraft and hospitality, Elizabeth Colson (1970) noted that in stateless societies, *strangers* are said to quickly lose their foreign identities and become members of the host community. On the contrary, Meyer Fortes (1975) pointed out how in colonial Asante society even lifelong residence was not enough to endow citizenship on strangers, who could only become full members by being adopted into local lineages. A free stranger could never become a full citizen of his host community because he never ceased to be a citizen of his natal community, and no one could be a citizen of two separate communities. Thus, following Fortes, one could categorize two types of strangers: *internal strangers* and *external strangers*.

From the articulation that one could have multiple conceptions of guests, homes, and strangers, a close analytical scrutiny of the contributions to this collection shows the existence of a cluster of what we could name *anthropologies of visiting*, often glossed under the umbrella category of «hospitality». *Visiting* is here defined as a «social philosophy of access»; that is, the semiotic and materially mediated capacity of encountering and entering other bodies (Bloch 2015 [2007]) or containing spaces. *Visiting* can manifest itself in different forms. We shall highlight a nonexhaustive number of such social philosophies of access that stand out from among anthropology's previous engagement with hospitality and cognate terms.

Commensality (Luiz Costa & Carlos Fausto, this issue) may be defined as the sharing of food, drinks, or substances to generate inclusion in the participants' parties and exclusion in the nonparticipant parties. Commensality generates or reaffirms relations of hierarchy, equality, or religious status in the act of consumption (cf. the sacrificial aspects of all feasts in Ancient Greece; Detienne & Vernant 1989). Commensality does not necessarily involve hospitality or hosting since it could also have an exclusively public dimension. According to Pauline Schmitt-Pantel (1992), the institution of public meals contributes to the emergence of Athenian democracy through the gradual redefinition of the boundaries between the polarized dichotomy *koinon* (the common domain) where public meals were consumed, and *idiom*, the private sphere.

Conviviality, a modality of visiting that especially emerges from ethnographies of Amazonian societies, should be distinguished from commensality for the predominance of what Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1996: 189) has named a «moral economy of intimacy», which privileges caring over giving, generation of value over exchange, mutuality over reciprocity, and the opposition between public and domestic domains (through feasts in village houses, for example).

Hospitality may be defined as the system of strategies and *ritualized kinship* (Pitt-Rivers 1974) for a subject (the host), possessing agency over a territory or a domestic domain, for keeping the stranger in abeyance or incorporating the *outside* into the *inside*. The actions involved in hospitality rituals are characteristic of rites of *incorporation* and are capable of establishing bonds analogous to adoption of new kinship or similar affinal ties.

Hosting is defined by Adam Yuet Chau (this issue) as a «ritual staging of host-guest interactions for particularly important sociopolitical and ritual occasions», including funerals, weddings, temple festivals, communal exorcisms, the World Expo, the Olympic Games. For Chau, hosting necessitates the acts of inviting, banqueting, and the sending off of guests. It includes prescribed host-guest interactional protocols rather than protocols that are deployed spontaneously, as is often the case in situations of hospitality to strangers. Hosting, contrary to hospitality to strangers, includes an element of competition and rotation, since «one cannot be a legitimate guest if one cannot host in return». One could take Chau's definition further: hosting may be defined as the system of ritualized kinship strategies that a subject possessing agency over a territory or a domestic domain employs to cement, reinforce, or preserve amicable and peaceful bonds with internal-strangers or nonstrangers («guests», kith and kin, authorities, etc.). To this purpose, hosting privileges the anticipation of gifts (rather than an economy of «sharing») to generate feelings of amity and the obligation of future mutual assistance or to establish a patron-client relationship (Caroline Humphrey, this issue).

Hoarding indicates the process of accumulation, incorporation, and retention of things and people within a contained space (Fabio Gygi and Alexander Newell, this issue). Two elements are required for hoarding to be achieved: a) the possibility of paradigmatic replacement of people with things, as in the case of *migawari* described by Fabio Gygi; and b) the purification of incorporated things from any previous *foreign* intentionality and the replacement with the intentionality of the *host*.

Visitation may be defined as the *event* that involves a meeting in a nondomestic space – that is, a public space or neutral zone – between two or more parties with no existing kin ties for the purpose of trading,

establishing alliances, or to reconcile or test the possibility of entertaining relations of commensality or hospitality. It may also include the capacity *to visit while retaining the status of master*, as in the case of the Mongolian masters described by Caroline Humphrey (this issue).

Where Mauss identified the three obligations to give, receive, and return as the constitutive elements of the gift, I wish to introduce six logics that emerge from this collection and ground our *anthropology of visiting: Stranger-density, Englobing, Ordering, Sacrificiality, Attentionality, Masterhood*.

Stranger-Density

«Hospitality is a stance toward strangers», writes Michael Herzfeld, toward beings who can become «useful, dangerous, or irritating» (1993: 173). It is precisely in the reflections surrounding the figure of the stranger that we may trace the original anthropological inquiry on hospitality. The demand of acceptance of the stranger has constituted an ideology of justice and democracy since Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace*. But which kind of strangers should be hosted?

Is hospitality toward strangers a universal? As noted earlier, contrary to the Judeo-Christian and Classical tradition, hospitality toward strangers must often be *constructed* and is not implied as a moral exemplar and obligation. Reo Fortune reports the surprise of the kula parties receiving hospitality in Dobu:

«Knowing also Dobuan distrust of, and lack of hospitality to strangers, his fear of strange sorcery, the fact that he is given hospitality and fed by his host, his kula partner abroad, may well be viewed, as he views it, as one of the strange miracles of magic» (1932: 215).

Or we could recall Evans-Pritchard's surprise at being deceived and regarded as a stranger by Nuer despite seeing himself as living among them – hence hosted:

«On one occasion I asked the way to a certain place and was deliberately deceived. I returned in chagrin to camp and asked the people why they had told me the wrong way. One of them replied, "You are a foreigner, why should we tell you the right way? Even if a Nuer who was a stranger asked us the way we would say to him, 'You continue straight along that path', but we would not tell him that the path forked"» (1940: 182).

Marshall Sahlins (1965) has famously argued that morality and reciprocity decrease in accordance with increasing social distance. Strangers seem to be the opposite of kin yet are today brought close through the very fabric of social life and push us to reconsider notions of proximity and distance. Edwin Ardener (2012 [1987]) once argued that in remote areas, strangers

are rare. By virtue of being vulnerable to intrusions, remote areas thus contain a certain *event-density*. Thus what happen when strangers become events? Which hospitality do we have in the presence of different *strangers-densities*³? Both David Sneath and Caroline Humphrey (this issue) note how the obligation to host strangers and visitors in the Mongolian steppe is taken extremely seriously. It could be indeed tempting to read the spiritual nature of the stranger according to the Ancient Greek lore that inspired Pitt-Rivers's argument: the beggar may be Zeus in disguise and *must* be welcomed.

For Stephan Feuchtwang (2010), hospitality still applies to the Chinese model despite its nonconformity to the classical Greek and Judaic models of hospitality to gods as strangers and outsiders. In his ethnography, the strangerhood and guesthood of Gods are scrutinized. A guest, Feuchtwang argues, may be both a benefactor and a threat, and may represent an encompassing and superior power in relation to the sovereign host, and to the territorial order of the place to which their hosts invite them. Thus Chinese Gods are endowed with a peculiar *stranger-density*; they are both familiar yet coming from the outside to be installed inside. They are guests yet their guesthood is of «such an order of scale and power that to not provide a sufficiently abundant welcome is to risk the destruction of order» (Feuchtwang, this issue).

Luiz Costa and Carlos Fausto (this issue) argue that in Amazonia the act of incorporating strangers is a form of *adoption* that results from a predatory act, and is thus rarely an event of hospitality. In Amazonia, we find preying and familiarizing rather than receiving and providing. Kinship is produced by capturing and extracting vitality from others.

What happens when the stranger to whom hospitality is offered is himself a substitute? According to Fabio Gygi, strangers do not have to be humans: they can be things, too. Each one brings its own distinctive danger until the strangerhood is neutralized and they become things-in-themselves.

3. Yunxiang Yan (2009) provides an interesting counterpoint to Pitt-Rivers's law of hospitality. He begins by noting how in Chinese cities, for example, people rescuing victims of car accidents are often sued by the same victim for complicity with the delinquent drivers. These Good Samaritans in China are addressed with the compound *zuo baoshi bei e* – namely, attempting to be helpful yet eventually ending up as the victim of extortion. The diffusion of these stories results in a reduced willingness to engage in any compassionate or altruistic act in Chinese urban life. Yan notes that most extortionists are elderly and poor people who, under considerable pain and economic constraint and facing the high cost of hospitalization, make every effort to find someone responsible for their misfortune. According to Yan, this attitude is rising due to the presence in urban settings of hordes of *strangers* spawned by massive dislocations, migration, and forced resettlement. This nonrelationship with strangers – which replaced a community of hosting in the countryside – is further increased by the highly competitive market economy and a context of uncertainty that characterises the contemporary Chinese risk society.

I use *englobing* (rather than encompassing) to refer to that process whereby, for Edwin Ardener, «one structure either blocks or enhances the power of actualization of the other» (1975: 25)⁴. In the famous epigraph to *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss chose a few stanzas from the Havamal, a Scandinavian poem. The poem is not concerned with reciprocity but Gestafáttir, the «guest's section», which comprises the rules and manners for being a guest while traveling as a pilgrim and entertaining relations with hosts. Indeed, for Mauss, hospitality intertwines with gift-giving in the most basic human acts foregrounding all relationships of alliance and affinity (Candea & Da Col 2012). One may think of hospitality as a container – an enclosed space that temporarily keeps people and things inside a relationship – and relationships (including gift-exchange) as hospitality's content. Andrew Shryock notes that:

«[...] gifts come to and leave a place; that givers and takers must approach or be received; that the power to offer and accept gifts (and the meaning of gifts) depends on one's status as host or guest; and that all of these determinations require precise forms of movement. A gift is what we take to the feast, or receive once we arrive. It allows us to come or go, but hospitality protocols tell us when we have arrived, how long we can stay, when we should sit or stand, eat or drink, and on what grounds we should entertain Others or keep them away» (2019: 11).

Anthropologists have long studied the role of containers in the formation of process of vitality and kinship⁵. Andrew Shryock and Daniel Lord Smail note that containers «both enable and inhibit transaction» (2018: 1). We live through containers: bodies are containers into which vital things enter and are transubstantiated; to be human is to be contained. Thus Mark Johnson (1987) has argued that the category of *class* (where categories are containers for their members) and the basic P/-P formula of formal logic (where the law of excluded middle defines that everything is either P or not P) originates in the experience of one's body as a container or as an entity that deals with other containers enabling other vital processes, from eating vessels to baskets where vital substances are symbolically preserved in order for them to grow. Reflecting on Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss's statement that «logical relations are thus, in a sense, domestic relations» (1963: 84), Gregory Schrempf (2011: 117) notes how the morphological congruence between the ideas of «society» and «class» derives from the prevalence of cognitive schemas of containership and boundedness. Containers

4. Michael Herzfeld also employs Ardener's notion of englobing in his article on hospitality (1987) albeit on a different scale of analysis.

5. See: Roy Wagner (1986); Gregory Schrempf (2011); Giovanni Da Col (2013); Andrew Shryock & Daniel Lord Smail (2018).

limit and enable spatially distributed interactions, keeping people attached to one place. Yet how is a hosting or hospitality place constituted as the ideal container type?

Annette Weiner (1992) famously questioned the Maussian ideology of reciprocity by showing that possession of certain things can never be relinquished as gifts. It is through the paradox of retaining things that can never be relinquished as gifts and become endowed with high value – while all other goods are exchanged – that the status of the donor is increased and his relationship with gods maintained. However, the ability to give and still keep is also the special position that a lord of the estate or wealthy host enjoys; their generosity is not a sort of investment designed to bring a return but an expression of the sort of permanent, inalienable wealth high hosts have – title to land, status, and fame. Weiner admits that it is accumulation of kula shells – which would later become inalienable possessions – resemble the prized wealth acquired in Ancient Greece during forms of guest-(ritualized) friendship, *xenia* (Herman 1987), the term in Ancient Greek usually glossed as *hospitality*. The retention of kula shells may be seen as a strategy for generating hospitality and thus further wealth, «just as feudal lords through the authority vested in their estates attracted merchants, peasants, and monks» (Weiner 1992: 43). Alexander Newell (this issue) argues that for the Kwakiutl, their possessions are both members of their own kinship and essential attributes of the practice of hospitality. Thus, Newell notes, when we speak of *possessions*, we should not refer to abstract ideas of property but rather to processes of *incorporation*: just as a shaman houses the spirit in his body when he is possessed, a house welcomes the material goods that gradually absorb the spirit of those with whom they remain.

Accumulating engenders vitality. The work of Adam Chau may be helpful to locate the place of ethnographies of hoarding and accumulation in this collection (Gygi, Newell). For Chau (this issue, also 2004), *hosting* is one of the most critical aspects of relatedness in Chinese society, the sphere of production of good relationships where networks of mutual assistance are forged or renewed. Relying on symbolic and material ritual expenditure, hosting engenders the community's *honghuo* («excitement»), establishing the household's mastery and reaffirming its moral character. Chau suggests that hosting belongs to a group of activities set apart from everyday life and subject to what he calls «event production». For Chau, hosting is an event for the production of *honghuo* («social heat») enacted through the convergence of people, liveliness, and crowdedness. Events such as weddings and funerals, which have been hitherto characterized as «ritual», include not only a procedural and liturgical element but also an equally important hosting

or guest-catering aspect. Hosting is not only a test of sociality or moral virtues (such as reciprocity and altruism) but also involves the production of community's *affects* and the *accumulation of life-capital*.

In this collection, hoarding requires a logic of *englobing* of alterity to enhance the vitality of a container-house. This *englobing* process is articulated through *cluttering* and *crowding* (Fabio Gygi, Alexander Newell, this issue). Elias Canetti (Newell, this issue) writes of the *crowd*:

«As soon as it exists, it wants to be composed of more people: the desire to grow is the main and the most eminent attribute of the crowd. It seeks to capture everything within its reach; everything that has the shape of a human being can join it. The natural crowd is the open crowd; there is no limit to its growth; neither houses, nor doors, nor locks» (Canetti 1962: 16).

This opens up a key paradigm for our *Cumulus* experiment: things can be subjects of crowding, and like humans, subject to the same logics of hosting and hospitality. This idea is illustrated by Fabio Gygi, who employs and also expands the Pitt-Riversian model of hospitality as *rite of incorporation*. For Gygi, the host exerts its power and intentionality toward his guests. In Gygi's Japanese ethnography, guests may be subject to the operation of *migawari*, the fusion or substitution of a body for another, especially when a thing replaces the role of a human stranger. Substituting a doll for a person is a practice quite common in Japan, but Gygi also describes the case of accumulating objects that will slowly lose the associations with the donors and are purged of their person-part. Rather than transform things into beings with intentionality, this operation of hospitality transforms things charged with otherness into pure things without condition or qualification, a state of «quiet autonomy». This de-personalization allows them to play the role of *the ideal guests* that are neither demanding nor capricious; they only require space.

Ordering

Hospitality may serve as a mode of inclusion in an existing sociopolitical and cosmopolitical order. Hospitality and hosting require order and arrangement: hierarchy is predicated not only on a differential *ordering* of substances or properties of beings but also on the ways they are displayed – or *enacted* – in hospitality settings. For David Sneath, Mongolian hospitality is a cosmo-aesthetic *ordering* project manifested in the physical arrangements, where hosts and guests are in positions of dominance and subordination. As such, Sneath challenges conceptions of hospitality as altruistic and charitable act. In Sneath's Mongolian ethnography, hospitality is about *obligations* rather than reciprocity or morality: hospitality is *required* of householders; it is a duty rather than an act of charity and generosity.

In the Mongolian case, hospitality rituals *enact* the incorporation of the visitor into the microsovereignty of the host within a wider political order rather than incorporating «the stranger» into a «community». Hospitality appears as a cosmo-aesthetic event involving an exchange of performative «nonmaterial gifts» such as dancing, display, and mutual sizing-up. Notably, Marcel Mauss (2002 [1950]) neglected the aesthetic, architectural side of gift exchange so very evident not only in Trobriand yam houses but also in Amazonian houses (Hugh-Jones, pers. comm.). The ambivalence between hostility and hospitality is especially developed in Amazonian ceremonial exchange, which dramatizes a transition from affinity/hostility to consanguinity/amity where the food-donor visitors must sleep outside the longhouse on the first day either because they really are potentially dangerous strangers or because they must enact this role (Costa 2017). To keep this ambiguity under control, hospitality requires *entertainment and display*. A polity of *ordering* is crucially manifested in *feasting* events.

From the visitor's point of view, guests may «entertain» their hosts with displays of dancing, costume, song, and oratory and food-gifts that are designed to entertain but also to impress, cow, or outdo; on the other hand, the hosts both entertain (in the sense of «acquiesce to» or «receive») these displays and also entertain their guests with talk, food, and drinks.

Angela Zito's essay (this issue) is also concerned with hosting in China, conceived as cosmopolitics of *ordering* and space for manifesting claims of ethical sovereignty. This cosmopolitical logic is connected to classical forms of *ji* («sacrifice»), whose ideogram contains the concept of «*manifesting, showing, or making visible* that which had been hidden». In Angela Zito's ethnography, the hosting at a Tv talk show in China reflects the hierarchies of agency emerging as a powerfully shared imaginary of the party-state.

Sacrificiality

The decision to not exchange valuable objects and instead retain them to increase one's own capacity and prestige as host could be conceived as a form of sacrificial action, where wealth is sacrificed for fame and material substances are converted into ethical ones. Nancy Munn (1992 [1986]), Annette Weiner (1992) and Michael Lambek (2008) have developed a view of sacrifice as a creative and active engagement with the world, a work of «immoderation» and *transvaluation* that converts material substances into ethical ones, and converts commensurable values (such as money or other material wealth) into ethical metavalues capable of generating new dimensions of *influence* and imaginative participation and mutuality with the hosted parties. It is widely known that for Mauss, the practice of gift-giving

could lead to social renewal because the paradigmatic form of the gift was an extension of the sacrificial theory earlier developed with Henri Hubert (Hubert & Mauss 1964), where a part of the person is relinquished to another being. As it is a field of participation, hospitality is equally the ideal field for sacrificial action. This is not a novel idea: for Marcel Detienne, every feast in Ancient Greece was a sacrificial moment; feasting in other traditions (Fausto 2008) was a way to reclassify and eat what may otherwise not be eaten, to make available for human consumption what cannot otherwise be consumed. The effects of such sacrificial action would reflect back on the host, usually the main sponsor of the rite. Thus, engaging Vedic sacrifice, Jan Heesterman (1993: 35-36) takes this point even further: any sacrificial act requires a host (usually a patron, or man of wealth providing the resources) and a guest, who share both benefits and the burden of the performance.

Yet one can sacrifice objects out of hosting spaces. The accumulation of objects through hoarding in the United States and Japan is a delicate game. For Alexander Newell, the threshold represents the space of undecidability between welcoming and refusing not only guests but also objects. This is the issue that object-hoarders face in relation to much of what they own. They know they have to separate from some of their belongings but must constantly struggle between forms of beneficial accumulation, to the extent that one controls the flow of things, and a form of overwhelming accumulation, which develops of its own free will and becomes parasitic.

As Alexander Newell (this issue) notes, hospitality often consists in converting a form of material wealth into a «wealth of people» or «wealth-in-people». In Newell's ethnography of US hoarders, the house emerges as a «container», which constitutes a spatial extension of the body and is intimately entangled with our cognitive, affective, and motor processes so that the removal or inclusion of an object changes our bearings. Secondhand or previously possessed objects are subject to a process of meta-filiation, so to speak. One adopts them. Newell argues that if objects are social entities that arouse an individual's sense of moral obligation and care, bringing things home would then amount to engaging in a relationship of hospitality. Losing some would be tantamount to enacting a sacrificial logic.

Attentionality

Perhaps a key difference between commensality and hospitality or hosting may reside in what we can tentatively call the *attentionality* of the two events – that is, the gesture of offering food, sitting in the same location is performed equally but with a more *attentive* posture or (to put it another way) in serving and consuming *in a subjunctive mode*. Following François

Berthomé, Julien Bonhomme, and Grégory Delaplace (2012), I want to stress how hospitality could be the prime field for investigating the productivity of uncertainty at the heart of human sociality. At stake in this process is the role of anticipatory cognition and imagination, which finds their ideal testing ground in a hospitality setting.

Angela Zito (this issue) shows that the focus of the space of sacrificial hosting in Chinese Imperial Sacrifice was to *display* the emperor as the most important part of a type of ritual. In classic ancestral ritual, it is always the Son who hosts, even if the Father was dominant in the ideology of imperial patriarchy. The Tv talk shows examined by Zito reverse this structure: the filial son is the guest, while the state's surrogate hosts the show. Yet the party-state's entire current project hopes to empower its « Sons » (and daughters; that is, its « children ») as individually strong, entrepreneurial citizens of a twenty-first-century new China; to be sure, the state hopes to achieve that while not giving away too much of its own clout. Mediterranean hospitality attempts to unite separate realms – the domestic and the stranger – while in Chinese hosting, there are no strangers. One always participates as a guest. However, the party-state media apparatus constantly hails its audience as its « guests » as much as its government demands its obedience from its citizens – a cosmopolitics of hospitality that exploits kin-aesthetic forms.

These double-binding somatic and cognitive modes of attention may be related to what Gregory Bateson has defined as the « play » frame. Bateson (1955) notably argued that any notion of play requires a metacommunicative invocation stating « this is play », which contains a tripartite mode of action: the message creates the frame; it creates the paradox of the frame; it overrides the paradox, opening the possibility of playing. Crucially, the metacommunicative paradox also questions the character of the action that might not be just play; thus the statement « this is play » may shift into an interrogation: « Is this play? », giving rise to a series of doubts and potentially unsettling interactions that are, however, constructive rather than detrimental to the reproduction of the category of hospitality. Among the Wa, living on the China-Burma border, Magnus Fiskesjö (2010) acutely remarks that events of hospitality and hosting are denoted by a sort of controlled collapse through the sharing of *blai* (« rice beer »), a « controlled » collapse (*Ibid.*: 119) of the everyday, aimed to cause what he calls « participant intoxication » and demarcate boundaries between hosting (where known guests may refuse repeated requests to drink and share) and hospitality to foreigners, who may decline to engage in mutual sharing of liquors and thus give rise to suspicion and failed inclusion.

We can thus conceive our anthropologies of visiting as relying on prototypical epistemology of anticipation, a metapragmatic of trust. Contrary to what Adam Chau notes, where a culture of hosting only allows for trusted

guests, Luiz Costa and Carlos Fausto (this issue) muse that ambiguity and suspicion is not just characteristic of the relationship between hosts and guests, but of mastery relations, «which always require the mastering of other masters» (p. 207). «We are indeed surrounded by enemies, and this is why we must weave relations with numerous owners» (p. 205). As human capacity, trust is the ground of any cooperative action. Niklas Luhmann (2017 [1979]) has shown how the human mind constantly anticipates and ramifies an endless number of potential futures, generating a chronic condition of radical uncertainty and undecidability (Carey 2017). For Luhmann, trust acts like a cognitive sieve, limiting and simplifying the number of available actions and possible futures. This simplification of all possible developing situations requires the assumption that others will participate cooperatively in our lives. If social life is predicated on the trust of others (Bloch 2015 [2007]) and the assumption that others will participate cooperatively in our lives, it follows that the anticipation of the action of the others would require the ability to cognitively model the interdependence of one's own and others' behaviors, a form of *social contingency* and recursive dependence of our actions on the imagination of authenticity of other people's actions. Through imagination and capacity to generate subjunctive frames of action, humans have the capability to question the flow of interaction and opening horizons or domains that are grounded on certain hypothetical, «as-if» qualities (Seligman, Weller & Puett 2008).

Thus, hospitality involves: 1) an *anticipatory* dimension (where hosts must be proactive in anticipation of the intentions and needs of the guests); 2) a *subjunctive* dimension (involving a metacommunicative signal warning the participants about the nature of their action and producing an imaginative space where social rules, truth, and authenticity have a different bearing); and 3) a *metapragmatic* dimension (where the social actors reflect on the reasons of their own action and the possibility that their interlocutor may misunderstand them). As a rite of passage for incorporating the outside into the inside (the first anthropologist of hospitality is not Pitt-Rivers but Van Gennep), hospitality involves what Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw (1994) and Maurice Bloch (2004) refer to as the repetition of an action without questioning its origin; showing *deference* toward an agent or an authority acting on our behalf, or a moment of self-abandonment to the welcoming of the stranger.

As noted earlier, hospitality is also a *social philosophy of access*. The anticipation of the action of the others requires the ability to cognitively model the interdependence of one's own and others' behavior or enact a «mind reading» (Gygi, this issue). Fabio Gygi beautifully illustrates this «art of anticipation» in Japan's *omotenashi*: it is through the mastery of

the possibilities that the guests become completely passive, as the guest agency is diverted through the host who anticipates their needs, through what is often being described as a form of «telepathy». However, not all instances of hospitality will allow such mind-reading. The irreducibility of the stranger (*e.g.*, the Ancient Greek belief that it may be a god in disguise, or the Hindu idea that the guest is a divinity – Sanskrit, *atithidevo bhava* – equated in spiritual power to figures like parents and teachers) epitomizes this conundrum. Strangers are the carriers of opacity and anonymity. Isn't witchcraft connected to the first actions of openness against strangers (Da Col 2012b)? Julien Bonhomme (2016) reflects on a strange rumor in Central Africa about a woman, always a stranger, who calls on people to ask them for a glass of water. Those who invite her in for a drink are thought to die mysteriously not long after. Offering a glass of water, Bonhomme notes, constitutes the first rule of hospitality in Central Africa. He writes:

«The rumor conjures up a stranger who enters the domestic space, only to betray her chosen hosts' hospitality; in exchange for water, she offers death. The only solution to protect oneself is to refuse her this minimal hospitality; to not give her anything to drink, or else to offer her a glass of undrinkable salt water. The moral of this story of betrayed hospitality is ostensibly the same as that of genital theft (even though the encounter takes place at the threshold of the domestic space rather than in the public space): it is best to be wary of strangers who ask something of you. By forcing people to remain on their guard, these two rumors lead to a temporary inversion of the communal norms governing ordinary sociality» (*Ibid.*: 76).

How does hospitality achieve access to other people's minds and bodies? Through the extension of the self to control unknown others *via commensality* and *containment* (through the materiality and traps of the domestic space). Hospitality achieves this through a permutation of influence, part of the same symbolic economy of alterity that allows people, through imagination and semiotic *cum* material mediation, to partake in each other, a capacity foundational of other cooperative states normally glossed within the domain of «kinship» or mutuality but also spirit possession, sacrifice, gifts, and their logical negations such as witchcraft, negative reciprocity, and parasitism. We know that *hau* did not merely connect beings; *hau* was also a vehicle of sorcery (Alexander Newell, this issue).

How could we locate the radical uncertainty underlying hospitality within a theory of ritual? If one would like to conceive hospitality as a rite of passage – or incorporation, as Pitt-Rivers (2012 [1977]) has it – it would be easy to identify a stage of separation, turning the outsider into a guest; a stage of overcoming symbolic and material thresholds; and a final stage of integration of incorporation. However, this form of interaction cannot be

taken for granted. How can one be sure, for instance, that an ironic comment made during a feast was only intended to tease and not really meant to be offensive? Or that the food is not poisoned? Fabio Gygi notes that the telepathy expected in the «art of anticipation» is contrasted by the hospitality industry and normative model of hosting customs. However, this mode of interaction with customers is threatened by unpredictable situations. Thus, hospitality's ritualization is challenged by the subjunctive/playful frame of the interactional order and its double binds. We know, for example, that hospitality operates by ritualized utterances that are fundamentally aporetic: «My house is your house», a radical double bind and impossibility that could act as a playful statement to establish trust and cooperation, or rather a «technology of mistrust» aimed to penetrate the guest's domain of opaque interiority, often with dire and unpredictable outcomes, as a joke gone wrong. These playful-yet-unsettling events are occasions to deploy the fundamental human capacity to enter «a subjunctive universe», an «as-if» world shared by participants where experiences of lived reality as fractured, uncertain, and ambiguous are juxtaposed to the alternate totalizing world, one that we may want to call «reality», in which people strive to be represented as whole, certain, and coherent (Seligman, Weller & Puett 2008).

Masterhood

If we imagine personhood is the clothing through which «society» bestows agency over an individual in relation other members, one can conceive *masterhood* as the essential dependency on prehuman «metapersons» (Sahlins 2017) deemed as sources of life, death, will, and fate. For Luiz Costa and Carlos Fausto, hospitality in Amazonia is too closely connected with the twin concepts of sovereignty and domestication, which precludes its abstraction as cultural logic. Thus, as the sociocosmic connector between two unrelated beings (*i.e.*, a host and a stranger) hospitality is paradigmatically replaced by a relationship of «mastery» between a master and its subjects. Costa and Fausto (this issue) quoting Descola write that animist cosmologies have been previously defined as sociocosmic formations of «entities of equal status defined by the position that they occupy vis-à-vis one another [...] [and where] only structuring relations possible are those that operate with *potentially reversible links* between subjects, whether human or nonhuman [...] that is to say, the relations of predation, exchange, or gift giving» (p. 214).

However, they argue, such relations are unworkable without «a relation that registers, establishes, and/or maintains an asymmetry between terms». This relation indexes a directional bond between two subjects, defined through an asymmetry of agency: a master that contains, feeds, and

protects its «pets». Relations of predation, dominant in «venatic ideologies» (Viveiros de Castro 1998; Costa & Fausto 2010: 97-100) should be then supplemented by relations of «meta-filiation», where the world appears not only constituted by predators versus prey but also as masters and pets. Masters include all beings known by this term, including nonhuman and metapersons that exert influence in the cosmic polity. In Amazonia, «everything has an owner and “nature is domestic because it is always the *domus* of someone”» (Fausto 2008: 338).

Likewise, David Sneath and Caroline Humphrey (this issue) show that in Inner Asia, a master-spirit is thought to be in charge of different geographic locations that have an influence on wild and domesticated animals and may shape human destinies; «mastery» may also entail shamanic abilities to dominate spirits and to achieve desired results in healing or fighting against evil spirits while protecting one’s own clan⁶. The master/owner/host appears as more than a multiscalar idea in social realms, as a way of conceptualizing the ruler of a state, guardian of property, host, or manager of a household; it is also a cosmological notion, spanning a vast range from spirit owner or master of a territory to the so-called masters of wild animal species, geological formations, or even human-made implements.

David Sneath (this issue) argues how notions of hospitality to strangers are central to Mongolian life, yet the polity and the household calls for an *ezen* («master»), a term that is the root for other words like *ezemshih* («possession»). Sneath points out how the meaning of the term resembles that of *patron* but can also mean *host*, indicating that a householder has an obligation to act in an appropriate way. The position of *ezen* entails a responsibility for one’s subordinates. The phrase *ezen boloh* (to become an *ezen*) means to vouch for something or someone, or to take responsibility for them like a *guardian*. The Mongolian term *ezengüi hüühed* (a child without an *ezen*) means an illegitimate child. The authority of the *ezen* over his subjects was a central value, one that applied to a series of social scales – from the imperial to the domestic.

Inner Asian masterhood differentiates from Amazonian masterhood in a few ways. Inner Asian masterhood normally converges in a well-defined apical figure (spirit or territorial masters); Amazonian masterhood seems to be more dispersed and imprecise. The topology of masters containing others is similar in both regions; however, in Amazonia, masterhood concerns primarily the body rather than the house. In Amazonia, a master is not conceived as host but as a predator (normally a jaguar) that simultaneously feeds, takes

6. In contrast to Amazonia, where Carlos Fausto’s (2008) reflections on «mastery» have been fairly recent, the analysis of spirit «masters» in Inner Asia has been fairly extensive. See, for example: Roberte Hamayon (1990); Ludek Broz (2007); Giovanni Da Col (2012a); Donatas Brandišauskas (2016).

care of, and embodies its children. One could argue that the Amazonian master encompasses the different degrees of *englobing*: the house as primary metaphor of containment of others in Inner Asia is replaced by the body in Amazonia. Mastery is a moment in this wider movement of generalized social reproduction, which results from the conversion of symmetrical relations between affines into asymmetrical relations between consanguines; it is a symmetrical-asymmetrical cosmic schema for producing kinship.

But is a master, like a host, connected to a bounded space of hospitality? This is a case where an ethnographic variation shows how the notion of masterhood is distinguishable from the familiar notion of the master of the house. For Caroline Humphrey (this issue), in European history a master is thought to exercise sovereignty over a place or is emplaced in a specific domain, be it a domestic space, a homeland, or a country, where the guest/stranger is often considered as a traveler on the move. However, in a nomadic pastoral society like Mongolia, the range of capacities that makes an *ezen*ship (« master ») includes the capacity to overcome a spatial localization, a real or imagined « super-mobility », in contrast to lower-status people who were thought to be bound to specific territories. A master could be both a host and a traveling visitor. The traveling master is thought as a guest who holds sway, since the host may be of lower rank and power. A master is both an immanent and transcendental field; it controls space (by limiting the movements of his subordinates) and is free to override spatial and social restrictions, including the governmental and legal ones. Masterhood subverts distinctions between disinterested and self-serving actions normally at play in classic conceptions of hospitality. Where hospitality may be conceived as a negotiation of alterity by a master-host (*e.g.*, the stranger is brought into a community), masterhood may act an incipient expansive expression of sovereignty through its hypermobility. In other words, once you conceive that masters, including spirit-masters, do not just host but can transform other domus in their domains of hosting, « hospitality » would turn from a social form articulating and expressing generosity into a logic of predation.

Conclusion : Beyond Hospitality

In my previous work (Candea & Da Col 2012; Da Col & Shryock 2017), I reflected at great length on Pitt-Rivers's seminal influence on today's anthropological conceptual repertoire for the study of hospitality. Pitt-Rivers's interest was in the « law of hospitality », the « problem of how to deal with strangers ». In a similar fashion, the incorporation of the alterity of the stranger has been deemed to be essential for society's reproduction (Sahlins 2008). Hospitality, like the gift, has been taken up as a paramount

social device, charged with ambiguities that are somehow universal, enabling humans to join different groups, articulate or establish convivial relationships; it reinforces alliances, makes friends out of enemies (Gluckman 1973) and kins out of strangers, or even achieves spiritual merit. Recent reflections build on this paradigm and claim that one should *make the strangers one's host* (Boudou 2017) or *become stranger* (Agier 2018) or make collectivities like the body's immune system, built on a principle of «xenophilia» (Napier 2017) – that is, the search for foreign and unknown stimulus to recreate itself. This collection problematizes such assumptions by presenting an alternative paradigm – *an anthropology of visitational intimacy* – where hospitality toward strangers is one among a wide range of «social philosophies of access», part of the human capacity and propensity to create and maintain container-spaces of intimate relationships, including families, villages, and houses.

Consider, then, the possibility that the anthropology of hospitality could study a world without strangers. Imagine a society where the problem of an inside domain trying to incorporate an outside element within itself is left in the background, and hosting, conviviality, and relations with already prehuman hosts is foregrounded in everyday relationships. In that world, hosting would pertain to the domain of the innate; hospitality would be a natural human propensity, the articulation of an essential morality toward other beings, because that world is far more complex and includes metapersons and objects treated as persons. That hosting world would be a given: all people entering one's house would be known, hosts would be spirits, the permanent domus of a village with whom relations of hospitality, certain objects – deemed to be constitutive of the vitality of the hosting environment – would be treated like permanent human guests. An element of treacherousness would remain, but affinity and kinship would prevail. Strangers would be *events* and gifts could only happen once relations of hospitality were established. *Cumulus* is a thought experiment that aims to rewrite the lexicon of hospitality to go «beyond the constrained horizon of its Classical and Judeo-Christian heritage». It is a project which questions what renders the different anthropologies of visiting compatible or not, as the primary stage that would govern the relation between terms – being *host* or *guest*, *stranger* or *affine*, *home* or *foreign*, *master* or *subject*. As Philippe Descola (2013 [2005]: 392) ponders in the epilogue of *Beyond Nature and Culture*, one cannot inquire into the combinatory principles before the combining elements have been precisely defined.

Perhaps the ethical imperative of future hospitality can begin here.

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