The widespread diffusion and utilization of ICTs affords new forms of interaction and exchange to emerge between people on a global level. One such social form becoming increasingly popular is network hospitality, which refers visiting or accommodating someone, usually a person you do not know in advance, through hospitality exchange networks such as Couchsurfing. In this study I present a qualitative study on hospitality exchange in the context of Airbnb form the perspective of the users participating in the network as hosts, that is, by offering accommodation for other users of the network for a fee. Airbnb differs from reciprocal type of hospitality exchange that Couchsurfing and most of the other existing hospitality exchange networks foster in that the hosts determine a price for the accommodation they are offering. I refer to this kind of commodified form of network hospitality as monetary network hospitality.

My theoretical framework is drawn on Simmel’s theory of social forms, recent sociological literature on the changing modes of sociality in the current networked era, prior discussions about hospitality from historical, sociological and anthropological sources, and the emerging body of literature on network hospitality. The aim of my study is to increase our understanding of network hospitality as a social form and to shed light to the role of money in mediating and structuring the hospitality exchange and the social interaction it spurs. In my analysis I will deploy Simmel’s notion of sociability, a play form of sociality that gains its value from the interaction itself, as well as his theorization of the effects of money on social relations between individuals, to make sense of the sociality monetary network hospitality brings between the parties of the hospitality exchange.

My empirical material consists of eleven semi-structured interviews with Airbnb host. The material was gathered during the summer 2013 in Greater Helsinki area. At this time, there was in total around 400 Airbnb hosts in the area. Participants’ age varied from 22 to 58. Seven of them were male and five female. The interview material is analyzed with theory-bound qualitative content analysis.

My analysis shows that engaging in social interaction with people from around the world is an important motive for participating in network hospitality by hosting, also when it offers possibilities for financial gains. My analysis also shows that the hosts want to be in control of whom they accept as guests and often try to select guests that are in some way similar to them. My central finding is that the inclusion money in the hospitality exchange contributes to the hosts’ sense of control and ease in the exchange. The inclusion of money renders to hospitality exchange more structured and formal. However, this does not exclude the possibility for sociable interaction between the host and the guest to occur, but, on the contrary, it may in some cases even contribute for conditions for sociable interaction to occur.
Monetary Network Hospitality and Sociability: A Study of Hospitality Exchange in the Context of Airbnb

Tapio Ilmari Ikkala
University of Helsinki
Faculty of Social Sciences
Media and Communication Studies
Master’s Thesis
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1 Introduction

The motive of my study is to increase our understanding of modes of association and interaction in the increasingly networked and global world we live in\(^1\). My point of departure is *network hospitality*, which refers to the way users of *hospitality exchange networks*, such as Couchsurfing\(^2\) or Airbnb\(^3\), ‘connect to one another using online networking systems, as well as to the kinds of relationships they perform when they meet each other offline and face to face’ (Germann Molz 2011, 216). Engaging in network hospitality means, thus, visiting or accommodating someone, usually a person you do not know in advance, by making use of social networking systems.

According to Germann Molz (ibid.), the emerging forms of network hospitality prompt two broad interrelated questions. First, how do these emerging forms of hospitality challenge and reproduce more traditional forms of hospitality? And second, how might hospitality as a certain analytical point of view help us to make sense of the mobile, global, and networked world we live in and the changing patterns of social interaction in it? Lynch et al. (2011, 13-4) suggest that hospitality has considerable potential to function as a ‘social lens’, an analytical framework in studying myriad forms of macro-level structures — such as large-scale organizations of welcoming and excluding others at the institutional or state level (a topic of ever growing importance in our current era of accelerating global migration — as well as mundane practices of everyday interaction. The focus of this study is in the latter, as I will look into how hospitality is performed through novel global systems that employ new technologies for social networking and what kind of sociality this network hospitality spurs in the micro-level of everyday life.

The aim of my study is to increase our understanding of network hospitality as a social form, which the widespread diffusion and utilization of information and communication technologies has afforded, and to shed light to the role of money in mediating and structuring the hospitality exchange and the social relations it spurs. I chose to approach these themes from the host’s perspective, as their position in the hospitality exchange network is crucial in defining how the hospitality exchange is carried out. This approach obviously leaves out the guest’s experience of this kind of monetary network hospitality — one possible avenue for future research.

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\(^1\)This thesis is a part of the research of Helsinki Institute for Information Technology (HIIT)

\(^2\)http://www.couchsurfing.org

\(^3\)http://www.airbnb.com
I present a qualitative interpretative study on people who practice network hospitality as *hosts* (i.e., offer accommodation for other users of the network) through the hospitality exchange network Airbnb. Airbnb is a commercial hospitality exchange service, where the exchanges incorporate financial transactions between users (hosts determine a price for the accommodation they are offering, which the guests pay prior their arrival). I refer to this commodified form of network hospitality as *monetary network hospitality* to separate it from the reciprocal types of network hospitality that for example Couchsurfing fosters. My empirical material consists of eleven semi-structured interviews with Airbnb hosts. The material was gathered during the summer 2013 in Helsinki, Finland. At this time, there was a bit over 400 Airbnb hosts in the Greater Helsinki area. Airbnb was thus still relatively new and marginal phenomenon, although starting to gain coverage in the Finnish popular press.\(^4\)

My theoretical framework is drawn on Simmel’s theory of social forms, recent sociological literature on the changing modes of sociality in the current networked era, prior discussions about hospitality from historical, sociological and anthropological sources, and the emerging body of literature on network hospitality. A central work in the last category of references is Paula Bialska’s book *Becoming Intimately Mobile* (2012), an ethnographic treatise on practices of Couchsurfing and online hitchhiking\(^5\), which also partly draws on Simmel’s sociology of social forms. As the prior research on network hospitality has for the most part been conducted in the context of hospitality exchange networks functioning on the basis of non-monetary reciprocal exchange (e.g., Couchsurfing), in my empirical material, there is a new intermediary, money, structuring and mediating the exchange. This renders an interesting and largely untapped context for research.

This thesis begins with a brief presentation of the phenomenon of network hospitality. I will discuss how it has evolved into its current form and give a description of its defining characteristics. In this context I will also present in more detail the hospitality exchange network Airbnb from which my empirical material is derived from. In chapter 3 I will present Simmel’s sociology of social forms and his analysis of sociality in the modern urban setting characterized by continuous flow of external stimuli and interactions increasingly mediated by money, the objective and homogenizing measure of value. Then I will go on to how hospitality as a social form can be viewed through Simm-

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\(^4\)E.g., *Helsingin Sanomat* 2.1.2013 “Vaihda elämää” and *Helsingin Sanomat* 1.7.2013 “Häätmatkalainen arvostaa vuokrakoodin rauhaa”.

\(^5\)See e.g. [http://www.blablacar.com](http://www.blablacar.com) for this kind of service where people can list available rides and book them for a fee.
mel's idea of sociability. After this I briefly discuss historical and cultural roots of hospitality, and discuss how the phenomenon of network hospitality reproduces and challenges these earlier practices of hospitality. Then I will move on to present more recent sociological literature on sociality and modes of association in the current networked era. In this section I will discuss especially Wittel’s (2001) conception of network sociality to which Germann Molz (2014, 2011) refers to in her conception of network hospitality. Here I will also present the emerging body of literature addressing the novel phenomenon of network hospitality. In chapter 4 I will present a brief summary of the above mentioned themes and present my research questions. In chapter 5 will discuss my methodological commitments and describe the process of gathering and analysing my empirical material. In chapters 6 and 7 I present the results of my analysis. In chapter 8 I will present my concluding remarks and present some possible avenues for future research.
2 Network Hospitality and Airbnb

2.1 The Emerging Phenomenon of Network Hospitality

As already noted, network hospitality refers to how those engaging with hospitality exchange services connect to one another using online social networking systems, as well as to the kinds of relationships they perform when they meet face-to-face (Germann Molz 2011, 216). Members of these networks can engage in hospitality exchange by hosting visitors or by staying with others as guests. The most prominent example of a hospitality exchange network is Couchsurfing. In the Couchsurfing website\(^6\) the network is described in the following way:

Couchsurfing is a global network of 7 million travelers, adventure seekers and lifelong learners in over 100,000 cities in every country in the world. The free service connects travelers across the globe who share experiences ranging from hosting one another in their homes to having a beer to becoming close friends and travel companions. Hotels and tour companies can give you a bed or show you the sites, but they can’t make your trip truly meaningful or memorable. People do that.

As the above paragraph illustrates, the idea of Couchsurfing is not merely that people can find free accommodation while they are traveling. It is essentially about meeting people and engaging in meaningful social interaction. This is also well reported in accounts of practices of network hospitality (Bialski 2012; Bialski and Batorski 2009; Germann Molz 2014, 2007).

As Germann Molz (2011) notes, network hospitality is a relatively new phenomenon, even though it is rooted in ancient traditions of hospitality and welcoming strangers (these are further discussed in section 2.2.2). Its more recent historical precursors include various formal and informal hospitality networks of people who would provide meals, aid, transportation or accommodation to traveling strangers. For example, Adler (1985), in her historical analysis of tramping, describes how trade societies established networks of homes and inns to accommodate traveling craftsmen in the early nineteenth-century England.

The first formal hospitality network in many ways resembling the current networks was Servas International. It was founded in in 1949 by Bob Lutweiler as a non-profit cooperative to promote tolerance and world peace

through person-to-person interactions in a post-war world. The Servas network originally consisted of only a few hundred members whose contact details were published and distributed on paper. For decades, members relied on telephone calls or handwritten letters and postcards to arrange homestays with other members around the world. By the late 1990s, the Internet made paging through printed lists obsolete and a handful of new online social networks began to replace the Servas model of handwritten requests with online networking systems. Several hospitality exchange organizations appeared online around this time, including Hospitality Club, Global Freeloaders\(^7\), Hospitality Exchange\(^8\) and, eventually, Couchsurfing. Like SERVAS international, these networks were primarily non-profit projects guided by the belief that world travel, interpersonal exchanges between people form diverse cultures, and the generosity expressed through free hospitality, could spread tolerance, friendship and world peace at a grassroots level. (Germann Molz 2014, 2011)

Nowadays there exists a variety of hospitality exchange networks. Some of them are commercial enterprises, such as Airbnb, but most function on reciprocal fashion and thus do not incorporate financial transactions between the participants of the network. The design of the online sites around which they are organized share some basic characteristics. The users are asked to create a profile to the service, after which they can contact other users (and others can contact them) and agree on the details of the hospitality exchange. Trust between users is fostered through a recommendation system where users can rate each others’ performance as hosts and guests.

As Germann Molz (2014) notes, the concept of network hospitality does not refer only to hospitality exchange networks discussed above, but also to different kind of online networks which foster for example online ridesharing and hitchhiking (Bialski 2012; O’Regan 2012); meal sharing (e.g. Thisafgehaald\(^9\)); and travel sharing sites, such as RentALocalFriend\(^10\), through which traveler can meet up with locals who are willing to show them around their town. What is notable in these sites — and what makes them exemplars of network hospitality — is the way they mobilize social network sites into offline social interactions around a paradigm of hosting, guesting, and hospitality. These web sites facilitate flexible peer-to-peer (rather than corporation-to-customer) exchanges of the material resources of hospitality (food, drink, beds, or rides) as well as the sociable resources of hosting and guesting (guidance,

\(^7\)http://www.globalfreeloaders.com
\(^8\)http://www.hospex.net
\(^9\)http://www.thuisafgehaald.nl
\(^10\)http://www.rentalocalfriend.com
welcome, or conviviality in a new place). (Ibid.)

As Germann Molz (2014) argues,

> network hospitality emerges out of a rich historical context of hospitality, but it is also emblematic of a renewed significance of hospitality in everyday life, of new ways of hosting and guesting, and of the shifting arrangements and emerging affects of communal life.

This is, however, not to suggest network hospitality is a universal mode of sociality (ibid.). Indeed, sharing an accommodation with strangers who one meets online is generally seen as somewhat “alternative” social practice (Bialska and Batorski 2009). However, as (Germann Molz 2014) notes, the emerging phenomenon of network hospitality is related to the renaissance of the ‘sharing economy’ (Botsman and Rogers 2011), which refers to new modes of peer-to-peer, sharing production and consumption through various kinds of online and offline marketplaces (e.g., www.sharetribe.com). For example Botsman and Rogers (2011) illustrates this trend with examples of network hospitality sites.

As Germann Molz (2011, 215) notes, we live in a world where new technologies are creating new hybrid spaces of social interaction, enabling new forms of intimacy and togetherness at a distance and redefining who counts as a ‘friend’ or a ‘stranger’. Network hospitality incorporates ‘complex interplay of mobility and immobility, online and offline interaction, brief but intense encounters, and local articulations of a global project’ (ibid., 216-7). In the next chapter I will visit sociological literature concerning the nature of modern sociality in a broader perspective, which will help putting the phenomenon of network hospitality in context. However, before that, I will briefly present the site from which my empirical material is gathered, that is, the hospitality exchange service Airbnb.

### 2.2 Hospitality Exchange Service Airbnb

The site form which I collected my empirical material is Airbnb, a peer-to-peer online renting service through which people are able to rent unoccupied living space and other short-term lodging to guests. Currently, it claims to have over 600 000 listings in over 34 000 cities and in 192 countries.  
Airbnb was founded in 2009. It is a profit seeking enterprise that charges a fee of 3 % form the hosts and a fee of 6-12 % from the guests every time a...

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booking is completed. However, Airbnb markets itself as a global community ‘comprised of users, passionate and eager to explore and enrich the world through the sharing of space’\textsuperscript{12}. In its functioning it leans heavily to a rating system where guests and hosts can rate each other. These reviews are shown in the user’s profile, and, thus, they are visible to other members of the netowrk. This transparent recommendation system is intended to build and maintain trust between users of the service.

There are two differing ways to perform hosting through Airbnb. One is \textit{remote hospitality}, where the host is not physically sharing her home with the guest but instead lodges somewhere else during the guest’s stay. Here the interaction with the guest is limited to messages exchanged through the Airbnb service, emails, text messages, phone calls, and maybe quick meetings where the keys to the apartment are exchanged and final details of the hospitality exchange discussed. My material suggests that the term hospitality is relevant here, since many of my interviewees engaging in this kind of hosting were willing to make a great effort in order to ensure that their guests feel welcome and enjoy their stay as much as possible. Another way to perform hosting through Airbnb is by being physically present and sharing the apartment with the guest. I refer to this as \textit{on-site hospitality}.

3 Background and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Simmel’s Sociology of Social Forms

2.1.1 Society as Interaction

Georg Simmel (1858-1918) was a German sociologist and philosopher who wrote extensively on various social and cultural phenomenon, such as individuality, modes of social interaction, urbanism and money economy. According to Simmel, society comes to being through interaction. As Pietila (2011, 172) puts it in his book *Reason of Sociology: Georg Simmel and Beyond*: ‘Society is the freeze-frame of a process in which interaction means sociation’. And citing Simmel (1971, l. 1193-8):

Society exists when number of individuals enter into interaction. This interaction always arises on the basis of certain drives for the sake of certain purposes. Erotic, religious, or merely associative impulses, and purposes of defense, attack, play, gain, aid, or instruction — these and countless others cause man to live with other men, to act for them, with them, against them, and thus correlate his condition with theirs. [...] The significance of these interactions among men lies in the fact that it is because of them that the individuals, in whom these driving impulses and purposes are lodged, form a unity, that is, society. For unity in the empirical sense of the world is nothing but the interaction of elements. An organic body is a unity because its organs maintain a more intimate exchange of their energies with each other than with any other organism; a state is a unity because its citizens show similar mutual effects.

For Simmel, society is thus a constellation of interacting individuals, linked to each other through various kinds of ephemeral and lasting relations. From this follows Simmel’s sociological maxim: he directs sociologists to study in minute the social relationships and interactions between humans. He claims that only through detailed examination of the different ways in which individuals compete, cooperate and drift into conflict, can we understand the workings of modern society.

13 Most of the Simmel’s texts I cite are from a Kindle Edition of a collection of English translations titled *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings of Georg Simmel* (1971). The exact locations of the citations are indicated with a location number (e.g. l. 1193), which are used in Kindle books instead of page numbers.
Simmel's views were initiated by the rapid changes that industrialisation and urbanisation laid upon European societies in the 19th century. Living most of his life in Berlin, a city going through a radical phase of expansion and modernisation during Simmel’s lifespan\textsuperscript{14}, Simmel was devoted analyzing the organization of social life in the metropolitan setting characterized by continuous flow of stimuli, fleeting interactions and disembedded social relations. Although written over a hundred years ago, Simmel's analyses of social forms, the ways in which social life is organized in a specific social and historical setting, are still valuable in the efforts to understand and make sense of our current social conditions penetrated by new means and technologies of communication which further expand our possibilities to interact and take part in the increasingly globalizing social world.

I will next introduce Simmel’s sociological scheme in more detail, but first it is worthwhile to note a few things about Simmel’s terminology. As Pyyhtinen (2010, 23) notes, Simmel does not distinguish between the notions of the social (\textit{das Sozial}) and society (\textit{Gesellschaft}) in any consistent manner and rather uses them interchangeably. This actually stems from the German concept \textit{Gesellschaft}, which can mean e.g., a society in the sense of a nation state, a corporation, a group of people and, as Simmel stresses, direct or indirect interconnectedness of individuals (Büschegs 1989, 245-52). However, it is important to note that Simmel employs the term society in two senses, broad and narrow. The first designates to the ‘specific socio-historical social order’ (Pyyhtinen 2010, 23). This is the way we usually understand the concept society, for example when we talk about Finnish society. The latter can be interpreted as ‘a principle of association: it is coextensive with relations, connections and associations' (ibid.). Although the first notion is

\textsuperscript{14}Mark Twain describes this transformation of Berlin vividly in his 1892 piece “The Chicago of Europe” written to a Chicago based newspaper Daily Tribune: ‘I feel lost in Berlin. It has no resemblance to the city I had supposed it was. There was once a Berlin which I would have known, from descriptions in books–the Berlin of the last century and the beginning of the present one: a dingy city in a marsh, with rough streets, muddy and lantern-lighted, dividing straight rows of ugly houses all alike, compacted into blocks as square and plain and uniform and monotonous and serious as so many dry-goods boxes. But that Berlin has disappeared. It seems to have disappeared totally, and left no sign. The bulk of the Berlin of today has about it no suggestion of a former period. The site it stands on has traditions and a history, but the city itself has no traditions and no history. It is a new city; the newest I have ever seen. Chicago would seem venerable beside it; for there are many old-looking districts in Chicago, but not many in Berlin. The main mass of the city looks as if it had been built last week, the rest of it has a just perceptibly graver tone, and looks as if it might be six or even eight months old.’ http://www.twainquotes.com/Travel1891/April1892.html, accessed 30.4.2014
an essential abstraction in any sociological thinking, Simmel’s emphasis is on the latter. He holds that sociology should investigate the principles and processes on which society rests, that is, the interconnectedness and interactions of individuals (ibid., 26).

2.1.2 Distinguishing the Forms and Contents of Social Life

The fundamental distinction in Simmel’s sociological approach is the one he makes between the contents and forms of social life. According to him (Simmel 1971, l. 1207)

[a]ny social process or phenomenon is composed of two elements which in reality are inseparable: on the one hand, an interest, a purpose, or a motive; on the other, a form or mode of interaction among individuals through which, or in the shape of which, that content attains social reality.

The object of sociology is to study the latter, ‘these kinds and forms of sociation’(ibid., l. 1216). Later commentators have labelled this approach as formal sociology (Noro 1991, 34).

As Wolf (1950, xxxix) notes, Simmel does not give a clear definition to the concept of social form. Nevertheless, the concept points towards the ways in which humans come together, cooperate, and conflict in more or less stable patterns or structures. Abel (1959, 467) holds that actually the concept of ‘form’ is not a necessity in Simmel’s thinking and could be replaced with other similar concepts:

Instead of forms-of-sociation he [Simmel] might just as well have spoken of ”modes of reciprocity” or ”types of transactions”. Pattern, structure, type, even social process, are appropriate equivalents for Simmel’s ”form”.

In this theses I will nevertheless employ Simmel’s terminology and use the concept of social form, which, although escaping a precise definition, refers to the particular ways in which the content of social life becomes manifested in observable structures and patterns.

Simmel acknowledges that this distinction between forms and contents of social life is merely analytic — in the empirical world they are always entangled. However, he (ibid., l. 1216-25) holds that this analytical distinction is necessary for thorough sociological inquiry:
To separate, by scientific abstraction, these two factors of form and content which are in reality inseparably united; to detach by analysis the forms in interaction or sociation from their contents (through which alone these forms become social forms); and to bring them together systematically under a consistent scientific viewpoint — this seems to me the basis for the only, as well as the entire, possibility of a special science of society as such.

Following the perpetual entangling of forms and contents of social life Simmel (ibid.) emphasizes that ‘the same form of sociation can be observed in quite dissimilar contents and in connection with quite dissimilar purposes’, and vice versa:

Superiority, subordination, competition, division of labor, formation of parties, representation, inner solidarity coupled with exclusiveness toward the outside, and innumerable similar features are found [...] in a band of conspirators as in an economic association, in an art school as in a family. However diverse the interests that give rise to these sociations, the forms in which the interests are realized are identical. On the other hand, the identical interest may be embodied in very different sociations. Economic interest is realized both in competition and in the planned organization of producers, in isolation from other groups and in fusion with them.

As a study of social forms, Simmel (ibid., l. 1267) compares sociology to geometry, which studies ‘the forms through which any material becomes an empirical body, and these forms as such exist, of course in abstraction only, precisely like the forms of sociation’. Although in principle similar, the subject matters of the two of course differ radically. When ‘[g]eometry can construe the whole range of possible formations from a relatively few fundamental definitions’, ‘[n]ot even a remotely similar resolution is to be hoped for [...] as regards the forms of sociation’ (ibid., l. 1267-75):

Sociological forms, if they are to be even approximately defined, can apply only to a limited range of phenomena. Even if we say, for instance, that superordination and subordination are forms found in almost every human sociation, we gain very little from this general knowledge. What is needed is the study of specific kinds of superordination and subordination, and of the specific forms in which they are realized. Through such study, of course, these forms
would lose in applicability what they would gain in definiteness. (Ibid., l. 1275.)

In the above paragraphs we can already note a tension in Simmel’s argument. For if ‘there is no such thing as interaction “as such” — there are only specific kinds of interaction’ (ibid., l. 1258), the problem is, how can we systematically study and analyze them so that we don’t lose the particularity of each social form but at the same time are able to produce knowledge that would apply outside the particular formation?

2.1.3 The Levels of Social Forms

Simmel’s resolution to the question asked above was to suggest that sociological analysis could be conducted on different levels. In his introduction to *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings of Georg Simmel* (1971, l. 302) Levine identifies four types or levels of social forms, which Simmel theorizes. These are (1) the forms of elementary social interaction, (2) institutionalized structures, (3) autonomous “play” forms, and (4) the generic form of society itself.

The first refers to ‘elementary social behavior’, which ‘originate[s] in, and remain[s] close to, the practical needs of daily life’ (ibid., l. 280). These are the mundane, spontaneous everyday interactions that constitute the “microscopic-molecular” processes of social life (ibid., l. 285). Simmel (1997, 110) describes this sphere of social interaction in the following way:

That people look at one another and are jealous of one another; that they exchange letters and have dinner together; that apart from all tangible interests they strike one another as pleasant or unpleasant; that gratitude for altruistic acts makes for inseparable union; that one asks another to point out a certain street; that people dress and adorn themselves for each other — these are the few casually chosen illustrations from the whole range of relations that play between one person and another.

The second level of forms, institutionalized structures, refer to labor unions, parties, family structure, different kinds of communities etc. They represent an objectification of social form to some kind of more or less stable structure with certain organization. (Ibid., l. 259.)

Third level is the ‘autonomous “play” forms’ of sociality. These are forms of interaction that emerge ‘not for some practical purpose but for the sake of themselves’:
Devoid of pragmatic content, they exist for those moments when we wish to participate in the "world" of society as an end in itself. [...] Instead of the serious competitive pursuits of economic or political goals, one can play at aggressive competition through sports and games. (Ibid., l. 295-304.)

The fourth and final level is the generic form of society itself comprised of the networks of human relationships — a view which was already discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Society is thus ‘the abstract general concept which subsumes all the particular forms of sociality’ (ibid., l. 6681), it is the manifestation of the particular organization of the drives and needs of humans.

Of the levels of social forms presented above, my focus is especially on the third level, that is, the "play" forms of sociality. In particular, I will deploy Simmel’s idea of sociability (die Geselligkeit) (ibid., l. 2716-990), a social form which gains its value from the interaction itself — not from some ulterior ends — to make sense of the social dimensions of network hospitality.

However, before moving on to these themes in more detail, I want point out the ambiguity and flexibility of Simmel’s fundamental distinction between social forms and contents of social life. Simmel holds that the content of a particular social interaction ‘often if not always has a decisive effect on the way the interaction is formed’. For example, that a number of persons assemble to play music may cause them to organize themselves differently from when they come together to carry scientific research. (ibid., l. 324.) Also, Simmel holds that social forms may influence the contents of the social life. In The Philosophy of Money (1990, 444-5) Simmel writes about the rationalizing effects that money economy, a particular form of economic organization, has various spheres of life.

2.1.4 Towards Modern Forms of Sociality

Although there exists a rich intellectual and cultural history behind sociological thinking, the rise of sociology as a separate academic discipline was closely linked to the radical changes that industrialisation and urbanisation had on Western societies. One of the prime roles of sociology was (and continues to be) the ‘interpreter of modern culture and society’ (Gronow, Noro, and Töttö 1996, 21). As it was noted in the beginning of this section, also Simmel was devoted to understand this ‘modern condition’, in which the populations of growing metropolises lived. However, it was not Simmel but another German sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936), whose theory of the shift from rural to urban settings has been most influential.
Tönnies (1989, 22-3) argues that if all sociological concepts would be somehow lost or forgotten, the theoretical framework of the discipline could be reconstructed by using Tönnies’s two concepts: Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. Tönnies (2002) uses them to describe and analyze social effects of urbanization, the shift from rural communities to metropolitan societies. With the concepts Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft Tönnies wanted to distinguish the two fundamental ways in which humans relate to each other and which produce two different types of social relations. If sociality is held valuable in itself or somehow follows from natural order of things, it leads to Gemeinschaft type of social relations. If sociality is merely instrumental, a mean to an end, it produces Gesellschaft type of social relations. The concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft are ideal types: in the empirical world they do not exist as such but social relations always incorporate elements from both types of sociality. However, social relations can be characterized according to which of the ideal types is dominant. As institutions dominated by Gemeinschaft, Tönnies mentions family, clan, village, and friendship. Institutions such as city, state, industry and markets are dominated by Gesellschaft. According to Tönnies, there has been a historical change from societies characterized by Gemeinschaft to societies characterized by Gesellschaft. This has resulted to a society, where every social relation has the tendency to become instrumental or calculative.

Although Simmel does not directly engage Tönnies’s ideas in any of his writings, also he operates with this distinction between primitive and more complex collectives, between small and large groupings. However, for Simmel the rise of Gesellschaft is not merely a tragedy; according to him, the progressive loosening of group ties permits the development of individuality. As Simmel (1971, l. 4624) puts it: ‘Individuality in being and action generally increases to the degree that the social circle encompassing the individual expands’. However, this individuality evolves along with other specific ‘mental stances’ which the metropolitan setting spurs.

According to Simmel (1971, l. 5775) urban life consists of a continuous flow of external stimuli, the tumult of metropolis, which stands in ‘deep contrast with the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the [...] small town and rural existence’. In order to go on in our daily life in the city, we are compelled not to react to every sound, smell or new person we perceive. Thus, we develop the blasé attitude, certain form of reservedness, towards this continuous bombardment of stimulus. Simmel argues that this is reflected in the social life of in a city. As it is impossible to engage with everyone a city dweller meets in his or her daily life (this would lead to a psychological catastrophe), strangers are met with reservedness. Thus, the
flip side of individuality is that nowhere does one feel as lonely and ditched as in the buzz of the metropolis.

According to Simmel this metropolitan individuality is also inextricably related to the modern money economy. Money frees individuals from various kinds of traditional and moral constraints, and thus contributes to their personal autonomy. However, at the same time the natural indifference of money has a rationalizing and homogenising effect on the life and interactions of individuals. In The Philosophy of Money (1990) Simmel writes about the rationalizing effects that money economy, a particular form of economic organization, has various spheres of life. Simmel argues that ‘the money economy enforces the necessity of continuous mathematical operations in our daily transactions’, which leads to ‘calculating and reducing of qualitative values to quantitative ones’. ‘Gauging values in terms of money’, he continues, ‘has taught us to determine and specify values down to the last farthing and has thus enforced a much greater precision in the comparison of various contents of life’. (Ibid. 444-5)

Because of the character of calculability which money has, there has come into the relationships of the elements of life a precision and a degree of certainty in the definition of the equalities and inequalities and an unambiguousness in agreements and arrangements, just as externally this precision has been brought about through the general diffusion of pocket watches. [...] To the extent that money, with its colorlessness and its indifferent quality, can become a common denominator of all values, it becomes the frightful leveler — it hollows out the core of things, their peculiarities, their specific values and their uniqueness and incomparability in a way which is beyond repair. ((Simmel 1971, 1.5817-56).)

Thus, Simmel argues that at same time as it affords precision and calculability in social relations, money also creates indifference and increases the social distance between actors. However, as I will illustrate in chapter 6 where I present the findings from my empirical material, this potential distance money creates between actors, at least in the context of hospitality exchange, do not exclude the possibility of sociable interaction between people. Instead, its mediating effect may in some cases provide conditions in which a sociable level of interaction is even easier to reach than in reciprocal hospitality exchange. This is something I will elaborate further in my analysis, but before that I will briefly present hospitality as a social form and Simmel’s notion of sociability.
2.2 Hospitality as a Social Form
2.2.1 Hospitality and Sociability

Oxford English Dictionary\(^{15}\) defines hospitality as ‘the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers, with liberality and goodwill’. According to Merriam-Webster\(^{16}\) dictionary hospitality refers to ‘the activity of providing food, drinks, etc. for people who are guests or customers of an organization’. These are the ways in which we usually understand the concept of hospitality. However, there has been attempts to formulate more precise definitions of the concept. For example, Morrison and O’Gorman (2006, 3) has offered the following definition:

> It represents a host’s cordial reception, welcome and entertainment of guests or strangers of diverse social backgrounds and cultures charitably, socially or commercially with kind and generous liberality, into one’s space to dine and/or lodge temporarily. Dependent on circumstance and context the degree to which the hospitality offering is conditional or unconditional may vary.

In the above definition hospitality can be either conditional or unconditional, which means that there may be some kind of price for hospitality or it may be offered without any expectations of compensation from the receiving party. Brotheron (1999, 168), in turn, defines hospitality as

> [a] contemporaneous human exchange, which is voluntarily entered into, and designed to enhance the mutual well-being of the parties concerned through the provision of accommodation, and/or food and/or drink.

Defining hospitality in terms of exchange puts emphasis in the relationship between the host and the guest, the parties of hospitality. Hospitality is seen as a specific kind of exchange relation that forms between the host and the guest. This exchange incorporates both material and symbolic transactions. It is manifested in material acts of hospitality by the host, such as offering accommodation or food, and through symbolic transactions in the host-guest interaction, for example through guest’s expressions of gratitude. This framework of exchange, I argue, is the best way to conceptualize hospitality as

\(^{15}\)http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/hospitality, accessed 29 April 2014
it emphasizes the social nature of hospitality. It also calls attention to the various ways in which hospitality can be acted out. It can be performed in order to make profit or offered without any expectations of reciprocity; it can be offered to either strangers or acquaintances; or it can mean acting out an acknowledged moral imperative or genuine good will of the host.

Lashley (2000) has mapped out a three domain framework in order to conceptualize the different spheres of hospitality exchange.

![Three Domain Framework of Hospitality](image)

**Figure 2**: The three domain framework of hospitality (l. 300).

As we can see in Figure 1, the three partly inter-related domains are social, private and commercial. The social domain of hospitality refers to the social setting in which hospitality takes place as well as to the social functions of hospitality. (Ibid., l. 387-405.) Hospitality is performed through private acts of hospitality, and these acts are articulated in a culturally and socially shared matrix of beliefs (Heal 1990, 2). These norms and practices of hospitality vary across cultures and change over time. The private domain of hospitality incorporates the ways in which hospitality is then acted out in the domestic settings. In discussing the private domain, attention is paid, for example, to how the host-guest relationship forms and develops and of what kinds of
acts does ‘being hospitable’ consist of. (Lashley 2000, l. 495-540.) And finally, the commercial domain concerns the provision of hospitality as an economic activity (guesthouses, hotels, etc.) (ibid., l. 540-93).

Interestingly, we can locate the hospitality exchange network Airbnb, the site where my empirical material is gathered from, at the intersection of these three domains. Hospitality exchange through Airbnb is a private form of hospitality as the hosts are accommodating the guests in their homes, according to their own preferences and customs. However, as hospitality is offered in return to financial compensation, there is also a commercial dimension in the exchange. And finally, hospitality exchange through Airbnb is part of the emerging culture of network hospitality, a form of hospitality that takes place between peers from different countries and deploys online social networking systems in coordinating the hospitality exchange. It is an example of the emerging forms of hospitality in our increasingly global and networked world.

It is notable that the definitions of hospitality often go beyond the material aspects of hospitality (accommodation, food, drink). Overall, the social interaction between the host and the guest is an important aspect of hospitality. It is when we conceive hospitality from this point of view, that Simmel’s idea of sociability becomes relevant. This is because we may argue that ideally the host-guest interaction evolves in the frame of sociability, a stylized form of being together where sociality, often in the form of casual “chatting”, becomes an and end in itself. The existing literature on network hospitality, as well as my own material, in fact, suggests, that this kind of sociable interaction is in fact an important motive to take part in network hospitality in the first place. I will now give a detailed description of Simmel’s notion of sociability.

Simmel explains that the various sociological structures of art and play (e.g., music or card-play) result from specific artistic and play impulses of humans. This directs attention to the fact that in every play or artistic activity there is contained a common element not affected by their differences of content.

Some residue of satisfaction lies in gymnastics, as in card-playing, in music, and in plastic art, something which has nothing to do with the peculiarities of music or plastic art as such but only with the fact that both of the latter are art and both of the former are play. A common element, a likeness of psychological reaction and need, is found in all these various things — something easily distinguishable from the special interest which gives each its distinction. (Simmel 1971, l. 2771-9.)
Simmel argues that also social interaction can occur in this kind of ‘play form’, and he calls this sociability. And in the same way as there is an impulse to art and play in humans, there is also an impulse to sociability, impulse to association for its own sake. Simmel argues that while human associations are often entered into because of some ulterior interests, there is in all of them a residue of pure sociability (Simmel 1949, 254).

To be sure, it is for the sake of special needs and interests that men unite in economic associations or blood fraternities, in cult societies or robber bands. But above and beyond their special content, all these associations are accompanied by a feeling for, by a satisfaction in, the very fact that one is associated with others and that the solitariness of the individual is resolved into togetherness, a union with others. (Ibid., 2779.)

Sociability, then, is the kind of interaction which only brings satisfaction of the impulse to sociability. As being voided from interests outside the social situation, co-operating or clashing, sociability is highly dependent on “good form” (ibid., l. 2788). It is,

in its conditions as in its results, strictly limited to its personal bearers; the personal traits of amiability, breeding, cordiality, and attractiveness of all kinds determine the character of purely sociable association (ibid., l. 2805).

Simmel explains that in sociable interaction one should exclude certain matters from the social situation. Simmel refers to these as upper and lower thresholds that one should avoid exceeding. The upper threshold is built of ‘objective’ (in the sense of impersonal) social positions such as wealth, learning, fame, other merits and exceptional abilities and talents. In sociable interaction one should not refer too much to any of these. One should also abstain form stressing one’s most personal qualities, character, mood or private concerns, so that the lower threshold is not crossed. Crossing the upper threshold often rises from the need for recognition and symbolic domination, and inflicts the sociable situations with excess severity and weight. Crossing the lower threshold, in turn, would make the conversation more like therapy, confession, voyeurism and/or comforting sympathy. This is why tact is so important in sociable interaction. As this kind of intermediate space between personal and object-oriented social interaction, sociability is about creating an “artificial” world of pure interaction, which is oriented only towards the present moment. (Toiskallio 2002; Noro 1991.)
Simmel identifies two further conditions for sociability. Sociability is “homogenic interaction”, where one acts as if all the interacting parties were equal and one has a genuine respect for all of them. Simmel states that this ideal equality of the interacting parties can only be obtained between members of the same social strata, even though the rules of upper and lower threshold are appreciated. Simmel 1971, l. 2908-25 According to Noro, this is because people with differing social statuses lack common topics and codes of interaction. Another condition is that the content of “chat” in sociability — although only secondary to the lively interaction — must be interesting and gripping. All forms of conversational interaction — arguments and the appeals to the norms recognized by both parties; the conclusion of peace through compromise and the discovery of common convictions; etc. — otherwise in the service of innumerable contents and purposes of human intercourse, have here their meaning in themselves; that is to say, in the relations which they establish between individuals. Interesting content is indispensable for lively exchange of talk, and thus a necessary mean to the actual end, the sociable intercourse. (Noro 1991, 56-9.)

Simmel claims that generally all interaction may be more or less conceived as exchange. However, not all exchange entails calculation of profit or loss (as in economic exchange), and this is the case in sociable interaction. (Simmel 1971, l. 1459-83.) As Simmel (ibid., l. 1483) notes:

Either the contribution of each party [to a conversation] stands beyond such a consideration, or else simply to be allowed to contribute is itself a gain — in which case we perceive the response of the other, despite our own offering, as an unearned gift.

Sociability is thus essentially a reciprocal mode of interaction. It necessitates that all the interacting parties commit to the rules of sociability and abstain from crossing the thresholds discussed above. The pleasure one obtains form sociable interaction is always dependent on the pleasure of other interacting parties.

As Noro (1991, 57-9) notes, Simmel holds that sociability is a way for individuals to adapt to and find relief from the ‘modern condition’ of urban life penetrated with instrumental social relations. Sociability can be seen as a mean to obtain a sense of ‘imagined communality’, or — using Tönnies’s terminology — to reproduce an ideal Gemeinschaft (236). Imagined or ideal in a sense that it always necessitates some kind of reservedness and stylization from the interacting parties in order for them to not cross the thresholds discussed above and reach sociable level of interaction.
Next, to provide further context for understanding the phenomenon of network hospitality, I will give a short outline of the cultural and historical roots of hospitality. I will then move on to describe Wittel’s (2001) conception of network sociality, on top of which Germann Molz (2014, 2011) draws her conception of network hospitality.

### 2.2.2 Origins of Hospitality

Hospitality can be viewed as a fundamental part of human sociality. It has been manifested in different forms in different phases of history and across different cultures. There exists also numerous references to hospitality, for example, within the Old Testament. In the Book of Genesis, God offers the newly created world as living space and its plants and trees as food to all living creatures; they are to be guests in God’s world and at God’s table. (O’Gorman 2007, l. 345.) Many laws in the Old Testament specifically require hospitality and concern for strangers in particular:

> If you have resident stranger in your country, you will not molest them. You will treat resident strangers as though they were native-born and love them as yourself for you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt. (Leviticus, 19:33-4 cited in O’Gorman 2007, l. 345.)

As O’Gorman (2007) notes, all modern words readily associated with hospitality are evolved from the same hypothetical Proto-Indo-European root *ghos-ti* which means: stranger, guest, host or someone with whom one has reciprocal duties of hospitality. *Ghos-ti* also evolved to the Latin root *hostis*, which refers to enemy or army. A stranger is always a potential threat. The combination of *ghos-ti* and another Proto-Indo-European root *poti*, powerful, gave the compound root *ghos-pot*, which evolved to the Latin *hospes* and eventually into hospice, hospitable, hospital, hospitality, hostage and hostel. Hospitality is also about demonstrating that one has the resources and means, the power, to be hospitable and welcome strangers and provide them with food and shelter.

The Greek language also evolved from the same Proto-Indo-European base. *Ghos-ti* gave the Greek *xenos* which has the interchangeable meaning guest, host or stranger. The law or custom pertaining to the Ancient Greeks, of

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18 This word is constructed, i.e. its existence has been deduced by linguistic scholars and there is no written evidence to prove the existence of the word (O’Gorman 2007, l. 329)
offering protection and hospitality to strangers is philoxenos, literally ‘love of strangers’; antithesis of which is still in common English usage today: ‘xenophobia’.19 (ibid., l. 319.)

Scholars form a variety of disciplinary perspectives have suggested that hospitality is an important social form holding social life together (Lynch et al. 2011; Lashley, Lynch, and Morrison 2007). For example, Heal (1990) argues that hospitality has been an important instrument of social order in a wide range of premodern societies such as early Rome, medieval Provence, the Maori, Indian tribes of Canada, early modern England and Mediterranean societies, and northern Africa. For example, in his study of pastoralist societies in north and north-east Africa, where feuding between bands and clans is idiomatic and hierarchical systems of authority are lacking, Evans-Pritchard (1940) locates hospitality at the heart of system of social order. Selwyn (2000, l. 685), in turn, mentions the elaborate systems of feasting amongst societies as far apart as the New Guinea Highlands and the Amazon forest as prime examples of socially significant institutions of hospitality. In these societies,

feasting, and the hospitality it signifies consolidates and/or establishes links between groups of kin, and is an integral part of the processes of drawing and re-drawing the parameter of alliances between such groups.

The duty to provide hospitality, act with generosity as a host, and to protect visitors in premodern societies was not a matter left to the preferences of individuals but was incorporated into the cultural norms and codes of conduct of these societies. Failures to act appropriately was treated with social condemnation.(Lashley 2000, l. 397-406.) Selwyn (2000, l. 676) argues, that

one of the principal functions of any act of hospitality is either (in the case of an existing relationship) to consolidate the recognition that hosts and guests already share the same moral universe or (in the case of a new relationship) to enable construction of a moral universe to which both the host and guest agree to belong.

By a shared ‘moral universe’ Selwyn refers to a shared system of beliefs and values. According to Selwyn (ibid.) hospitality can convert ‘strangers into familiars, enemies into friends, friends into better friends, outsiders into insiders,

19Interestingly, though, the word xenos was reserved for those strangers or outsiders, who were not members of the polis but nevertheless had Greek origins. Non-Greek aliens were referred to as barbaroi, strangers so strange that were by definition outside the range of philoxenos (Reed 2008, 39).
non-kin into kin. Hospitality is thus a way to maintain and establish solidarity and feelings of togetherness between people, and thus, it is an important social form holding societies together.

Also, hospitality can be a way to act out one’s social status and to meet one’s needs of social recognition. An extreme example of this is ‘potlatch’, a gift-giving feast practiced, for example, by indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest Coast of Canada and the United States. In a ‘potlatch’, the host, a chieftain of a clan or tribe, challenged a guest chieftain to exceed him in his power to give away goods. This was carried out by a reciprocal ‘potlatch’, hosted by the original guest tribe, which attempted to beat the gifts of the other tribe by even more excessive offering of goods. Sometimes this excessive giving and consumption even led to intentional destruction of goods: the tribe wanted to showcase that it so wealthy that it can for example burn valuable goods in a bonfire (Johansen 1967, 7-8.)

Forms of hospitality and the value placed on being hospitable varies through time and between societies. As we have seen, hospitality has occupied a central position in the social organization of premodern societies. However, for example Heal (1990, 1) argues, that hospitality is increasingly becoming a ‘private form of behaviour, exercised as a matter of personal preference within a limited circle of friendship and connection’. She argues, that the importance accorded to hospitality has waned considerably — except, of course, in the commercial sphere. However, the emerging practices of network hospitality seem to challenge this view, since they predominantly foster hospitality exchange between people who do not know each other in advance. Also, as noted in section 2.1, the idea that hospitality exchange between people around the world can spread tolerance and understanding of different cultures has been important in establishing hospitality exchange networks, and, thus, they are reproducing the ancient role of hospitality as a producer or social order and cohesion — now at a global level.

2.2.3 From Network Sociality to Network Hospitality

Germann Molz (2011) draws her concept of network hospitality on top of Wittel’s (2001) conception of network sociality. According to Germann Molz (2011, 216), network hospitality gestures towards ‘a qualitative shift in the way individuals imagine and perform hospitality in a mobile, mediated and networked society’. I will next briefly present Wittel’s notion of network sociality.

The widespread diffusion and utilization of information and communication technologies has dramatically increased our ability interact — to date,
couchsurf, host, friend, tweet and skype — in the world. Wittel (2001, 72) has characterized our contemporary forms of association and social interaction as network sociality, which is ‘a sociality based on individualization and deeply embedded in technology; it is informational, ephemeral but intense, and it is characterized by an assimilation of work and play’.

With the concept of network sociality Wittel attempts to map put characteristics of the micro-sociological structure of the network society. That is to say, to ‘not focus on networks themselves but on the making of networks’ (52).

Wittel (2001, 65) states that

”[i]ndividualization” presumes a removal from historically prescribed social forms and commitments, a loss of traditional security with respect to rituals, guiding norms and practical knowledge.

Instead, individuals must actively construct social bonds. They must make decisions and order preferences. To paraphrase Giddens (1990), people are ‘lifted out’ of their contexts and reinserted in largely disembedded social relations, which they must at the same time actively construct. Wittel (2001, 67-8) holds that network sociality is not rooted in common and shared history, but on informational and ephemeral relations. For Sennett (1990) this means erosion of enduring friendships, responsibility and trust. However, Wittel (2001, 67) notes that there is also

the possibility of a reconfigured trust being inscribed in informational social bonds, bonds based less in hierarchical relations and more in the complex, reciprocal intricacies of transverse networks of information exchange. Trust might be based [...] less on the knowledge of someone’s character and more on the knowledge of someone’s resources and his/her position in the social field.

Wittel (ibid., 68) describes this as a ‘shift from narrative- or experience-based sociality to an informational sociality’.

Network sociality promotes ephemeral but intense relations between individuals. Wittel (ibid., 66) notes that, ‘in the Internet industry, as in most other industrial sectors, business is increasingly organized in terms of short-term projects’ where information moves to and fro rapidly the duration of the project, but when the project terminates, ‘collaborations are kept on a low flame and new projects, cooperations and social ties are established or

20Wittel’s notion of network sociality is drawn on two years of ethnographic field work among people working in the new media industry in London.
re-established. As Wittel (ibid.) notes, this tendency towards ephemeral but intense, focused, fast and overloaded social ties is also observable in non-work situations:

At parties, for example, the distinctive dimensions of network sociality are highly visible — the fleetingness of interactions, their intensity and the fluctuation of social figurations. Parties are an occasion to talk to many people within only a few hours. One has to make decisions and selections between who to talk to and for how long.

Network sociality is technological sociality insofar as it is deeply embedded in communication technology. These technologies provide the infrastructure for people and societies on the move. In the era of smart-phones, we can observe an increasing integration of technologically mediated and face-to-face interaction. With the concept of network sociality, Wittel tries to argue that the way we perform and manage our social relations is undergoing a fundamental yet gradual change accelerated by the diffusion of various technologies of communication and transportation.

However, Wittel (ibid., 52) acknowledges that this rise of network sociality is a process and this process has historical roots. Although it is clear that the change in our social relations, which the concept of network sociality attempts to grasp, is manifested more clearly now than a hundred years ago, the process he is describing in many ways echoes the ideas of the early theorists of modernisation — not the least those of Simmel’s.

Broadly speaking, Wittel’s concept of network sociality echoes what Tönnies calls Gesellschaft: both refer to social relations which are more or less without history, based on shared interests and instrumental utility. Wittel is in the same boat with theorists who argue that Gesellschaft type of social relations promote greater personal freedom compared to more traditional Gemeinschaft type of social organization. Wittel’s description of network sociality and his portrait of the subject of network society thus also in many ways echoes Simmel’s ideas about the metropolitan type sociality and individualism. Simmel stresses the simultaneous ‘fleetingness’ and ‘intensity’ of interaction that often characterizes social encounters in the city. According to him (Simmel 1971, l. 5968) the ‘brevity and rarity of meetings which are allotted to each individual as compared with social intercourse in a small city’, leads to the

attempt to appear to-the-point, clear-cut and individual with extraordinarily greater frequency than where frequent and long
association assures to each person an unambiguous conception of the other’s personality.

This appears to me to be the most profound cause of the fact that the metropolis places emphasis on striving for the most individual forms of personal existence — regardless of whether it is always correct or always successful.

Simmel thus argues that as social encounters (the situations in which there is not only physical proximity but actual social engagement between two or more people) in the city are infrequent and momentary, people tend to present their personalities as clear-cut and concentrated as possible in order to get their individuality recognized. Also Wittel writes about the calculative nature of modern social life as he describes how people are actively networking in order to enhance their professional careers and business opportunities, and how this kind of sociality penetrates into their non-professional social life.21

Network sociality is perhaps best characterized as an “amplified” version of the metropolitan sociality described by Simmel. As Saastamoinen (2011) argues, present Western societies are characterized by ever intensifying individualization to which the ubiquitous media technologies of the 21st century contribute to. There is an increasing amount of social interaction in our lives with increasing number of people leads to an intensifying individualization. However, as Saastamoinen (2011, 89) argues, the change in our social relations does not necessarily result in this kind of existential crisis. People will always find ways to build and maintain meaningful social relationships, but the ways in which this is achieved, the social forms according to which social life is organized, may change. Wittel (2001) proposes that we abandon altogether the concept of community, which refers to static social relations in a specific spatio-temporal location, and speak instead of social networks, which consist of rapid interactions and swiftly forming and dissipating relationships. Noro (1991, 238-9), in turn, speaks about ‘post-traditional communities’ to which people join voluntarily and according to their preferences. People do not engage in them in ‘full personalities’; they are rather places where people can act out some part of their identities. Examples of these are e.g. fan communities. According to Noro (1991, 242) the social form of sociability is an important element in these kinds of ‘post-traditional communities’; the fact there is some

21Wittel (2001, 52) acknowledges that although network sociality is now a far broader and more visible phenomenon than it was a few generations ago, and has become increasingly dominant form of social life, it is still largely limited to a certain segment of culturally educated media- an computer-literate people’, to which the new media and IT professionals he observed belong to.
kind of mutual object of interest that draws people together produces fruitful conditions for sociable interaction — the subject of conversation is interesting but does not require that people are immersed in the social situation at a personal level, and the interaction stays between the upper and lower thresholds of sociable interaction.

Forming social relations is now increasingly disembedded form locality, which increases people’s freedom to choose, with whom they wish to interact. This has resulted in a situation where one can engage in social relations with people around the world. Thus, the ‘post-traditional communities’ and social networks discussed above can now also function on global level. I will not move on to discuss network hospitality as a manifestation of the network sociality presented above.

As already discussed in the introduction and section 2.1., network hospitality refers to the new ways in which hospitality is performed by making use of online networking platforms. In contrast to the more traditional forms of hospitality, network hospitality is more voluntary and flexible, echoing the characteristics of network sociality discussed above. Accounts of practices of network hospitality (Bials 2012; Bials and Bat 2009; Germann Molz 2014, 2007) have reported that network hospitality is often about participating in a global network of like-minded individuals who wish meet people from different countries and experience different parts of the world form the viewpoint if the local people living there. A distinguishing feature of network hospitality is that the hosts and guests have great autonomy with whom they wish to engage in hospitality exchange. The social encounters network hospitality spurs are not so much determined by “chance” but through more or less informed decisions the exchanging parties make regarding with whom to engage in hospitality exchange. Also, as the exchanging parties contact and get acquainted with each other online, there already exists some kind of relationship between the host and the guest prior the actual hospitality exchange. Thus, the guest, although in many ways unknown to the host, is no longer a complete ‘stranger’ in the sense he or she often may have been in more traditional forms of hospitality.

Prior research on network hospitality has focused mainly on reciprocal hospitality networks where members of the community accommodate each other free of charge. One reason for this is that most of the existing hospitality networks function this way. Couchsurfing community, at the moment the largest existing hospitality exchange network, has been the object of analysis in most of these studies.

Bials 2012’s study demonstrates that what motivates the hosts and the guests to take part in hospitality exchange networks is the meaningful
social encounters they facilitate. She refers to people participating in these networks as ‘intimately mobile’ as they serach intense social encounters with strangers while and through traveling. In her research among Couchsurfers Bialski has found out that couchsurfing fosters ‘moments of friendship’, which her respondents describe as “brief”, “intense” and “exciting”. These social encounters are often momentary, they form and dissolve as the Couchsurfers meet and depart. As one Couchsurfer in her study stated:

I am fascinated by encounters with new people, especially people who are instant friends and kindred spirits. Some of my most magical moments in foreign places have been these sorts of instant, lovely friendships. I don’t think these friendships lose anything by being ”in the moment” and not continuing — sometimes those brief moments are all you need for a person’s life to touch your own. (26 year old American female survey respondent) (Ibid., 117.)

Bialski describes these respondents as ‘intimately mobile’, which refers to their search of intense social encounters with strangers while traveling. There is always the possibility that the relationships formed through Couchsurfing evolve into a stable, deep and long lasting friendships, but according to Bialski this is relatively rare. However, this is not a disappointment for Couchsurfers. As another Bialski’s respondent states: “Sometimes friendships are brief but exciting, this is not bad, after all it is impossible to keep in touch with everyone you ever meet in your life”. (Ibid., 116-7.)

There is, thus, as Bialski, acknowledges, an obvious parallel between the type of sociality that these ‘intimately mobile’ people seek through hospitality exchange networks, and Simmel’s conception of sociability, “artificial” world of pure interaction with no ulterior ends but the interaction itself. Bialski (ibid., 61) describes this kind of interaction as experiential, meaning that its meaning and value arises from ‘the process of co-presence itself’.

Of course, the interaction between a host and a guest may not always reach the level of enjoyable sociable interaction. As an example of this, Bialski presents one of her couchsurfing respondent’s description of his time as a guest of a middle-aged Swiss journalist, who had a desperate need to talk about himself and his achievements and showed very little interest to hear about his guest’s life or his opinions. As another example Bialski mentions a couchsurfing couple’s description of a Portuguese host who, during a dinner, wanted to confess them that she has never had an orgasm in her life. (Ibid., 71-2.) If we view these instances from the point of view of Simmelian sociability, we may note that the former instance demonstrates crossing of the upper
threshold, as the host brings excessive amount his professional character to the social situation and emphasizes his status, and the latter the lower threshold, as the host is confessing highly personal matters which may make the situation awkward or uneasy for the guest.

Bialski (2012) also notes, that hospitality exchange networks such as Couchsurfing enable people to choose the strangers with whom to interact with. This selection is based on viewing the profiles of potential guests or hosts and exchanging messages with them prior their arrival. Studies suggest that in this kind of selection people have a tendency to favor people who are in some way similar to them (Bialski 2012; Bialski and Batorski 2009). Some have worried that social network sites in general increase this tendency to homophily, which may create an echo chamber effect where the diversity of one’s social interaction decreases as he or she only interacts with similar others (Boyd 2005). In the context of network hospitality this tendency to homophily incorporates an interesting tension. People participate in network hospitality in order to meet people from different cultures; they want to experience certain ‘strangeness’. However, at the same time people are selective of which ‘strangers’ to engage in hospitality exchange with. In a recent study Edelman and Luca (2014) compared the prices black and non-black hosts charge for similar accommodations and concluded that non-black hosts charge approximately 12% more than black hosts. The authors suggest that this highlights the prevalence of discrimination in online marketplaces, suggesting an important unintended consequence in the process of selecting with whom to exchange with.

In addition to the studies presented so far, the emerging body of literature on network hospitality has focused on how hosting Couchsurfers and traditional customs of hospitality get interwoven in Taiwan (Chen 2011) and Morocco (Buchberger 2011); how trust is built in the Couchsurfing community through the online recommendation system (Tan 2010); and how Couchsurfing is — at least partly — driven by a search of more ‘authentic’ travelling experiences as it allows the surfer also to peak into the everyday life of a local resident (Steylaerts and Dubhghaill 2011). However, no existing studies have examined hospitality exchange networks that incorporate monetary transactions as a part of the exchange from the viewpoint of people participating in these networks. Thus, it is unknown how the mediation money brings into the hospitality exchange affects their experience of the hospitality exchange and the sociality it spurs. Bialski (2012, 73-5) briefly touches this theme as she discusses the use of online hitchhiking websites in which the passenger pays a fee for his or her ride. She (ibid., 74) argues that the payment ‘changes the role of driver-passenger / speaker-listener to simply that of a payee and service provider’. According to Bialski (ibid.) this removes the passenger’s pressure
to engage in social interaction with the driver: ‘[t]he passenger can fall asleep in the backseat, listen to their iPod, read, or speak on their mobile phone if they want to and not feel a sense of obligation to converse’. However, Bialski (ibid., 75) also notes that

[ Perhaps the sociality that emerges despite the explicit nature of reciprocity deems the conversation less instrumental, more voluntary, than the conversation and interaction in some cases during the implicit reciprocity between Couchsurfers.

This puts Simmel’s ideas about how money leads to calculativiness in social relations and ‘hollows out’ their core into an interesting perspective, since here the mediation money brings into the social situation may actually have a positive effect as it makes the roles of the passenger and driver more explicit and frees their interaction from pressures that may exists in reciprocal forms of network hospitality.
4 Research Questions

I will now present my research questions, after which I will move on to describe my methodology as well as the process of gathering and analyzing data. In have two primary research questions. First, what motivates people to take part in monetary network hospitality by hosting? Second, what kind of sociality does monetary network hospitality spur between hosts and guests? The first question can be thought as a necessarily preliminary question before moving to answer the second one, which forms the core of this study.

- Research question 1: *What motivates people to take part in monetary network hospitality by hosting?*

As prior research has focused on non-monetary network hospitality, my first research task was to find out what motivates people to take part in monetary network hospitality by hosting. Findings from my material concerning this question will be addressed in chapter 6.

- Research question 2: *What kind of sociality does monetary network hospitality spur between host and the guest?*

The prior research on reciprocal network hospitality has emphasized that people participating in network hospitality often view the sociality this hospitality exchange spurs as an important part of the experience. I seek to gain insight into what kind of sociality monetary network hospitality spurs and how do the people participating in monetary network hospitality as hosts conceive this sociality. I also seek to find out how whether the inclusion of money in the hospitality exchange has some kind of effect on the people’s experiences of the resulting sociality. My empirical findings regarding this question will be addressed in chapter 7, which is arranged in sub-sections according to the central themes derived form the material.
5 Methodology

I will first outline my rationale behind adopting a qualitative approach for my study and describe my ‘theory bound’ research approach. After this, I describe my research process starting from designing the interview outline and conducting the interviews to analyzing my empirical material. Then I will go through the limitations of the present study. Finally, I will go through what kind of ethical issues are good to consider in this kind of research and how I addressed them.

I chose to employ qualitative methodology for this thesis because its aim is to understand networked monetary hospitality exchange through the viewpoint of people participating in it and to gain insight into how they perceive this participation. This is especially important since there is little prior research on the phenomenon of network hospitality — and no existing research that tries specifically to understand monetary network hospitality as a social phenomenon. As (Elliot and Timulak 2005, 149) notes, qualitative inquiry is a suitable methodology for exploratory research where there is relatively little existing knowledge of the research area. For example interviews are a common method for gathering this kind of qualitative material since they allow addressing the research subjects in an open-ended manner without preconceived — or at maximum with loosely defined — categories and classifications. The rationale behind this kind of approach is that it allows the researcher to get an understanding of the phenomenon under study that is firmly ‘grounded’ to the lived experiences of the research subjects.

3.2 Theory bound approach

As Elliot and Timulak (ibid.) point out, previously some qualitative researches believed that it was better to ‘go in the field’ without first reading the available literature. The reason for this position was the belief that becoming familiar with previous knowledge would ‘taint’ the researcher, predisposing them to impose their preconceptions on the research material and raising the danger of not being sensitive enough to allow the material to speak for itself in order to reveal essential features of the phenomenon. Elliot and Timulak (ibid.) hold this approach as ‘somewhat naive’:

For one thing, it is now understood that bias is an unavoidable part of the process of coming to know something and that knowledge is impossible without some kind of previous conceptual structure. Far from removing the researcher’s influence on the data, remain-
ing ignorant of previous work on a phenomenon simply ensures that one’s work will be guided by uninformed rather than informed expectations.

As a consequence, Elliot and Tumuluk suggest that before commencing data collection, researchers should carefully examine available knowledge and theory, carrying out a thorough literature review that includes up to date information on the topic under investigation. Strauss and Corbin (1998, cited by Elliot and Tumuluk 2005, 148) refer to this as ‘theoretical sensitivity’ quoting Pasteur’s motto, ‘Discovery favors the prepared mind’. Elliot and Tumuluk (2005, 148) note that an important feature of this initial phase is that the researcher should become as aware as possible of the nature of his or her pre-understandings of the phenomenon as these are likely to shape the data collection, analysis and interpretation. The researcher should regard their expectations lightly so that he or she is open for unexpected discoveries (ibid.).

Eskola (2000, 136) describes this kind of middle-ground approach between theory driven (an approach that draws heavily on existing theory on its analysis and interpretations about the data) and purely ‘grounded’ (approach that seeks to derive a theory from the data itself) analysis as ‘theory bound approach’. In analysis grounded purely to the empirical material theoretical concepts are created out of the material where as in theory bound approach they exist beforehand, as “what is already known” of the phenomenon (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002, 116). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (ibid., 99) describe the logic behind theory bound analysis as abductive. In the thinking process of the researcher grounded approach takes turns with pre-existing theoretical models. Theoretical connections exist, but the analysis neither stems directly from the theory nor is it strictly based in theory (Eskola 2000, 137). The relationship of theoretical and empirical elements can be best described as circular, where rounds of theoretical positioning and empirical analysis are made in turns.

I adopted this kind of ‘theory bound’ perspective to my research. Prior to collecting the empirical material I familiarized myself with the existing research on network hospitality and the literature these studies refer to. This aided me in formulating my research questions as well as in constructing the interview outline which I used to gather my material. During my literature search I also studied Simmel’s analysis of social forms and related sociological literature, which complemented the conceptual frame for my research. Thus, once I started the process of analysing my material, I already had certain theoretical positions in mind which guided my analysis. However, in order to not force the material to predefined categories I did the first round of coding in an open-ended manner letting the categories to rise from the material itself,
and moving towards more abstract and conceptual categories later on my analysis (the analysis process is described in more detail in section 3.3.4).

3.3 Research process

3.3.1 Starting points

As already noted, I launched my research with a literature review on network hospitality. As the existing research had focused mainly on reciprocal networked hospitality exchange, I concluded that conducting a study among Airbnb foster and interesting context for study, as it allows to see how practicing network hospitality in a setting that includes monetary exchanges between the exchanging parties may differ from reciprocal modes of network hospitality. Among my initial research questions was also a question about what kind of meanings do the hosts attach to their homes and whether Airbnb hosting has affected their perceptions, but in the course of my research I decided to drop this question out from the present thesis. Questions about participant’s homes and the meanings they attach to them were included in the interview outline, but as it turned out that there was relatively little this kind of material in the resulting research material and the participants often did not link these descriptions to their participation in network hospitality; I decided to leave this material out form the current thesis.

After conducting the literature review I started planning how to conduct the interviews. I decided to employ a semi-structured interview outline, which means that the same topics are discussed with all interviewees but specific sub-questions may vary from interview to interview. I concluded two pilot interviews prior the actual interviews in order to test the duration of the interview and to gain some insights into what kind of questions are best for gathering material, what matters were given too much or too little attention, and so on. Based on the remarks made of these pilot interviews, the interview outline was slightly modified and some additional questions were implemented.

The interview outline was designed so that it would allow me to get a holistic view of the respondents’ hosting experiences. The outline was designed so that the interview would start with “warm up questions” — such as how the participants had first heard of Airbnb and whether he or she had experience of other similar hospitality exchange networks — which would prompt the participant to talk freely of how he or she first came up with the idea to engage in Airbnb hosting. These questions were followed by questions concerning the

22 The complete interview outline can be found as an attachment at the end of this document.
respondents current home and his or her attitudes towards hospitality (e.g. does he or she host people also from outside the Airbnb network). This was followed by questions about the respondents motives for hosting. The next set of questions related to the respondents online presence at the Airbnb website, after which I moved on to ask questions about how the respondent communicates with the guests, how the price of the listing is defined, and how he or she decides which inquiries to accept. And finally there were questions about the actual hospitality exchange: how is the hospitality exchange arranged in practice, what kind of things has to be taken into consideration, has there been any problems or somehow unsuccessful exchanges etc. In the end of the interview, each subject was given the occasion to freely address any topics that they felt had been left out or with too little attention and to which they wanted to add something. Final background information, such as age, education level, profession and an estimate of the number of guests hosted so far were collected with a separate form after the interview.

3.3.2 Gathering the material

The research subjects were recruited through the Airbnb service. As I had no experience about the service prior this project, I made a profile to the site in order to reach potential research subjects. No compensation was offered for the research subjects upon participating in the study.

As the listings at the Airbnb website are put in order by an algorithm that ranks hosts according to their activity on the site during the past 30 days, the number of times they have declined an inquiry form a guest, the total number and rating of their reviews, and a location relevance model based on data from users\textsuperscript{23}, I decided to contact every tenth host listed at the site in order to include respondents with various degrees of hosting experience and activity in my material. Out of the 42 contacted hosts (there was a bit over four-hundred Airbnb hosts in Greater Helsinki in July 2013 when the interviews were conducted) eleven agreed to be interviewed.

As it was already described, the interviews were semi-structured. The sub-questions related to each larger theme in the interview outline were presented according to the perceived need to stir the discussion or ask for additional information. All in all, the realized structures of the interviews were highly similar to one another which facilitated the analysis process.

The interviews were mostly conducted in participants’ homes. This was often convenient for the respondent, but it also contributed to understanding

\textsuperscript{23}https://www.airbnb.com/help/question/39
the context in which the hospitality exchange takes place and thus offered valuable insight for the purposes of the research. However, another location convenient for the interviewees was selected when the interviewers wished so. The interviews lasted from 40 to 75 minutes. All the interviews were recorded and afterwards transcribed.

3.3.3 Participants of the study

As already stated, my empirical material is derived from eleven semi-structured interviews. The only prerequisite for participating in the study was that the research subject had hosted at least one guest prior the interview, and that he or she lived in Greater Helsinki. Greater Helsinki is the metropolitan area consisting of Helsinki and the neighbouring cities of Vantaa, Espoo, and Kauniainen.

Ten of the interviews were individual interviews with only the person managing the Airbnb account present. In one interview both parties of a couple were present, since they managed their Airbnb profile together and both wished to participate to the study. Thus, the number of participants in my study is actually twelve. However, in my analysis I treated the one joint interview with two people as a single unit.

Participants age varied from 22 to 58. Seven of them were male and five female. Four of my respondents were living alone, three were living with a partner, one shared a flat with two flatmates, and three had a family. One of the respondents was living in the city centre, nine in inner city — which refers to urban districts such as Alppila, Kallio, Vallila and Arabia located relatively close to the city center —, and one in a suburban area. As it was described in section 2.1, there are two distinct ways to perform hospitality exchange through Airbnb, remote and on-site hospitality. Five of my respondents practiced the former and six the latter. The number of guests my respondents had hosted varied from just one to over 30. Four of my respondents had hosted less than 10 guests, five more than 20. Six of the respondents lived in a owner-occupied flat, four on rent, and one of my respondents practicing remote hospitality, Tomi rented out an apartment he had bought as an investment with a purpose to rent it out.

Nine of my respondents were native Finnish speakers, and thus these interviews were conducted in Finnish. Two respondents, Alfonso and Sophia, did not speak Finnish, and with them the interviews were conducted in English. This was not the native language of either of these two respondents. However, as both of them use English daily as their professional languages, their command of English was sufficient for the purposes of this research.
In the chapter 5, where I will report the findings of my analysis, all the quotations from the interviews are presented in English. Translating spoken language to another language is not a straightforward task, and, as Pietilä (2010, 420-1) notes, sometimes translating all the nuances of a language is simply not possible. When I have encountered this kind of problems, instead of being as literal as possible in my translations, my aim has been in capturing the meanings of the original passage.

3.3.4 Analysis

The interview material was analyzed by theory bound qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is the basic analysis method that can be applied in all the traditions of qualitative research (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002, 93). The goal of qualitative content analysis is to create a verbal description of the phenomenon that is in the first place described by the research material. Content analysis is used to organize the material into a concise and clear form without losing information included in it.

As I collected and transcribed the material for this study personally, I was already well familiarized with the material when formally beginning the analysis. I started out by reading through the interview material and making free notes and comments on it. I utilized the computer program Dedoose in my analysis. It offers tools for coding and categorizing textual material, which is traditionally done with coloured pencil and copy-paste techniques. The program allows naming of separate parts of the text with descriptive codes and attaching notes these codes to where one can clarify the relationships between different categories or draw initial interpretations about the data.

The first round of analysis was made by separating the material to five wide classes according to the issues that were discussed. These classes were “motives for Airbnb hosting”, “host-guest interaction”, “guest selection”, “money” and “uncomfortableness and stress related to hosting”. In some cases there was overlap between the classes. For example, “host-guest interaction” included also material related to “uncomfortableness and stress in hosting”, or “guest selection” was combined with “money” and so on.

After this initial phase, “motives for Airbnb hosting” was analyzed in more detail. I looked for differing descriptions of the drivers for Airbnb hosting. I noticed that the respondent’s motives for hosting can be well categorized through Tefler’s (2000) categorization of ‘other-regarding’, ‘reciprocal’, and ‘self-regarding’ motives for hospitality. It turned out that these categories do not exclude each other on the individual level but many of my respondents’
descriptions incorporated elements of multiple categories. These findings are discussed in the section chapter 7.

Also, a detailed analysis was given to categories “host-guest interaction”, “guest selection”, and “money”. Following my research questions, “host-guest interaction” was the ‘core category’ to which two other main categories were compared. “Uncomfortableness and stress in hosting” was used to support the conclusions drawn from the key classes. The findings of this part of the analysis are discussed in chapter 7, organized in sub-sections according to the above mentioned key categories.

3.4 Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in my study that must be discussed. Obviously, my respondents do not represent Airbnb hosts in Greater Helsinki in a manner that would allow to make generalizations concerning this whole group. Furthermore, it is likely that there exists some kind of bias in what kind of people agreed to be interviewed, since about three of the four hosts contacted declined the invitation to the study. It may be, for example, that the hosts who agreed to participate had more positive orientation towards Airbnb hosting than those who declined. However, the aim of this study has not been to provide a complete and representative description of Airbnb hosts’ motives behind hosting and their hosting practices but gain insight into what kind of motives there exists and how the hosts conceive the sociality related to monetary network hospitality in an explorative manner.

3.5 Ethical considerations

In the beginning of the interview the interviewees were reminded of the voluntariness of their participation and of their right to skip any questions they might find disturbing without needing to explain why. Also their right to stop the interview at any point was discussed. The interviewees were given the opportunity to ask questions both before and after the interview. In most cases, the questions asked before the interview were mainly practical, whereas afterwards many of the interviewees were interested to hear more about the study and its objectives. In these cases they were given additional information describing the study. It was also stressed that would the interviewees come up with questions later on after the interview, they were welcome to contact me.

All research material has been treated confidentially and anonymously. In order to ensure my participants' anonymity, they are referred to with
pseudonyms throughout this thesis. The research subject’s age and sex and in some cases some additional information are mentioned in order to give the reader some contextual background of the participants.
6 Motives for Hosting: Airbnb Hosting as a Financial and Social Practice

Tefler (2000) discusses three categories of motives for being hospitable. These are ‘other-regarding motives’, which stem from general friendliness, the desire to meet someone’s needs, or an allegiance to hospitality, ‘reciprocal motives’, such as a desire to have company or meet new people, and ‘self-regarding motives’, such as financial compensation or the wish to receive social recognition, for example through showcasing one’s affluence or tasty decor. These motivations do not exclude each other; a host can be motivated by several at the same time. However, the composition of these different motives varies between hosts. In her research on Couchsurfing Bialski (2012, 77), who does not operate with Tefler’s categorisation in her work, has identified four motivations for hosts’ hospitable in the Couchsurfing network. First, the host may genuinely take liking to their guests and want to spend time with them. Second, the host wants to prove to their guest that the place where they live has value. Third, the host has little or no interactions with anyone beyond Couchsurfing and find hospitality exchange a chance to interact with another individual. And finally, the host wants to make a good impression on their guests in order to guarantee that their guest provides them with a positive review at the Couchsurfing website. If we wish to conceptualize these motivations using Tefler’s terms, we may put the first three under the label of ‘reciprocal motives’ and the last under the label of ‘self-regarding motives’.

However, as the whole participation in Couchsurfing is voluntary and based on reciprocal non-monetary hospitality exchange, there surely exists mainly ‘other-regarding’ motives as well among the hosts — it may be that Bialski does not explicitly discuss them as she takes their existence for granted in a travelers community such as Couchsurfing. I will now move on to describe how the motivations identified by Tefler were manifested in my material.

As the hospitality exchange through Airbnb includes monetary exchange between the exchanging parties, it seems likely that ‘self-regarding’ motives — most notably the financial compensations for offering hospitality — play a bigger role in Airbnb than in hospitality exchange networks functioning on a purely reciprocal fashion. These financial motives were important for many of my respondents, but most of them saw them as complementary to ‘reciprocal motives’, such as meeting new people around the world or incorporating more social interaction to one’s life, not as the sole motivator for hosting. And finally, some of my respondents held hospitality as a valuable activity in itself and were inclined to hosting at least partly because of this. This kind of
motivation falls into the category of ‘other-regarding motives’ since it stems from general appreciation of hospitable behaviour. These kinds of motives for hospitality exchange often exist alongside with an inclination to engage in hospitality exchange in order to receive recognition for one’s acts of hospitality, which can in turn be labeled as ‘self-regarding motive’.

For two of my respondents, Kaisa, a 22-year-old woman living in a shared flat with two flatmates, and Pirjo, a 58-year-old single lady whose kids had already moved to live on their own, Airbnb hosting was predominantly a way to cover a part of their rent. For two others, Alfonso, a 51-year-old IT-expert, and Sophia, a 22-year-old recently graduated business consultant, (both were non-Finnish) Airbnb hosting was predominantly a way to incorporate more social interaction to their lives. However, for most it was a combination between the two motivations: way to meet people from around the world and incorporate new kind of sociality to one’s life, as well as a way to earn some extra cash, which could be used for example for traveling. All of my respondents were interested to meet people form around the world, and most of them were also keen travelers themselves.

Some hosts who had initially started hosting for financial reasons, had learned to appreciate the possibility of interesting and engaging social encounters with their guests, and this had encouraged them to continue hosting. This line of thinking can be inferred for example from Tomi’s story.

Tomi, 33, was unusual among my respondents in that he rented out an investment apartment. Tomi had problems getting a lessee since his condominium was facing a large pipe repair at some point in the next nine months. Thus, he decided to rent it out through Airbnb. As it was necessary for Tomi to get certain amount of revenue from the apartment, he had to hold a business-like attitude towards hosting. However, also Tomi emphasized that the social interaction hosting spurs is an important part of being an Airbnb host and one of the reasons he has been pleased with the arrangement (he has considered that he might continue to rent his place through Airbnb even after the pipe repair).

[...] there is obviously this potential of meeting people. And also meeting interesting people. It has maybe become more evident now that I’ve been renting for a while and there has already been quite a few guests that they are actually quite similar with me or like have a similar mind set with me. (Tomi)

Sometimes, when Tomi feels that he is getting along well with the guests and that he might enjoy their company he might, for example, invite the guests to
do a little tour around the city with him. Thus, although he is predominantly hosting for other reasons than the sociality the hosting spurs, he sometimes moves away from the business-like mindset and engages in social interaction with the guests, according to his own preferences.

*It’s great that if you feel like you would want to do something like for example do a little tour with some foreigners and show some places you can actually do it. That’s one thing I like. If I see that there is potential that I might have a good time with these people I can go for it.* (Tomi)

Also Mikael, a 41-year-old professor who was prompted to Airbnb hosting by a want to put the extra space he and his family had in the basement of their apartment to better use and earn some money at the same time, had similar thoughts. At start, he was rather unsure about how it would feel like to let a stranger to their house, what would be appropriate amount of interaction with the guest, and what the guests would think of the arrangement.

*It has been nice to meet these people. I haven't talked to all of them awful lot but it has still been nice. This has brought like this new sort of sociality to my life.* (Mikael)

These descriptions by Mikael and Tomi illustrate how the ‘self-regarding’ financial motives and ‘reciprocal motives’ for hosting can mix.

As already noted, some of my respondents held hospitality as valuable activity in itself and were inclined to Airbnb hosting partly because of this. This kind of motivation falls into the category of ‘other-regarding’ motives in Tefler’s categorisation since it stems form general appreciation of hospitable behaviour. Among my interviewees practicing on-site hospitality, Alfonso and Sophia shared this kind of orientation towards hospitality. For example, Sophia stated that she is quite hospitable person and was interested to try how it feels to host strangers. */I like to accommodate and meet different kinds of people so this seemed like something I would like to try'/, Sophia describes. Also Alfonso stated that he enjoys hosting and being hospitable. Even so that he has actually thought of setting up some kind of more institutionalized bed and breakfast, or, as he describes his concept, */dinner and a sleeping place'/.

Out of my interviewees practicing remote hospitality, two, Pia, a 25-year-old woman renting out her and her boyfriend’s beautifully decorated top-floor flat in inner Helsinki while they are traveling, and Pertti, a 33-year-old male cost guard who offers his apartment for during his week long shifts at the naval
base, expressed these kind of ‘other-regarding’ motives as well. For example Pia stated that although the financial compensation for renting is nice, for her, Airbnb hosting has actually been more of a hobby. It has been an easy way to perform hospitality, which is something she holds as valuable and also rewarding. Pia enjoys preparing their apartment for the guests so that they can really enjoy their stay. She for example makes sure that the guests have something little to drink and eat as they arrive, for example some fruits or Finnish candy and coffee and tea. As Pia describes:

At some level I have dreamed about setting up a hotel to some nice place. I’m not sure if I would actually be ready for that, but by doing this [renting the apartment through Airbnb] I can in a way do some of it, as you can see [she refers to the city guides and brochures she has set up to the table for her guests]. (Pia)

It is also so much fun to prepare the apartment for the guests, although it can also be a bit stressful sometimes. I’ll always try to think how to make the guest’s stay an unforgettable experience, you know, make them feel like, ‘Wow!’ (Pia)

I’m actually not sure how much revenue there is left after these things I buy for my guests but I actually don’t want to think about it too much. (Pia)

Pertti, in turn, describes his orientation towards hosting in the following way:

I enjoy answering people’s questions and helping them to organize things so that they can have as pleasant weekend in Helsinki a possible. I can for example suggest them some places that I think are nice to visit. (Pertti)

Often these ‘other-regarding’ motives exist alongside with more ‘reciprocal’ type of motives such as feelings of pride when the hosts notice that their guests are really enjoying their stay and the recognition they receive for their acts of hospitality, expressed for example through the online recommendation system. As Sophia describes:

It’s nice when you can see that the guest is truly enjoying the place. And sometimes I get very nice and specific compliments about the guests. They liked sitting in this specific corner or had a very good sleep or something else. Then it really feels like there’s some kind of appreciation form the guests. (Sophia)
Ida and Sami, a couple in their early thirties with three kids renting out a private room from their home in the city center, expressed that the reviews they receive from the guests function as a kind of confirmation that they are “good people”:

Sami: *You get this sort of nice validation when you read the reviews the guests have left. You feel like, oh, we are actually good people. It’s nice that others think so!* (Ida and Sami)

In addition to the recommendation system, guests express their gratitude through private notes or postcards left to the hosts’ apartment as the guest departed. These unofficial acknowledgements were often appreciated more than the feedback coming through the official feedback channel at the Airbnb web page.

*One of the most gratifying things has been the personal hand written messages I have received from my guests. Airbnb automatically reminds people to write the reviews, but no one asks the guest to leave you a personal note. Also the occasions when I have received for example a text message where the guests tell that they followed my hint and went to some restaurant or event I had suggested for them are very nice. They give you a warm feeling.* (Pertti)

*These letters and notes that people leave here are the best. Almost everyone has left a personal note or at least sent an email in addition to the official review made through the website.* (Pia)

One reason why the personal notes and emails were often appreciated more than the official reviews is that the interviewees felt that there is a culture of positive feedback in Airbnb: negative reviews are not easily given. This is reflected also in the reviews the hosts give to their guests. As Pia, who so far haven’t had a chance to meet her guests, explains:

*Yeah well mainly we [Pia and her boyfriend] give positive feedback. There seems to be a culture of superlatives there in Airbnb. You know, as we haven’t even met these people and don’t know anything about them but still you have to try to figure out something positive from the little information you have.*

Taking this into account, the personal notes may feel more authentic and truthful than the “official” reviews.
Overall, it can be inferred that hosts engaging monetary network hospitality often practice hospitality exchange for other than purely financial reasons. ‘Reciprocal’, and also, ‘other-regarding’, motives related to the social interaction with the guests hosting spurs, holding hospitality as a valuable social form in itself, as well as the social recognition hosts may receive through hosting, are important motivational factors in engaging also monetary network hospitality exchange.
7 Sociability in Monetary Network Hospitality

7.1 Airbnb Hosting and Sociability

As pointed out in the previous section, the social interaction that hosting spurs is an important motivator for Airbnb hosting. In this vain, Airbnb resembles non-monetary network hospitality, practiced for example through the Couchsurfing network. As discussed in section 2.2.4, Bialski (2012) describes the meaningful social encounters between hosts and guests as ‘moments of friendship’. This highlights the temporary but often intense and rewarding nature of the social relations network hospitality spurs. As I further argued in the section 2.2.3 these ‘moments of friendship’ can be understood in the framework of Simmel’s notion of sociability, interaction with no ulterior ends but the interaction itself.

I found this same kind of orientation towards the host-guest interaction related to hospitality exchange in my material. The hosts who sought social interaction with their guests often did not talk about this sociality in the framework of “getting new friends” or creating lasting social ties. Instead, they described them more as moments where one can spend time with interesting people around the world and engage in interesting conversations. They enjoyed the social interaction as such, but did not expect that the relationships with their guests would extend beyond the guests’ visit. Some even explicitly stated that this would be undesirable.

The want to incorporate sociable intercourse to one’s life through Airbnb hosting can be found in several respondents’ descriptions, for example in Ida’s and Sami’s. Ida and Sami are living a busy life; they have three kids and both are working full-time. They value highly the new sociality that Airbnb hosting brings to their lives. For them, hosting is a way to incorporate new social encounters, which differ from their everyday routines, to their life. Receiving guests through Airbnb functions as a departure from the ordinary. It is a way to engage in meaningful social interaction in a manageable way.

Sami: […] if we would not do this it could be even a bit dull sometimes, you know, since our everyday life pretty much consists of just working and taking kids to their hobbies and so on. It can be quite hectic. […] As we have a family we can’t just decide with Ida to for example go to a salsa class to meet new people.

Also Alfonso and Sophia emphasized they are hosting predominantly in order to incorporate new social encounters to their lives.
For me it’s not that easy to meet people here in Helsinki. Of course, I could go to a bar or something but it’s not that easy for people of my age to meet people like that. But sometimes I have really nice conversations and moments with my guests, people who are total strangers for me. I thinks it’s similar to what happens when you are traveling. You meet people in the trains and in the airplanes and sometimes you find it easy to connect with them. (Alfonso)

This [hosting] has been nice for the summer since I’m quite bored and I like to meet new people. [...] The nice thing in AirBnb is that you actually meet people that you wouldn’t ever meet in case you wouldn’t host. (Sophia)

A repeatedly occurring theme in my material related to the host-guest interaction was my respondents’ descriptions of how hosting provides possibilities for meeting people whom they could otherwise not meet. Often this was linked to the fact that the as guests come from different countries hosting allows the host to for example learn about the guest’s home country or culture and hear interesting stories. However, the fact that the guest is somehow interesting was not always solely related to the fact that he or she is from another country but it was sometimes due to the guest’s profession or character. This can be inferred, for example, from Kaisa’s description:

You can actually meet some nice and interesting people through this hosting. Sometimes you can’t figure out anything to talk about with the guests or can’t acquire any kind of contact with them. But then some are in turn very open and nice. For example, I got to know this one Italian fashion designer as he stayed in my place. These kinds of things are nice, because when you think about it, how on earth could I have met this guy if he wouldn’t have been my guest? You can’t just go and stop people on the street and be like, “you look interesting, would you like to hang out?” (Kaisa)

Also Ida and Sami emphasized that one thing why they have enjoyed participating in AirBnb hosting is that many of the guests have had interesting backgrounds or interesting projects going on:

Ida: Most of the people have been highly educated or in interesting jobs and the conversations have been very interesting. Often the guests have also travelled a lot. As we also like to travel it’s been easy to find common ground with most of the guests. (Ida and Sami)
The deemed sociable intercourse with the guest was of course not always acquired. Sometimes the guest might for example not be interested to converse or socialize with the host as much as the host would like to. For example Sophia had this kind of experience with one of her guests:

*I just had a Canadian guest who was very shy and I don’t know if I crossed the line and the guest felt somehow uncomfortable. [...] I played Xbox and asked if he wants to join. And he was like "ummm well no thanks". First he said "no thanks" but then he just came out of his room to watch me play and I asked again if he wants to join. And he answered something but I wasn’t sure was he declining or accepting the offer. And then I didn’t know whether I should continue to invite to him to play ’cos I just might make him uncomfortable if he doesn’t want to.* (Sophia)

However, it may also be the case that the host feels that the guest is too talkative, or that they do not somehow get along particularly well.

*I had this another guest who stayed a week. He came here for some conference and was not really that interested to see Helsinki. He had a lot of free time and was like following me around and talking all the time. But then I just kept silent and eventually he was silent also.* (Sophia)

Many of my respondents received a lot of inquiries from potential guests and thus they have an opportunity to choose which guests to accept from various candidates. Several of my respondents stated that they try to choose the guests so that both their and their guests’ expectation would be matched in the hospitality exchange (I will discuss this process of selecting the guests further in the next section).

My respondents usually did not expect or wish that their social relations with the guests would extend beyond the hospitality exchange. And this rarely happened, either. Rather, the relationship with the guest forms and evolves during the guests’ stay and wears off as the guest departs. As Ida and Sami describe:

*Ida: Sometimes it’s a shame that a guest with whom you have connected with leaves. You can sometimes feel a bit sorry for that. But it always passes out of your mind quickly.*
Sami: Yeah, and we haven’t kept in touch with our guests after their departure. Of course it might happen. But I think that’s not something we are actually actively looking for. (Ida and Sami)

Neither Pia was inclined to keep in touch with her guests, even if her guests might make an attempt to keep some kind of contact, for example through Facebook:

*No I don’t feel like I’d want to stay in touch with my guests. Someone once put a friend request through Facebook, but it actually just felt a bit strange. I mean, I don’t really have any kind of need for that.* (Pia)

Also Alfonso’s relations with his guests has been limited to the actual hospitality exchange. He stated that one reason for this is probably that the visits are usually rather short, two or three days, and thus there is usually no time for the relationship to develop so that it would feel natural keep in touch after the guest’s departure.

*We might have breakfast and dinner together and its often really nice, but I haven’t kept in touch with any of them. I have become Facebook friends with few of them, but what does that really mean? For me the value of that is nothing.*

Overall, the material clearly illustrates that my respondents value highly the sociality that practicing Airbnb hosting brings. The sociality they seek can be understood in the framework of sociability, which gains its value and meaning from interaction itself, as well as from the possibility of meeting interesting people with different cultural backgrounds. There is an interesting tension in that although the hosts often deem the social encounters with their guests as enjoyable, many still state that they have no inclination to extend these social relations beyond the actual hospitality exchange. This sociality can thus be interpreted as form of social ‘play’, which is not expected to lead some kind of more lasting social relationships. In the next section I will look into how my respondents decided whom to accept as guest in order for the hospitality exchange to be successful and to achieve a sociable level of interaction.
7.2 Selecting the Guests

As discussed in the previous section, many of my interviewees practiced Airbnb hosting in order to engage in sociable interaction with people around the world. However, this deemed sociable interaction is not always achieved. One way through which the likelihood of a enjoyable hospitality exchange can be increased is through trying to select guests with whom they thought they would have something in common or would otherwise get along well. This is in line with Simmel’s meditations on in what conditions sociable interaction is likely to occur, one condition being the similarity and equal social status of the interacting parties.

As I mentioned in the previous section, many of my respondents received various inquiries from potential guests and thus they often have an opportunity to choose which guests to accept from a pool of potential candidates. The evaluation of potential guests is based on the guests’ profiles, reviews from their prior hosts, and on the communication prior accepting the hospitality exchange. Of course the guests can make a similar kind of evaluation of the host. Some of the hosts acknowledged this, and in order to attract guests with similar interests as theirs they put a lot of information about themselves and their interests to their profiles.

*I try give a good picture of who I am in the profile because then the guest who is interested to stay in my place will likely be a kind of person whom I am interested to host. For example, I state here that I am not into drinking or smoking and then that I really like to talk to people. So mostly the guest’s who end up in my place are quite similar to me.* (Sophia)

However, in my material the emphasis was on the descriptions of the ways my respondents decide to choose their guests. All in all, my hosts emphasized that they liked the fact that they know in advance who they are hosting, what kind of person the guest is, and that they can choose whom they decide to host.

*The fact that you can choose who comes there is nice. I just pretty much use my intuition in choosing the guests and try to choose guests that seem nice, you know, so that I might even spend some time with them if I feel like it.* (Tomi)

This opportunity to choose whom one wishes to host increases the host’s control over the hospitality exchange and the social encounters it leads to.
In this perspective, this kind of network hospitality, at least viewed from the host’s side, is actually rather controlled form of sociality. Although, at least to a degree, the hosts want to engage in social interaction with ‘strangers’, people from different countries, but in fact this ‘strangeness’ is mediated in the process of choosing the guests. It can be inferred from my material that it is usual for the hosts to favor guests that are somehow similar to them or at least have mutual objects of interest with them. For example Sophia noted this kind of pattern in the way she selects her guests:

*I usually choose the guests quite selectively. I choose the guests that I might like and when the guest arrives we usually immediately feel like friends. [...] I tell in my Airbnb profile that I like cooking and my boyfriend likes to play piano and almost all my guests have been either some sort of artists or they also really like cooking. Or eating* (Sophia)

*At least I’m quite discriminate when it comes to age. [...] I mostly like to host students and other young people. I think most of my guests have been university students or at least recently graduated.* (Sophia)

Also Ida and Sami had noted that their preferences seem to favor people with similar background as theirs, that is, highly educated and rather wealthy professionals.

*Sami: For the most part our guests have been highly educated and they are in interesting jobs. They are the kind of people with whom it is easy for us to find some common ground and thus the conversations have been often very interesting.* (Ida and Sami)

Among my respondents there was also few who openly stated that they do not wish to host people form certain countries or people of certain ethnicity. Sophia explicitly stated that because of previous bad experiences (not related to Airbnb hosting but sub-renting her previous apartment) she does not host people from India or “black” people. Sophia stated that this kind of selection is “not a good thing”, but she does it anyways. Ida and Sami, Markku, Mikael and Sami stated that they are maybe a bit more selective when it comes to Russian guests. However, they often thought this kind of behaviour is not necessarily a good thing and thus tried to avoid it. Nevertheless, this illustrates how the discourse on how the hosts wish to engage in a kind of cultural exchange through hosting people form around the world may not be as inclusive as it first seems.


7.3 Money as a Mediator in Network Hospitality

As discussed earlier, the difference between Airbnb and other similar hospitality exchange networks, such as Couchsurfing and Hospitality Club, is that Airbnb fosters monetary transactions as a part of the exchange. The hosts determine a price which the guest(s) pay prior their arrival. In this section I will look how money mediates and structures network hospitality. I will look how money affects the host-guest interaction resulting from the hospitality exchange. Also, I will discuss how the hosts determine the price for their hospitality services. As it turns out, this is guided not only by economic thinking in which the host aims to maximize his or her profits but also social factors, such as what kind of guests the host wishes to host, get intertwined into the decision process.

It can be inferred from my material that money provides a certain frame for hospitality exchange and renders it more formal and structured. This affects also the sociality that hosting spurs. This can be inferred, for example, from Kaisa’s description. Kaisa sub-rents her room a few times a month to cover a part of her rent. Occasionally, she hosts Couchsurfers, as well. She is eager to meet new people although she feels that hosting can get tiresome if there is a mismatch in the expectations of the guest and the host. She thinks this is more common in the case of non-monetary network hospitality.

*The attitude is often that since you are charging these people they think that you should somehow be in the background. Whereas [people coming] through Couchsurfing, they ask you to be their guide or boyfriend or girlfriend or whatever. It can sometimes be a bit annoying if you are not really in the mood for that or you are just busy. Usually people who come through Airbnb are a bit more independent and they don't expect that much from you.* (Kaisa)

Kaisa is also eager to socialise with her guests, but she wants to do it in her own conditions, that is, when she feels like it and with the guests she finds interesting. It thus seems that monetary transactions contribute to the host’s sense of control in the hospitality exchange. When the hospitality exchange is executed in this kind of more quid-pro-quo-fashion, it is easier for the host to draw back in case he or she feels that the social interaction with the guest is burdensome. In the case of reciprocal hospitality exchange, such as Couchsurfing, this kind of behaviour might be interpreted rude, since the host is expected to spend time with the guest. It seems that in monetary network hospitality such as Airbnb the pregiven norm of host-guest interaction is not
so strong. For example the following description by Tomi, who had experience from both Couchsurfing and Airbnb hosting, supports this interpretation:

*I think that in Couchsurfing both the host and the guest are expected to show interest towards each other and to spend some time together. In Airbnb the guest is paying for the accommodation and thus he is not expected or obliged to socialize that much with the host. So this also means that if the host wants to be more on the background he can do it.* (Tomi)

My analysis shows that the hosts do not always try to find the optimal “market price” for their hospitality services, but in determining the price for their listings the hosts may for example take in account what kind of guests can be expected to pay a certain price. For example Pia had put the price of her listing somewhat above the average price for the type of accommodation she was offering in order to keep out “troublemakers”:

*I could sure get more guests if I would lower the price. [...] But I’ve wanted to keep the price a bit high ’cause I want to... How should I put it... Well sort of reach a bit higher standard. So I want especially those guests to contact me who are looking an above average place to stay. Because I think this flat is quite nice and then I can also go for a little extra effort of making sure that they have for example some food waiting here as they come and so forth. And maybe the higher price keeps the works troublemakers and exploiters away.* (Pia)

Also Ida and Sami noted that one reason why their guests have usually not been ‘regular backpackers’ is that the price they have determined for their room is not from the cheapest spectrum:

Ida: *Well I have to admit that our place does not seem to draw the usual backpacker-type of travellers who are just trying to manage with as small budget as possible. On the contrary, actually. Our guests have for the most part been very educated people, bankers, architects, professors, and so forth. [...] This is of course at least partly due to the fact that the price we have set up is not particularly cheap.* (Ida and Sami)

Some of my respondents, in turn, deliberately kept the price under the “market price”, since it increases the number of inquiries they receive and thus they have more options to choose whom to host.
The good thing in keeping the price a it low is that you receive more inquiries and thus you have more options to choose from. Of course it might be a pity for some of the guests if they are really interested about the place and then you start choosing between them. But it’s easier for the host that way. (Pertti)

As we can see, in the context of Airbnb hosting, money and the social interaction related to hosting get intertwined in interesting ways. First, the inclusion of money in the hospitality exchange does not automatically hollow out the social interaction between host and guest from its meaning and value. From the hosts perspective, the inclusion of money makes the social interaction easier to control, and this can have a positive effect for the overall experience of hosting. And second, the hosts use the price of their accommodation as a way to filter out unwanted guests or to increase the pool of potential candidates from which to choose from.
8 Conclusions

The aim of this study has been to increase our understanding of the emerging social form of network hospitality by presenting an analysis of how network hospitality is practiced in a hospitality exchange network that incorporates monetary transactions as a part of the exchange form the viewpoint of hosts participating in it. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, network hospitality can be understood as an exemplar of the new modes of sociality and association that the new mediums of communication afford. It represents many of the characteristics of Wittel’s (2001) conception of network sociality: the sociality that network hospitality spurs is voluntary in a sense that the hosts and guests can choose with whom to exchange with and the social encounters are momentary, they form and dissolve during each hospitality exchange.

As my analysis shows, there are obvious parallels between the motives my respondents have towards hosting and the motives of the hosts participating in non-monetary hospitality exchange. Although some of my respondents motives were primarily financial, all of them also emphasized the importance of social aspects in their hosting practices. Hosts in my study are eager to meet new people, especially people form around the world, to interact with them and to help them feel like home in a new country. For some of my respondents, the financial gains were secondary to the sociality that hosting brings.

A few of my respondents saw Airbnb hosting as a way to preform acts of hospitality, which they saw as valuable in their own right. As it was discussed in section 2.2.2, hospitality is a social form with far reaching cultural and historical roots. Ethnographic evidence from wide range of social systems suggest that acts of hospitality between individuals, families, and tribes have important roles in consolidating and establishing social ties. In network hospitality these old functions and traditions of hospitality are reproduced, but in a rather different form. Rather than trying to establish some kind of stable ties between people, network hospitality is more characterized by one-time encounters between people from different cultures.

Overall, it seems that Airbnb hosting is a way to insert more variation into one’s social life, not a way to pursue longitudinal relationships with people around the world. These findings are in line with prior research conducted on network hospitality. As I argued in the previous chapter, this sociality monetary network hospitality brings can be understood as Simmelian sociality, which gains its value from the process of interaction itself.

Various explanations can be found for why network hospitality fosters an especially fertile ground for this kind of interaction. First, the pregiven roles
of host and guest allow the interaction to evolve in a certain pre-given framework, which already structures the interaction. The parties of the hospitality exchange are for example expected to show mutual respect to one another and act cordially. Also, as the parties of the hospitality exchange encounter each others as strangers with only little prior knowledge of each other, their interaction is not defined by preconceived conceptions of one's personality, and thus the host and the guest can perform their roles rather freely. Furthermore, as the guest and the host usually come from different countries, it is likely that both find the host-guest interaction, exchange of experiences and some more or less personal details of one's life, interesting — one must not make a great effort in order to achieve this.

My analysis also shows that the hosts pay rather close attention to whom they accept as guests. The hosts want to engage in social interaction with ‘strangers’ but they want to be in control who these ‘strangers’ are. Sometimes this can even mean that racial discrimination becomes incorporated into the selection process. It seems that Simmel’s observation that sociability often necessitates homophily holds is also — at least to a degree — true for network hospitality.

Finally, my analysis shows that money and the social interaction network hospitality spurs get intertwined in interesting ways. The inclusion of money in the hospitality exchange does not automatically hollow out the social interaction between host and guest from its meaning and value as Simmel presented. From the hosts perspective, the inclusion of money may make the social interaction more manageable and as the monetary exchange removes some of the expectations, and this can have a positive effect for the overall experience of hosting. Also, the hosts use the price of their accommodation as a way to filter out unwanted guests or to increase the pool of potential candidates from which to choose from.

A sociologically interesting point here is especially the fact that monetary exchanges may in some instances structure the hospitality exchange in a way that allows for a sense of control in the interaction. Future studies could examine this in more detail for example through interviewing people who have experience on both monetary and non-monetary hospitality exchange networks, as well as see whether this might hold true in other kind of exchange relations and social settings. Also, future research is needed to gain insight on participating in monetary network hospitality from guests’ point of view.
9 References


To start with...

• How did you run into Airbnb?
• Have you stayed in Airbnb flats while abroad?
  o Why have you chosen Airbnb flats over hotels?
• Do you have experiences of other travelers communities (e.g. Couchsurfing?)
  o What are the main differences between these and Airbnb?
  o In your opinion, how does the money involved change the character of the service?
• Have you been involved in time banking or other sharing economy activities?
  o What motivates your participation?

Some thoughts about your home...

• Could you briefly describe how you ended up living in Helsinki and in your current home?

This might feel a bit difficult or abstract but...

• Could you describe what is the meaning of home for you (as a place)?
  o Could you describe things that you feel are important in a home?
  o Do you enjoy being at home or do you rather spend your free time somewhere else?
  o If Airbnb guests do not count do you have a lot of visitors or guests in your place (staying for the night or just for coffee)?
  o So how does it feel to let (Airbnb) strangers to stay in your place?
  o Would you say, that permitting travellers to your place has somehow affected your relationship with your home?

Motives behind renting...

• Could you tell a bit how you ended up listing your place to Airbnb?
• Could you describe the motives behind renting your place through Airbnb?
• How would you describe the role of this Airbnb renting as a source of income?
  o Where does the money mainly go (norml living expenses, traveling, leisure etc.)?

About the profile...

• Could you tell a bit about the pictures in the profile. Was there something you wanted to especially emphasize or fade out in the pictures?
• Could you tell a bit about the description? How did you end up describing your place as it is described? Was there something you wanted to especially emphasize or avoid? Why do you think these things are important bring up in your profile?
• Could you tell me a bit about your personal description? How did you end up to this description? Why did you feel these things were important to bring up in your profile?
• Could you tell me a bit about the house rules. How did you decide to set them up as they are?
• **How did you decide the level of the price?**
  o How about cleaning, extra-guests, deposit?
  o Does the price change according to dates?
  o What do you feel the price includes? Is it just for the space or is there something more included (e.g. food, tour in the city, tips or something else)?
  o Do you think you could easily rise the price?

*Upon accepting the guests…*

• Is the number of inquiries you get too small/appropriate/too big?
• Could you describe a bit the process through which inquiry leads to a reservation? Do you sort out all the details before or after the reservations?
• **Could you tell a bit, how do you choose your guests.**
  o What do you want to know about the guest?
  o Could you tell a bit about the instances when you have declined? Examples? Why did you decline?
  o In what situations are you usually willing to take guests and in what not?
• **What is the minimum stay? Why? What is the maximum stay? Why?**
  o Has there been a lot of inquiries which do not fit in your min-max range?
• How would you describe a typical Airbnb guest?
• Could you tell a bit about instances when you have kept in touch with your guests/hosts?

*As the guests arrive…*

• What kinds of directions or guidance do you give the guests’ prior their arrival?
• What kind of preparations do you make prior to the guests’ arrival?
• How do you welcome your guests? Where do you meet them?
• Could you describe your first meetings with your guests. Has there been any awkward moment?

*Guests are there…*

• **If you are renting the whole apartment, where are you during the guests’ stay?**
  o Is it easy or boresome to arrange a place to stay? How does it feel that you have to leave your home to someone else and a find another place to sleep?
What do your “hosts” think about you renting your place and staying in theirs?
Can the guests contact you? Do they ever? In what occasions?

OR

Tell me a bit about the time when guests are in your place. How are things usually going with them?
What kinds of things do you have to take in account when you have a guest?
What kinds of things do you wish that the guest takes in account as s/he stays in your place? What do you expect from them?
Is there a lot of interaction with the guests? In which occasions yes and in which not?
How is boundary between your private space and guests space negotiated? Is it easy?
Has there been any problems or conflicts?
  Is there a possibility of conflict? What could be a possible cause of conflict or problem?

So far what has been the most stressful or uncomfortable incident which you have faced during your time as a Airbnb host? And what has been the most rewarding?

As the guests leave...

How does the checkout happen?
What kinds of things do you have to do after the guest leaves?
Could you tell a bit about writing the reviews. Is it easy to rate the guests and review them?
  Have you written any bad reviews? How did it feel?
  How does it feel to get reviews? Have you gotten any surprising reviews, positive or negative?

Is there something you would like to add?