

A Freegan Pop-up Café: Embedding critical hospitalities into the curriculum

Abstract

This article suggests the importance of opening tourism and hospitality management education to critical perspectives and practices. Critical developments on hospitality have had a limited impact on higher education curricula, which retain a strong vocational orientation. This article presents a student-led pedagogical innovation that enacts hospitality as a critical tool. The activity involved the organisation of a pop-up café using freegan principles. Surplus food was transformed into nutritious meals that were distributed on campus on a pay-as-you-feel basis. The innovation drew on Tribe's (2002) philosophical practitioner, which vindicates the practical value of adding critical reflection into vocational courses. This article reflects on the pedagogical value of embedding critical hospitalities into vocational curricula. The experience raised relevant questions concerning the interplay of hospitality and criticality, the ethical values of tourism education and the educational needs of tourism management students more generally.

Keywords: Food waste, pop-up hospitality, freeganism, participatory action research, critical hospitality management, critical pedagogy, experiential learning, higher education.

Introduction

This article suggests the importance of opening up tourism and hospitality management education to critical perspectives and practices through the discussion of a student-led pedagogical innovation. The field of hospitality is gaining critical significance and conceptual richness, with a growing number of scholars engaging in transdisciplinary conversations on a wide range of social, cultural and political issues. Critical approaches to hospitality management (Lynch et al. 2011; Lugosi et al 2009; Germann Molz and Gibson 2007; Lashley et al 2007) are among the most exciting and stimulating developments in tourism studies, which have come a long way since Franklin and Crang qualified the field as ‘stale, tired, repetitive and lifeless’ (2001: 1). And yet, the impact of critical developments on hospitality management education has been limited. Tourism and hospitality management courses retain a strong vocational orientation (Morrison and O’Mahony 2003; Lashley 2013, 2015), with highly managerial curricula that respond to the operational short-term needs of industry, thus ignoring the links with wider social and cultural issues. Any pedagogical engagement with critical perspectives is disassociated from vocational practice. There are many shortcomings to a vocational style education, according to Lashley (2015), including the abandonment of critical graduate skills, the limited scope and conceptual depth of the discipline as well as its insufficient intellectual status. There is a need to bridge the gap between managerial and philosophical approaches to hospitality and make space for critical perspectives and practices in tourism and hospitality management curricula.

Drawing on the work of critical hospitality management (Lugosi et al. 2009), this article presents a pedagogical innovation that enacted hospitality as a critical tool, engaging with alternative configurations of hospitality as part of an experiential learning module. The innovation involved the organization of a pop-up café with undergraduate students in partnership with the Magic Hat Café, a local activist group campaigning on food waste. The

distinctive feature of this café was the unconventional origin of its food and its pricing model. Surplus food was transformed into nutritious meals which were distributed on campus on a pay-as-you-feel basis. The innovation drew on Tribe's (2002) philosophical practitioner, which vindicates the importance of adding critical reflection into vocational courses so that graduates combine technical efficiency with ethical competence. By making curricular space for critical perspectives and practices, the activity directly challenged the dualism of tourism and hospitality management education, bridging the gap between critical reflection and managerial action. The experience raised relevant questions for critical hospitality management research and education about the interplay of hospitality and criticality. These include the democratic possibilities of enacting hospitality as a critical tool, the role of criticality in professional practice and the critical orientation of tourism and hospitality management curricula. This article, which is divided in five parts, reflects on these issues as part of a wider concern about the ethical and educational needs of tourism and hospitality management students. The first section considers an expanding notion of hospitality that highlights its political dimension; the second section looks at the limited presence of criticality in tourism and hospitality management education, calling for a more balanced curriculum. The third section delineates the main findings of the case study, by looking at the design, implementation and evaluation of the activity. The fourth section discusses the educational benefits and challenges of enacting hospitality as a critical tool. The article concludes with a summary of the key achievements.

The article is informed by participatory action research principles (Stringer 2014; McAteer 2013; Kindon et al. 2009). Participatory action research is, according to Kindon et al., 'a collaborative process of research, education, and action explicitly oriented toward social change' (2009: 90). It is a research framework that is closely aligned with the notions of participation, transformation and empowerment that inform the pop-up café and Tribe's

(2002) philosophical practitioner. At its heart is ‘the principle that it is research *with* rather than *on* people’ (Seale 2010: 1000; italics in original), that is, treating participants as co-researchers rather than merely as sources of data. Participatory action research challenges a positivistic view of knowledge, rejecting the possibility of value and objective free research in favor of a practice that is committed to democratic change, in this case social and environmental justice and the democratic possibilities of hospitality. It also challenges the epistemological distance between theory and practice. In participatory action research, theory is to be generated through practice, thus shifting from a problem-solving, responsive strategy ‘to one which is problem-posing, or problematizing, continually subjecting practice to critical inquiry, challenging the “taken for granted”’ (McAteer 2013: 17-18). The pop-up café was developed according to these principles, with this article critically reflecting on the pedagogical innovation as the final stage of the action research cycle. Participatory action research is not so much a set of techniques as a democratic framework for research and inquiry that is predicated on critically reflective practice. Researchers and participants work together to develop context-specific methods that facilitate the iterative cycles of action and reflection (Kindon et al. 2009: 93). The pop-up café took place on 23 March 2017 as part of a newly created experiential learning module named Building Business Practices, which is compulsory for all first-year undergraduate students at Newcastle Business School. The event was the focal point for a whole semester of teaching for 35 Tourism and Events Management students. Students were involved as co-creators in all stages of the project from design to evaluation and worked directly with the external organization. The article draws exclusively on materials that were produced in the context of the project including action plans, customer, student and staff feedback, marketing materials and risk assessment. A range of context specific research techniques were used in the production of these documents, including evaluation surveys, information search and document analysis. No additional

primary data were produced for this article with the exception of a reflective diary. Students were consulted on the plans to write this article at the beginning of the module . Formal ethical approval for the project was obtained through the ethical committee at Northumbria University.

Freegan hospitality

The field of hospitality is broadening with a growing number of scholars embracing critical and reflexive paths of inquiry that consider hospitality ‘wherever hospitality exists, in whatever shape or form’ (Lashley et al. 2007: 188). The notion of hospitality has been used to examine a wide range of issues beyond the commercial provision of food, drink and accommodation, including citizenship and human rights (Derrida 2000; Dikeç 2002), the treatment of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Rossello 2001; Gibson 2003) and technology (Germann Molz 2012). Most of these works consider hospitality as welcome metaphor (Lynch 2017), that is, as a ‘structure that regulates, negotiates and celebrates the social relations between inside and outside’ (Germann Molz and Gibson 2007: 3). There is a renewed emphasis on the centrality of hospitality in society (Bell 2012) as well as the ethical, political and philosophical implications of hospitality, with more authors ‘seeking to build and interlink with wider theoretical arguments’ (Lugosi et al. 2009: 1471). The study of hospitality is broadening and yet, hospitality management rarely goes beyond the commercial provision of food, drink and accommodation, ignoring how other disciplines and sectors frame hospitality. The subject is essentially ‘pro-business, preoccupied with managerial practice and issues of industry importance’ (Lugosi et al. 2009: 1468-69). Its intellectual inhospitality towards other disciplines has been emphatically criticized by Lynch et al. (2011) and Germann Molz and Gibson (2007) in a move that replicates wider trends in tourism studies (Franklin and Crang 2001; Cohen and Cohen 2019) and critical management

(Grey and Willmott 2005), who also highlight the lack of interdisciplinary conversations. Responding to these shortcomings, critical hospitality management stresses the need to bridge the gap between managerial action and critical reflection, enhancing hospitality management research and education 'by employing the strengths of social scientific approaches' (Lugosi et al. 2009: 1471). There are many benefits from opening hospitality management to critical discussions. Firstly, it can 'provide a base for better understanding hospitality management' (Lashley 2013: 289), with new conceptual tools to develop more sophisticated interpretations of hospitality service delivery. The intersection of hospitality management and critical thinking has, according to Morrison and Barry O'Mahony, the 'potential to generate new ways of thinking' (2003: 39) opening a myriad of social forms and practices for critical exploration. Secondly, it is an opportunity 'to infuse hospitality studies with critical significance' (Lynch et al. 2011: 1). Philosophical and sociological perspectives question how we think and deliver hospitality, where it occurs or who is able to perform it. They invite us to search for more ethical practices and emancipatory encounters, thus making space for alternative configurations of hospitality which, like the case study of this article, defy the commercial logic of most transactions. Thirdly, it has the potential to elevate the intellectual status and interest of the discipline at a time that it looks increasingly vulnerable (Lugosi and Jameson 2017; Airey and Tribe 2000). Finally, there are educational benefits associated with the broadening of hospitality (Morrison and Mahony 2003) which, as we will see in the next section, concern critical graduate skills.

This article presents a student-led pedagogical innovation that bridges the gap between critical reflection and managerial action. The innovation consisted of a freegan pop-up restaurant experience, which students organized in partnership with the Magic Hat Café with the aim to reduce food waste and overconsumption. Drawing on critical hospitality management research, the pedagogical innovation enacted hospitality as a critical tool,

engaging practically with environmental justice discourses and practices. The activity adapted the radical principles of freeganism (Barnard 2011), an anti-consumerist movement that takes up broad strategies of opting out - 'a political statement against overconsumption, waste and corporate greed' (Edwards and Mercer 2012: 175). According to Freegan.info – one of the world's most visible organizations- freegans are 'people who employ alternative strategies for living based on limited participation in the conventional economy and minimal consumption of resources' (Barnard 2011: 420). Upcycling food is a practice with a long history often linked with the alleviation of poverty. As a political statement, however, it can be traced back to the activities of the San Francisco-based Diggers' street theatre collective in the 1960s (Edwards and Mercer 2012) and also has strong links with the 1970s anarchist punk culture (Clark 2004; Coyne 2009). Edwards and Mercer (2013) identify two basic freegan traditions. The first and more radical tradition is dumpster diving, where people in small groups rummage through dumpster bins for their produce. The second tradition is soup kitchens such as Food Not Bombs movement, an anarchist (dis)organization that collects food that cannot be sold from supermarkets and groceries and which are redistributed to those in need often in the form of a delicious meal (Clark 2004). This is a less extreme tradition that does not involve collecting food from bins. It is also more communitarian with its focus on helping the homelessness and the poor. The Magic Hat Café aligns with this second tradition. It organizes activist soup kitchens with food that is not collected from bins, but it is all legally donated by major supermarkets and local groceries, in some cases as part of wider schemes to reduce waste and help the poor.

The politics of freeganism shares an anarchist punk ethos that rejects mainstream capitalist values and privilege direct localized action. Central to freeganism is the pursuit of autonomous geographies, 'spaces where people desire to constitute non-capitalist, egalitarian and solidaristic forms of political, social, and economic organization through a combination

of resistance and creation' (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006: 730). Freeganism's emphasis on autonomy is evident in Seattle's Black Cat Café, which Clark (2004: 21) describes as a 'declaration of autonomy and organic creation, a rejection of commodification'. With its characteristic combination of resistance and creativity, the Magic Hat Café shares a similar political approach that pursues the creation of autonomous food geographies. Upcycling food is one of the activities that better exemplifies the new social movements' focus on the politicization of everyday life, traditionally free from contention (Melucci 1989). We can find in freegan groups the same 'explosive combination of making protest part of everyday life, but also making life into workable alternatives for a wider social good' (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006: 737). The strategies of freegan groups are, according to Barnard (2011), broadly similar to other drop-out subcultures inasmuch as they reject formal politics, instead directing their energies on collective action within the cultural and individual sphere. Groups like the Magic Hat café adopt the fluid, non-hierarchical organizational structures of the new social movements, privileging nonviolent and attention-grasping tactics as well as decentralized decision making. There are also echoes of Situationism in freeganism, in particular in its use of *détournement*, a situationist technique that was reprised by the punk movement (Coverley 2006). *Détournement*, meaning diversion or rerouting, involves the use of pre-existing artistic productions which are susceptible to be converted into something else. Situationism developed a guerrilla mentality by seeking to create new and unexpected meanings and situations by highjacking and disrupting the original. Freeganism can be seen as an example of *détournement* inasmuch as it transgresses the rules of consumerism by redistributing its products, upturning the logic of food and waste and channeling anger against wasteful societies into fun (Wettergreen 2009). With its political use of *détournement*, Freegan cafés can be aligned with other creative initiatives that also explore the political possibilities of tourism, like toxic tourism (Pezzullo 2007).

The freegan movement involves ‘a restructuring of the location from which edible food can be procured’ (Coyne 2009: 9) inasmuch as it intercepts food that was going to waste. This restructuring does not respond to an act of desperation, but it is the result of an ethical commitment ‘to reduce the amount of food waste produced by the industrial, capitalist food system’ (Edwards and Mercer 2012). There is a mounting evidence of deteriorating food security around the world. According to the FAO (2017), the number of chronically undernourished people in the world is estimated to have increased to 815 million in 2016. Malnutrition is a problem in Third World countries, as well as in the West. According to the Food Foundation (Taylor and Loopstra 2016), 8.4 million people in the UK live in households where adults report insecure access to food. Nutritious food is a scarce resource for millions, and yet between a third and a half of all food produced every year is wasted (Goldensberg 2016). According to the UK waste and recycling advisory body (WRAP 2017), £13b worth of food that could have been eaten was binned in 2015. An estimated 7.3 million tons of food were wasted in 2015, 4.4 million of which was deemed to be avoidable. Freegans believe that the problem of waste is not just a question of efficiency, but it is consubstantial to a capitalist system that promotes wasteful consumption and production. In response to these contradictions, the freegan movement promotes ‘alternative strategies for living based on limited participation in the conventional economy and minimal consumption of resources’ (Freeganinfo 2017). The use of surplus food is the most successful strategy with the most potential to educate the general public and campaign against global issues. Freeganism’s media friendly direct actions have the ability to highlight the links between consumer society and the hospitality industry with some of the most pressing issues of our time, including food waste and climate change. Its unique focus on food waste makes the movement simultaneously radical and one of common sense. Whilst some may see in freeganism a totalizing revolutionary ideology that combats the excesses of capitalism, others

see it as a common-sense approach to food waste (Barnard 2011).

The freegan movement questions fundamental principles that organize hospitality in our society, including the cultural notions of dirt, which determines what is edible and what is not. By intercepting food that was going to waste, freeganism ‘confronts the arbitrary cultural meanings that support a system that allows useable food to be discarded’ (Coyne 2009: 11). Mary Douglas ([1966] 2002) reminds us that waste is part of a classification system that establishes symbolic boundaries between purity and impurity, sacred and profane. The classification of food as dirty is not so much based on safety concerns but on an unquestioned faith in location. A clear-cut dichotomy is established between the supermarket, where we get our food from, and the garbage, which cannot be touched. Sell by or use by dates determine the speed food travels from shelves to garbage. These dates have often little relation with food safety and nutrition but denote either how long a product can remain on store shelves or when they are recommended to be eaten for best flavor or quality. In rejecting the strict adherence to sell by and used by dates, the freegan movement questions the mantra of sterility that food industry imposes. What is rotten is not so much food waste as society, which fills the body with poisons and pesticides, which are necessary to keep the required desirability of food. Conventional food safety standards are problematic inasmuch as they hide the nature and labor processes involved in food production. ‘The food industry seeks to provide a product so clean and neat that its human creation is not readily apparent’, Clark (2004: 22) argues. Freeganism can be seen as an attempt to break free from the fetishization of food as a commodity. The food that is intercepted is in a sense ‘decomodified, stripped of its alienating qualities, and restored to a kind of pure use bodily substance’ (Clark 2004: 21). By intercepting food that was going to waste, freeganism makes visible the origin, the human work and the values that are associated with food, thus problematizing what is commonly regarded as natural. However, the cultural work of freeganism is intrinsically contradictory.

This is a radical approach to hospitality that seeks to disrupt the standard circulation of food whilst challenging the categories of safe consumption, and yet the freegan movement often remains bounded by legal structures. This was the case of our pop-up café, which did not collect food from bins but only used legal methods of intercepting food that do not contravene food safety legislation. The pop-up café was a radical anti-consumerist pedagogical activity that defied the commercial logic of hospitality management by distributing surplus food on a pay-as-you-feel basis. The activity, however, was subordinated to the managerial learning outcomes of a module that seeks to equip undergraduate students with relevant skills to tackle real business problems. As the next section shows, there is little space for alternative configurations of hospitality in tourism and hospitality management education.

Rebalancing tourism and hospitality management education

There is a limited presence of philosophical and sociological discussions in tourism and hospitality management degrees, which are ‘dominated by the tyranny of relevance’ (Airey and Tribe, 2000: 290) and have a strong vocational orientation (Morrison and O’Mahony 2003; Lashley 2013, 2015). The emphasis of hospitality management education is on practically-orientated content that meets the operational short-term needs of industry, with ‘a curriculum rigidly locked into a checklist of management content and skills’ (Lashley 2015: 374). Short-term employability goals rather than graduate skill development remain its prime ambition (Wood 2015; Martin and McCabe 2007). ‘The explicit intention is to prepare students for an occupationally circumscribed profession on graduation’ (Morrison and O’Gorman 2008: 215). The vocational orientation of hospitality management education is further compounded by the dominant learning preferences of students, who, according to Lashley (2015), are mainly activist learners, preferring action rather than reflection. It is a

similar story with tourism management degrees, which are also driven by vocational action (Tribe 2002, 2005, 2008). A vocational-style education 'does not do justice to the students, the industry or the subject itself' (Hemmington and Gibbons 2017: 123) presenting challenges at two levels. On the one hand, it does not deal with the social, cultural and political complexities of hospitality (Lynch et al. 2011) or its multiple externalities (Tribe 2002), thus undermining the subject's ability 'to work on behalf of the public good in ways that transcend the promotion of short-term gains in economic productivity' (Belhaseen and Caton 2011: 1390). On the other hand, a vocational-style education does not pay sufficient attention to critical reflection and analysis (Lashley 2015; Morrison and O'Mahony 2003; Wood 2015). The vocational orientation of programs 'reinforces student tendencies to avoid reflection and theorizing' (Lashley 2013: 286), abandoning vital higher education skills of understanding, wisdom and critique (Belhaseen and Caton 2011) at a time when they are increasingly necessary (Barnett 1997). Critical hospitality management scholars are calling for 'the liberation of hospitality higher education from its vocational base' (Morrison and O'Mahony 2003: 38) and the adoption of a more reflexive style of learning (Mooney and Harrison 2018) that prepare graduates 'who are at least reflective, if not philosophical practitioners' (Lashley 2015: 374). Establishing interdisciplinary conversations, as Lynch et al. (2011), Germann Molz and Gibson (2007) and Lugosi et al. (2009) propose, not only 'will stimulate new and different approaches to thinking about hospitality', it also has positive 'implications for hospitality education and the hospitality industry' (Hemmington and Gibbons 2017: 115), infusing hospitality management education with critical significance, elevating the status of the discipline and improving graduate skills. Belhaseen and Caton (2011) identifies three benefits for students and industry of broadening tourism and hospitality management curricula, namely individual freedom, social justice and business productivity. Tourism and hospitality management education is now reflecting more openly

on 'the connection of hospitality to society as a whole' (Morrison & O'Gorman 2008: 214), a trend which Airey et al. (2015) views as a good indicator of the maturity of the subjects. However, such an optimistic view is not widely shared as engagement with critical theory remains largely theoretical in nature (Tribe 2008). In tourism and hospitality management education, 'critical scholarship is tolerated, even encouraged, but not acted upon' (Wood 2015: 334). Critical, philosophical and cultural discussions are safely contained in theoretical chapters away from vocational practice, leaving the vocational orientation of hospitality education untouched, making the discipline less mature and increasingly vulnerable, according to Wood (2015). Pedagogical initiatives integrating a liberal base within a vocational curriculum are still rare, though highly promising (Morrison and O'Mahony 2003).

Tribe's (2002, 2005, 2008) notion of the philosophical practitioner is a useful framework to open up tourism and hospitality management education to critical approaches. Tribe has criticized the dualistic tendencies of tourism and hospitality management education, where the vocational is linked with action and the more liberal aspects with cognitive modes of study. The former produces highly employable but largely uncritical and compliant graduates, whereas the latter produces highly critical graduates with limited employability skills (Tribe 2008). There is little action in the critical or indeed reflection in the vocational. Tribe's philosophical practitioner vindicates the importance of constructing bridges between the liberal and the vocational ends of education, balancing ethical and vocational competences. The tourism and hospitality sectors need 'graduates who deliver efficient and effective tourism services whilst at the same discharging the role of stewardship for the development of the wider tourism world in which these services are delivered' (Tribe 2002: 338). His proposals caution against abandoning a vocational curriculum in favor of a liberal one. Just as a vocational curriculum implies closure, liberal education may be

perceived as a largely passive, individual and cerebral process with little implications for action. He proposes, instead, an interdisciplinary curriculum that satisfies the demands of business and ‘of a more widely drawn tourism society and world’ (Tribe 2002: 340). The notion of the philosophical practitioner is particularly relevant for this article inasmuch as it questions the established relation between the purpose of the curriculum and the mode of study. Traditionally, a liberal curriculum is linked to theorization and emphasizes critique and skepticism, whereas a vocational curriculum is about getting on with things and is framed by pragmatism. This is a dangerous association that strengthens the idea that criticality is of little use in real life, protecting vocationalism against any criticism. At the heart of the philosophical practitioner is the notion of liberal action, which ‘implies both the practicing of philosophy and the enacting of its fruits’ (Tribe 2002: 349). Tribe’s (2002) philosophical practitioner aligns with other critical hospitality scholars (Hemmington and Gibbons 2017; Lashley 2008, 2013, 2015; Lugosi et al. 2009; Morrison and O’Gorman 2008; Morrison and O’Mahony 2003) on the need to create curricular space for critical management approaches to complement applied, vocational aspects of hospitality management education. However, curricular space should not be limited to theoretical discussions but should, also, include vocational activities. The pedagogical activity this article presents addresses Tribe’s call for a balanced curriculum that breaks the divide, destabilizing the ideological construct of vocationalism.

Discussions about the rebalancing of tourism and hospitality management education echo wider debates in higher education about the role of universities and the sort of skills graduates need. Universities operate in a world in permanent flux that is characterized by high levels of uncertainty in what Barnett (2000) calls the age of super complexity. In such a fluid world, presuppositions as to what counts as valid knowledge are in dispute, with universities fast losing the monopoly on its creation and transmission. Social Sciences and

humanities are struggling to get a hearing (Barnett and Bengtson 2017) with young degrees such as tourism and hospitality management looking increasingly vulnerable (Wood 2015). In this age of super complexity, what is required is no longer that students become masters of an accredited body of thought that lecturers possess but that they develop the necessary knowledge and skills to engage with a complex and open future. If they are to have a purpose, the thinking that takes place in universities should not just respond to 'an immediate claim of instrumental understanding' but 'may help to *unfold possible futures*' (Barnett and Bengtson 2017: 7 italics in original). The citizens of tomorrow need imaginative forms of thinking that are at once 'critical, real, utopian and optimistic' (Barnett and Bengtson 2017: 7). Students must learn how to exercise their creative and critical capacities and nurture their own continued intellectual growth. Without a proper conception of criticality in universities, Barnett argues, 'there have to be question marks put against the sustainability of modern society' (1997: 7). Criticality is a defining concept of the western university, however, it has often been interpreted too narrowly. As Fullagar and Wilson (2012) explain, we need to move beyond an oppositional and negative stance of critical thinking that seeks to occupy a dissenting position and embrace, instead, a more reflexive perspective of criticality that is 'concerned with creating and sharing knowledge that we hope will have a positive effect on the world' (2012: 3). Critical thinking in tourism and hospitality management education can neither be reduced to a business skill for economic regeneration or self-development nor to a dissenting position that seeks to 'overthrow the managerial regime'. Critical thinking is a means to a great end and a better life, a way to open up different futures and thinking across boundaries. A critique of a wider context as an orientation to action is at the heart of critical thinking.

Preparing reflexive and critical graduates who are philosophical practitioners requires the redefinition of the traditional teacher-focused learning model. If we want to rebalance

tourism and hospitality management curricula, it is necessary to move away from static models that think of teaching as a mere transfer of information from the researcher to the student and embrace student-centered approaches to learning that engage all participants as learning and knowledge builders, thus establishing better links between theory and practice. There is a wide recognition of the value of student-centered approaches to learning among critical hospitality scholars, with Lugosi et al (2009) highlighting the importance of Research informed teaching, Wood (20015) the need for learners to be involved in knowledge creation in class and Lashley (2015) the educational value of working from students' own personal experiences. The freegan pop-up café adopted an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning that recognizes the value of research in higher education. The nexus between teaching and research is complex and subtle as 'effective teaching research links are not automatic and have to be constructed' (Jenkins et al. 2007: 2). For Brew (2006) research and teaching should not inhabit different domains. Drawing on the work of Prosser and Trigwell (1999), she proposes, instead, a dynamic model that engages all participants as knowledge builders. 'We need to move to more inclusive, collaborative, inquiry-based models of research, teaching and learning' (Brew 2006: 15). In this model, academics and students come together 'to solve complex, important and yet unforeseen problems' (Brew 2006: 4). The purpose of higher education is to open together new questions about the world and find new ways of searching for solutions. This is a student-focused approach that emphasizes the skills of inquiry and critical thinking and is more likely to lead to deep learning. It also breaks the divide between teaching and research, knowledge and skills as well as teachers and students. This approach shifts attention away from the lecture as a predominant form of teaching to develop a more diverse diet that blurs the divide between students and lecturers, teaching and research as well as between knowledge and skills. The learning activity this article presents adopted an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning. Students were

not treated as audience of research but as participants of a process of enquiry. Centering the learning activity on students enabled me to bring critical hospitality into a more practical domain, enacting it rather than merely learning about it. However, the approach was not without its challenges inasmuch as its success depends on the level of student engagement and their styles of learning. In the next section I will examine its design and implementation to see how critical hospitalities can be translated into practice.

Embedding critical hospitalities into the curriculum

The pedagogical innovation saw first year undergraduate students engaging with politically-motivated configurations of hospitality that defy the commercial logic of tourism and hospitality management education. The aim of the activity was the organization of a freegan pop-up restaurant experience in partnership with the Magic Hat Café, a local organization campaigning on food waste and overconsumption. The café took place on 23 March 2017 (figure 1), targeting the busy lunch time service at one of the largest business schools in the country with over 4000 students on campus. The distinctive feature of the café was the unconventional origin of its food and its pricing model. It was a real junk food café that up-cycled surplus food, transforming foods destined for waste into nutritious meals, which were distributed on campus on a pay-as-you-feel basis. The café was set outdoors using the Magic Hat's mobile unit consisting of two bicycle trailers and two parasols (Figure 2). One trailer had two electric hubs to heat the food and the other a sink to clean up plates and cutlery so that they could be reused. The menu consisted of seven dishes that students had cooked the day before under the supervision of Duncan from the Magic Hat (Figure 3). They included vegetarian soup, aubergine curry, potato omelet, potato wedges with an avocado dip, banana bread, fruit salad, pear crumble and smoothies. For cooking, students used surplus food collected from one major supermarket and two small groceries on the week

prior to the event. Collections targeted only low risk food mainly fruit, vegetables and breads. The food that was not used for cooking was redistributed to the student community in the module unit (Figure 4). By any standards, the pop-up café was an unusual pedagogical activity for a business school.

The freegan pop-up café challenged the established division between critical reflection and vocational action in tourism and hospitality management education, by integrating anti-consumerist forms of hospitality into an experiential learning context designed to equip students with relevant skills for employment. Specifically, the event was part of a newly created module named Building Business Practices, which is compulsory for all first-year undergraduate students at the Business School. The module, which adopted a student-centered approach to learning, provided students with relevant skills to tackle real-life business problems and projects. The module had two distinct parts. The first semester was common to all degrees and focused on improving soft business and academic skills in six areas including team work, information skills, research, presentation, project management and self-directed learning. Building on the skills and abilities developed in the first semester, the second semester was entirely dedicated to a subject-specific project where students developed relevant skills to their professional practice. The freegan pop-up café was the focal point of the second semester for tourism and events management students. Developing a teaching and learning plan that integrates critical discourses and practices into an experiential learning context was challenging. The plan had to break with the narrow instrumentality of tourism and hospitality curricula whilst providing relevant skills to tackle real life problems; enacting hospitality as a critical tool and, at the same time, meeting the requirements of a module with strong business values. Two key principles informed the design of the teaching and learning plan. The first principle was interdisciplinarity, in line with Tribe's (2002) notion of the philosophical practitioner and critical perspectives of hospitality (Lynch et al

2011; Lugosi et al 2009). Interdisciplinarity was demonstrated in the diverse range of issues covered in class including marketing, food safety, sustainability, waste, the philosophical nature of hospitality, event planning and evaluation. Such an eclectic combination of issues challenged the idea that criticality is of little use in real life. The second principle corresponded with Brew's (2006) conception of education as a process of inquiry. The plan adopted, using Jenkins et al. (2007) terminology, a research-based approach to teaching and learning, in which, like in the case of Wood (2015), students were involved in knowledge creation and inquiry, thus calling into question the artificial divide between research and teaching in higher education. There were no lectures in this module, only workshops and timetabled studio sessions for self-directed learning, where students embarked on meaningful projects that require research, planning and reflection with the lecturer adopting the role of a facilitator. Many of these activities worked from student's own personal experience (Lashley 2015). The teaching and learning program was divided in four distinctive parts, creating an iterative cycle of action and reflection that is typical of participatory action research. The first part was explorative in nature and focused on researching the topic. Students had to find out about the social and environmental problems concerning food waste and read up on the freegan movement. The plan included an inquiry session with the founder of Magic Hat Café and a student-led task where they had to explore the issue of waste in four different contexts: at home, on campus, at an industry level and at a global scale. The second part had a vocational orientation focusing on hospitality and event planning. The class was divided in four groups, each of which was responsible for planning a different task, collection of surplus food, cooking, marketing and service. This second part also included workshops on food safety and event planning and evaluation to help students with their action plans. The third part was the event itself, which, as explained above, started a week earlier with the collection of surplus food and finished with the actual event. The last part was the evaluation.

The pop-up café was a remarkable success. The student-led project intercepted huge amounts of wasted food, served 150 meals and raised 200 pounds on a pay-as-you-feel basis, which was donated to the Magic Hat Café. The popularity of the event was such that we ran out of food and nothing was wasted. As part of the evaluation process, customer feedback was collected using a self-administrated survey. All 60 respondents had a positive and enjoyable experience. Food was rated at 4.65 out of 5 and service at 4.66. Participants were also invited to write their thoughts on a paper wall as well as on a survey. Participants expressed their surprise for the quality of the food. ‘At first I thought it wouldn’t taste as good as fresh food but it was lovely’, one customer mentioned. Participants also commented on issues surrounding food waste. ‘We concern ourselves too much with dates’ - one participant observed - ‘when we ought to look at the actual food’. The importance of making space for alternative economies at business schools was also emphasized, ‘ethical business in practice’. There was positive feedback from students. The activity contributed to creating a more hospitable atmosphere, fostering friendship and helping with student satisfaction. The activity also raised awareness of waste problems and emphasized the value of ethical and non-technocratic approach to business. Success, however, was not straightforward. There were many shortcomings, the most important one being a power cut at the beginning of the activity, which stressed the team and delayed the start of the activity. Not all students engaged with the activity with the same level of enthusiasm, with the marketing team, in particular, producing disappointing results. Disorganization and bureaucratic complications were also an issue.

Enacting hospitality as a critical tool

The freegan pop-up café highlighted important limitations in the teaching of vocational skills in tourism and hospitality management education. Barnett and Bengtson

(2017) argue that students must learn how to exercise their creative and critical skills, for the reason that ‘in practice managers need to be *reflective practitioners*’ (Lashley 2015: 366, italics in original) that are able to adapt to a changing environment. And yet, the emphasis of tourism and hospitality management education is on operational and managerial skills. Such an emphasis meets the short-term operational needs of industry but undermines an entrepreneurial and responsibility-based agenda. It does neither prepare students well to ‘work on behalf of the public good’ (Belhassen and Caton 2011: 1390), nor help them ‘to unfold possible futures’ (Barnett and Bengtson 2017: 38). Students are trained to work within the safe parameters of existing systems with few incentives to create, innovate or adapt them. The project responded to these limitations by contextualizing the piecemeal focus of the module on soft generic skills. The pop-up café was conceived as an open platform for students to develop skills creatively and meaningfully. Central to the project was the idea that graduate skill training cannot be detached from a subject-specific meaningful context. It was made clear from the start that success was more dependent on students’ commitment and creativity than on their efficiency and that creativity does not emerge in a vacuum but has to be based on critical thinking. The project’s integrated approach to skill training contrasted with the calculative behavior adopted by many undergraduate students, who engage mainly in summative assessments losing out on deep learning (Brinkman-Staneva 2015). This was manifest in the personal reflective reports students had to write for their assessments, where discussions on skills were often limited to a question of efficiency. That was the case of student 1 who highlighted the need ‘to get everything done efficiently and to a good standard’. Student 11 went further by linking efficiency to proficient leadership ‘to be more effective in their jobs and provide greater benefit to the organizations in which they work’. There were, however, some differing views, the most interesting of which come from the marketing team reflecting on their problems. The limited achievements of the team,

according to student 4, were due to the unimaginative approach they used to tackle the task. 'Our marketing methods were rather ineffective. It would've been better to undertake a more creative approach which possibly would resulted in a bolder campaign', she concluded. The importance of being creative was also highlighted in relation to problem solving. Unexpected hurdles like a power cut compelled students to leave aside pre-established patterns of work to focus on more creative ways of achieving their goals. Student 13 mentioned that 'we were determined to still make the event successful by using our resilience and critical thinking to find the quickest possible solution to the problem'. Such a link between creativity and criticality was central to the project. Creative interventions do not appear out of the blue, but they are the result of a critical appraisal of the context to be intervened. Thus, before creating an action plan, students were asked to critically reflect on waste in four contexts: at home, on campus, in hospitality and generally. The conclusions of their research had to inform their action plans. Drawing on Barnett (1997) and Fullagar and Wilson (2012), the pedagogical activity neither confined critical thinking to formal knowledge nor reduced it to a negative or oppositional stance, but placed it in the domain of the self and the world. Criticality here had a political orientation to action, in this case related to issues of sustainability and environmental justice. This approach to criticality led to interesting results, for example when one of the groups interviewed a member of the private catering company that runs the campus outlets, in relation to their food waste practice. The interview allowed students to critically reflect on the environmental responsibility of businesses.

One of the most interesting aspects of the project was the clash between the autonomous practices of the Magic Hat Café and the business ethos of the degree. Students were gaining business experience in partnership with an anti-consumerist collective that challenged taken-for-granted business principles. The clash was most evident in the differential use of money. With the pop-up café, a micro-economy was created based on gift

rather than purchase. Surplus food was donated, labor was volunteer, and meals were distributed on a pay-as-you-feel basis. Students did not set prices, but it was the customer who decided the terms of exchange. The exception was a £200 budget included in the grant, which was mainly used for marketing related activities, but which proved to be unnecessary as well as contradictory to the values of the project. The freegan pop-up café questioned standard notions of value, by adding value to foods discarded from the commodity chain, whilst problematizing the unsustainable way economies create value. The pay-as-you-feel pricing method caught the attention of students, who highlighted it as a key feature of the event in their marketing leaflets (Figure 1). The clash was about organizational cultures as much as it was about principles. The Magic Hat's commitment to an autonomous organizational culture, 'to freedom, non-hierarchy and connection and a desire to eliminate (or reduce) power relations' (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006: 739), was in contradiction to dominant ideas of leadership and management at the Business School. The clash was particularly evident in the kitchen. Whilst students were thinking in terms of productivity and organization, Duncan, the Magic Hat supervisor, was more concerned with creating the right atmosphere for the values of the project. Duncan did not organize the kitchen by way of team leaders, delegated jobs and project management but developed consensus creating techniques typical of autonomous groups that sought to erase power relations. The clash brought to the fore the inextricable links between processes and goals. To unveil the creative and critical potential of students, a more autonomous and stimulating environment was necessary, where participants could take full ownership of the task. The autonomous organizational culture excited students as it is reflected in their individual reflective reports. 'We all support each other and help where needed and really work as a team in all aspects', explained student 7. Most discussions on teamwork emphasized the importance of consensus and cooperation. 'Many of us had different ideas for the menu (...) In order to find a consensus, we needed to

develop our problem-solving skills’, student 5 concluded. However, an autonomous organizational culture also created problems in particular with the service team, who struggled to organize themselves on the day. Disorganization, typical of autonomous groups, was highlighted as a negative aspect of the event. ‘It is important to delegate more jobs-roles on the day’, student 8 concluded. Unfortunately, we did not reflect sufficiently on the clash of organization cultures in class.

A business school was an unusual context for a freegan real junk food event. Unsurprisingly, I had to overcome many institutional hurdles. Putting academic ideas into practice was a challenging task that showed the practical limitations of Tribe’s (2002) philosophical practitioner. It took up to 10 months of preparation and many meetings. First, I needed to get everyone on board: colleagues, students, the module leader, the university campus services and the Magic Hat Café. Initially most of the stakeholders were rather skeptical and did not show much enthusiasm for a waste café. My savior was a small Teaching Quality Enhancement Small Grant which gave credibility and funding to the project. The process of engaging with others resulted in a rewarding pedagogical dialogue. Second, the project had to fit within existing university structures. My initial idea was to take over a catering outlet for a day, but this plan was soon discarded following reservations from the university’s campus services, the student union and the private catering contractor. A solution was found in the university’s nutritional kitchen lab, which was available for teaching related activities. The lab was well equipped with thirteen kitchen units, a refrigeration and cooking equipment. Another important hurdle was the requirement for full risk assessment. I had to submit three assessments, for the use of the lab, for the transport of food to and from the lab and for the heating and serving of food on site. Finally, the activity had to fit within the framework of an existing module. The aims and objectives had to be adjusted and the radical tone had to be moderated. These adjustments did not compromise,

however, the critical dimension of the event as the prime focus was centered on enacting more than discussing. Fitting with the assessment criteria required more compromises. The assessment consisted of two elements, a group report summarizing the key insights emerging from the project and an individual reflective report focusing on two of the six areas of skills the module covered. The assessment strategy contradicted the project's underlying approach to skills, dissociating criticality from vocational action, outcomes and processes. I purposefully said little about assessment before the event so that students focused on the actual café rather than on the assessment criteria. The project was sufficiently rich in experiences and materials for a successful assessment to be produced.

Conclusion

This article has presented a student-led pedagogical innovation that enacted hospitality as a critical tool. The innovation involved the upcycling of surplus food, which was distributed in a freegan pop-up café on a pay-as-you-feel basis. The pop-up café was a modest initiative that had neither continuity in time nor sufficient theoretical scaffolding. And yet, it demonstrated the importance of opening up tourism and hospitality management education to critical perspectives and practices, bringing the work of Lynch et al (2011), Lugosi et al. (2009) and Lashley (2015, 2013) to life. Drawing on Tribe's (2002) philosophical practitioner, this article has examined the pedagogical value of embedding critical perspectives and practices into tourism and hospitality management education. Four main benefits have been identified. First, it expands the meaning of hospitality beyond the commercial provision of food, drink and accommodation, establishing a fruitful dialogue between philosophical and managerial approaches to the concept. The freegan pop-up café contributed to a better understanding of how hospitality works, inviting students to question the principles that organize the interaction between hosts and guests. As well as politicizing

an area generally free from contention, it brought attention to the multiple externalities hospitality generates, mainly issues of waste and welcome. Second, the innovation demonstrated the vocational relevance of critical perspectives on hospitality. Embedding critical discourses and practices into the curriculum is not detrimental to vocational practice, but it can actually have a positive impact on employability and skills inasmuch as it embraces creativity and critical thinking - two important graduate skills which are generally overlooked in tourism and hospitality management courses. What is at stake with critical hospitality management is not the pre-eminence of theoretical discussions over vocational training in higher education but the practical value of criticality for hospitality management. Third, the freegan pop-up café highlighted the value of autonomous organizational cultures as a way to promote creativity and student engagement, an aspect that needs further research. For creativity and criticality to thrive, a more autonomous organizational culture that empowers both hosts and guests is necessary. In exploring more inclusive and sustainable ways of organizing hospitality, the activity established a clear link between the meaning and practice of hospitality, ethical and organizational principles. Last but not least, there are reputational benefits for tourism and hospitality management education. Embedding critical perspectives and practices into a highly vocational curriculum gave intellectual substance and critical depth to a degree that has been overlooked in the Faculty. Underpinning the project is the idea the sector's future does not rely on docile employees that work within established parameters of commercial hospitality but on nurturing an entrepreneurial, ethical and creative culture, that is, on the ability of future professionals to unfold possible futures, which requires a critical attitude. We should embrace the increasing theoretical richness of our disciplines as a way to make our degrees more relevant in these fast-moving times.

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