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KEYWORDS: Aesthetic, craft, meal-design, restaurant, serving, table setting, waiter.

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# The Waiter's Craft Knowledge of Meal-design

*By Lars Eriksson*

## INTRODUCTION

Crafts have traditionally been regarded as technical skills that require little or no theoretical schooling (Sjömar 2011; Almevik 2014). Craftsmanship in the restaurant industry is no exception. The restaurant industry is often viewed as an industry characterised by low requirements of prior knowledge and low wages (Fine [1996] 2009; 2009; Lainpelto & Lainpelto 2012; Lainpelto 2018). Meal-design performed by waiters is not only for pleasure; it can also have social and political goals, as discussed by Lugosi (2008), who points out that meetings will seldom be arranged without offering food or drink. To design a meal could be “to create a shared, experiential space in which participants become part of a contextually defined social entity” (Lugosi 2008, 141). Furnishing, table setting, and serving are part of a meal's design. The way meals are designed holistically affects how they are experienced by those

in attendance and often gives the prerequisites for communication and being together in several different contexts such as government, industrial representatives, as well as for different nations. Procedures such as table setting and serving are performed every day not only in the restaurant industry, but also, for example, in hospitals. A waiter's inherent skill in practical performance and situational judgements—their craft knowledge—needs to be communicated because it is more meaningful than is perhaps anticipated.

Craft researcher and social anthropologist Trevor Marchand discusses the role of crafts and writes that “craft is about problem solving.” But, Marchand argues, the solution to the problem is seldom discussed and noticed; it is often perceived as “a mundane task routinely executed in the flow of work and therefore unworthy of special attention” (2016, 2). This is in line with the chemist

and philosopher Michael Polanyi's (1966) concept of tacit knowledge, used for describing procedural knowledge as automatised through numerous similar situations—the practitioner is able to perform such tasks without much effort or seemingly without much attention. Another way to describe craft and craftsmanship is to make knowledge of craft esoteric and unattainable, and associating it with feeling and intention (Sjömar 2011) or by stating that the knowledge “sits in the spinal” or is “a fingerspitzgefühl” as described by Rolf (2017, 55). On the other hand, social anthropologist Tim Ingold discusses the relation between thinking and making, and puts forward the idea that the theorist *makes through thinking*, and the craftsperson *thinks through making* (Ingold 2013, 6). Craft educator and design researcher Pirita Seitamaa-Hakkarainen (2000) discusses the holistic craft procedure which involves dual problem solving, within both the visual and compositional design spaces. Craft researcher Camilla Groth (2017) similarly emphasises the importance of knowing both the material properties and the manufacturing procedures in the process of designing something that works. This can be related to philosopher Bengt Molander's key concept *knowing in action* (2015) and Adamson's idea that “Craft exists only in motion. It is a way of doing things” (2007, 4).

In this chapter I aim to discuss and get closer to the often unspoken knowledge within the crafting procedures involved in the design of a meal situation. The aim of this study is to investigate research methods that could be used for verbalising the waiter's craft knowledge which is needed in designing a meal situation.

## THE RESTAURANT AS A MEAL EXPERIENCE ROOM

A meal experience, as a holistic event, includes the following dimensions: “the room,” “the meeting,” “the product,” “the atmosphere/ambiance,” and “the management control system,” according to the Five Aspect Meal Model (FAMM) (Gustafsson 2004; Gustafsson et al. 2006). FAMM is a theoretical framework for the planning and analysis of meals, developed within the interdisciplinary topic Culinary Arts and Meal Science at the University of Örebro. Creating and designing meals can be seen as part of the research area of hospitality. Brotherton and Lugosi are both researchers of hospitality with different perspectives, where Brotherton (1999) discusses hospitality as an exchange between humans to enhance mutual well-being through a provision of accommodation and/or food and/or drink. Lugosi (2008), on the other hand, distinguishes the production of “*hospitable*” as being the offer of food, drink, shelter, and entertainment, each representing different forms of hospitality. At first, “*hospitable*” is a provision to fulfil basic needs such as hunger, thirst, and tiredness, most often within a commercial transaction; secondly, it is a provision that has a social or political outcome “to establish a relationship”; and thirdly, it is a provision that is existential and facilitates a shared, experiential space in which the participants become part of a defined social entity (Lugosi 2008). Tourism researchers Monica Hanefors and Lena Mossberg (2004) are also interested in the social engagement and entertainment that often occur together with the consumption of food and drink. Something that can be seen as tacit knowledge is the restaurant's codes that, according to the sociologist Joanne Finkel-

stein (1989), shape the dining experience and are symbolised by a restaurant's ambience. In a similar way, the restaurant researcher Roy Wood (2000) argues that the guest's dining experience consists of both tangible and intangible aspects as well as of status-driven systems of "fashionability" and social exclusiveness. This is in line with the aspect of atmosphere/ambience in the FAMM Model (Gustafsson et al. 2006).

In addition, the waiter's crafts of serving food and drink can also be about combinations of food and drink (Nygren 2004; Scander 2019), restaurant service (Walter 2011), the meeting between guests and the waiter (Hansen 2005; Jonsson, Ekström and Nygren 2008), and collaboration between colleagues in the dining room and kitchen (Wellton 2017). The accuracy of the table setting is emphasised by Gustafsson (2004), who writes that the table should be aesthetically appealing and attractive. To drink a good wine can be less pleasurable if the glasses are out-sized, or eating from a larger platter can be a source of irritation if the dining table is too small and the plate repeatedly clunks against crockery. These examples of absent attention to the function of a meal utensil can be seen as a lack of accuracy towards fulfilling a guest's physiological needs in a meal-experience. A waiter has the task of fulfilling the guest's needs and at his/her disposal are various utensils. The utensils necessary to carry out a meal can be seen as craft objects in the hand of a skilled waiter. The basic functions of these utensils—or, if we could call them, craft objects—are obvious, but so simple that they are often forgotten even though they have significant implications, as the craft and art researcher Risatti (2007) has argued. The waiter is responsible for furnishing, setting the table, and serving, and the consequences that these procedures give rise to,

thus his practice is comparable to craft procedures. Research on how the guests' experience of food and beverages is affected by tableware has been conducted by Spence and Piqueras-Fiszman (2012). They argue that the weight of a glass container affects the way we perceive the taste of a drink. Similarly, Michel, Velasco and Spence's research (2015) showed that strawberry mousse was rated significantly sweeter when it was served on a white plate in contrast to when it was served on a black plate. Both Sobal and Wansink (2007) and Garcia-Segovia, Harrington and Seo (2015) state that the room, the furnishings, and the table setting all affect food intake and food acceptance. Overall, it can be said that research on the guest's meal experiences is about tangible factors within a restaurant context, such as the appreciation of food and drink, or the amount of food consumed. Although the FAMM model (Gustafsson et al. 2006) is interested in the elusive parts of a meal experience, both Finkelstein (2004) and Stierand and Wood (2012) have stated that the intangible circumstances of a meal experience—such as service, meal design, and atmosphere—have rarely been taken into account.

## RATIONALISATION OF THE WAITER'S CRAFT

Furnishing, table setting, and serving are systematised work executed day after day, but the waiter's craft processes include more than carrying different utensils from one point to another. A process in this text means a series of steps taken together in order to achieve goals. A process is about *what* we do, for example to furnish, to set the table, or to serve. On the other hand, a procedure and the procedural knowledge describe and explain *how* we do something; procedures can be seen as explanatory factors which contribute to a skilful action (Rolf



2017, 50–52). To be ready for the guest's needs, which are sometimes completely unpredictable, the waiter has to prepare for a range of different risks for the upcoming serving procedures. Assistance for the waiter comes from recommendations given in textbooks (Hedman 1999; Bokstad and Eriksson 2006; Ingelsson 2016), where pictures and texts show and tell how the utensils are to be placed. For example, according to the advice from the Swedish expert headwaiter and restaurateur Uno Hedman (1999), the plate should be placed two centimetres from the edge of the table. One concept that is common in guidelines and connected to the waiter's craft procedures is *mise en place* (Jönsson 2012). A *mise en place* means to be predictable and anticipate the various risks that may happen during a meal. Hedman (1999) exemplified how to make a *mise en place* before the upcoming craft procedures. When a waiter plans for serving, his or her ability to pay attention in order to predict which problems and risks could arise is crucial. The philosopher Donald Schön argues that "professional practice is a process of problem solving" and stresses the significance of phenomena such as complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value-conflict ([1983] 2013, 39). A craftsperson within the restaurant area must predict, in their inner sense, how an upcoming serving procedure will be executed.

The profession of a waiter, like many other crafts, lacks identification because there is no certified title. The term *waiter* is used regardless of the waiter's level of knowledge, from a beginner to an expert. The practical knowledge of a waiter is not innate knowledge; it must be learned. Dreyfus and Dreyfus ([1988] 2014) point out that the acquisition of knowledge takes place in stages from beginner level to advanced beginner, competent, skilled, before finally reaching the highest level: expert.

When the waiter has developed expert skills, new tasks can be added to their repertoire. Thereby the waiter, for example, could be a banquet manager and working directly with customers/clients who have ordered a big meal event in advance. These kinds of expert waiters lead the creative process and can be called meal visionaries, meal artists, or designers of a meal experience (Tellström 2003). He or she negotiates with the client how to execute the meal event. This can be described as a three-step process, with interpretation, commercialisation, and innovation (Tellström 2005). In the dialogue between the expert waiter and the client, knowledge of logistics and how the meal should be practically performed, as well as how it should be experienced, is required (Mossberg 2003). It is expected that the expert waiter can plan the event with, for example, exact serving times in order to create an operational schedule. Zampollo and Peacock (2016) examined methods and tools through Themes for Eating Design (TED) and introduced a design method, comparable to the FAMM model (Gustafsson et al. 2006), designed specifically to facilitate reflection on the eating experience and to aid a food design process. What is rarely investigated is how the waiter executes the craft procedures in order to meet the clients' and the guests' expectations.

There are several different professional roles in a restaurant context but a classic division is to distinguish between kitchen staff and dining-room staff (Jönsson 2012). In the kitchen, there are various work functions, such as head chef, sous chef, cold-buffet chef, pastry chef, and others. The dining-room staff consist of a cellar master, restaurant manager, headwaiter, banquet manager, sommelier, waiter, bar manager, bartender, and others (The Culinary Institute of America 2001). This division between professional roles was prevalent until the

end of the twentieth century. Few restaurants today have such a large workforce that the roles can be as distinctive and defined as they have been in the past (Jönsson 2012; Tellström and Jönsson 2018). Within the restaurant context, a large part of the craftsmanship has been rationalised and the demand for different skills is not the same as before (Lundqvist 2006). Changes in the need for competence have simplified several craft procedures, but it has also meant that simplifications have resulted in less variety of utensils used for table setting and serving. When the opportunity to choose among the restaurant's various utensils is limited due to a smaller selection, the risk of the waiter choosing the wrong material is minimised. With this kind of rationalisation, the waiter does not need to be attentive about what size, for example, a fork will be. On the other hand, by reducing the number of utensils, the risk-taking could also rise if the restaurant's atmosphere cannot meet the guest's expectation. Craft theorist and carpenter David Pye discusses the meaning of skill and emphasises that risk taking is central to the performance of crafts (1968). Workmanship of risk is characterised by unprecedented work, where the quality of work can be risked in pursuit of a more developed result. On the other hand, workmanship of certainty illustrates that work is performed on the basis of a security, is automated, and the result is predetermined (Pye 1968, 20–24). Simplifications and risk minimising can, however, mean that a part of the craft is lost and the practice is degenerated. The waiter's craftsmanship that takes place through a flow of actions in the placement of furnishing, table setting, and serving, and which consist of both tangible and intangible aspects, needs to be carefully investigated.

## METHODS AND MATERIAL

Through my own long professional restaurant experience and with support of theoretical concepts and in dialogue with other researchers, I seek research methods that help me to research my own practice and related craft skills. In this study I used the methodology of case study to collect material from a craft science perspective, with analysis methods from time geography (Hägerstrand 1970) and three-dimensional visual analysis (Akner-Koller 1994; 2007). A craft science approach means that the researcher who examines the craft has the skill and knowledge required to perform the work that is being studied (Sjömar 2017). The method to use one's own experience as a starting point or as an example of general research is called autoethnography (Chang 2016). The autoethnographic researcher interviews and observes himself and is both subject and object in the study (Ehn 2014). This study has an autoethnographic approach. It is in this capacity, as a craft researcher within a restaurant context, that I can attempt to define details of the craftsmanship and increase understanding of a waiter's knowledge also on a more general level.

### A Case Study of a Meal

Based on my role as an expert waiter, I have over the years developed my professional skills to include meal design for large events. This means having responsibility for furnishing, setting tables, decorations, and serving procedures for large dinner events. The case study presented in this chapter draws on my experience as a meal event designer of an event entitled "A Forest Walk," hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) in Sweden. The idea for

the meal was to offer a taste of Sweden by serving food from different agricultural products produced by Swedish farmers. The goal that the client had given me was to offer the international guests the opportunity to get a taste of Sweden. The approximately 350 guests were European Commissioners for Agriculture and other officials attending a conference. The themes for the conference, as well as for the meal, were climate, agriculture, and forest. The data for this case study includes only the reception, when the craft procedures such as the furnishing, table setting, and serving of drinks and canapés were performed. What happens after the reception, when the guests sat down and were served an appetiser, a main course, a cheese course, and a dessert, is not included here. It is my archival materials and my experiences from the meal which are gathered and analysed. As example, listed below are the source materials from the meal event “A forest walk”:

- Seven photographs (of a total of 20 photos). The photographs were taken by a professional photographer.
- A conference brochure entitled “Swedish Farmers Invite You to Dinner” produced by the host Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF 2009). Each guest received a copy of it when they sat down at the dinner table.
- My own work notes (approximately 70 pages of text, sketches, and furniture plans).
- An operational schedule, which was written by me. An operational schedule contains information about the following: menu, drinks, serving procedures, number of guests, etc. The operational schedule will help the waiters to furnish and set the tables according to the plan. It contains information about exact times for serving procedures—for example, when the main course is to

be served. The operating schedule is distributed to the waiters before the preparation of a dinner.

- My own craft experiences as waiter and as designer of a meal event.

## Methodological Triangulation

This case study was conducted in several parts, consisting of data collection, a time-geographic analysis, and a three-dimensional visual analysis. These were later combined in the in-dept auto-ethnographic analysis.

Time-geography is usually applied in interdisciplinary research in themes such as urban and regional planning, transportation, and communication (Hägerstrand 2009). Time-geography is also useful when studying the organisation and production of work, everyday life, wellbeing and household division of labour, and ecological sustainability (Ellegård 2019). Concepts from time-geography are here used to present the waiter’s knowledge of time, room, and logistics. Time-geography illustrates that a craft procedure has been performed, as well as *where*, *when*, and by *whom*. Time-geography does not illustrate *how* something is done (Hägerstrand 2009; Ellegård 2019). This aspect is rather illustrated in the autoethnographic analysis. The formal-aesthetic dimension of the event is covered by the three-dimensional visual analysis which is a compositional taxonomy used in art and design education (Akner-Koler 1994; 2007). In her thesis, Akner-Koler presents a structure to distinguish form and room/space in our surroundings, and has since developed this in later work (1994; 2007). Her ambition has been to create a taxonomy that enables a dialogue about three-dimensional aesthetic composition on an abstract level. The three-dimensional visual analysis illustrates *how* the

aesthetic dimensions appear in a single object or/ and in a composition of several objects. During a period of approximately 10 years, a simplified version of the taxonomy, for three-dimensional visual analysis, has been applied in aesthetic courses on table setting for bachelor students in culinary arts and gastronomy (School of Hospitality, Culinary Arts and Meal Science 2020). The simplified version, under the name *aesthetic composition's concept*, has been used as a tool to describe how to create a meal design, including the food on the plate, the utensils on the table, and the furniture in the room. This is in order to direct a guest's attention towards predetermined parts of the meal experience. To understand the waiter's craft knowledge in the designing of a meal event in a more holistic perspective, concepts from time-geography and three-dimensional visual analysis have been combined. The term *holistic* here refers to taking both a logistical and an aesthetical perspective on the craft procedures.

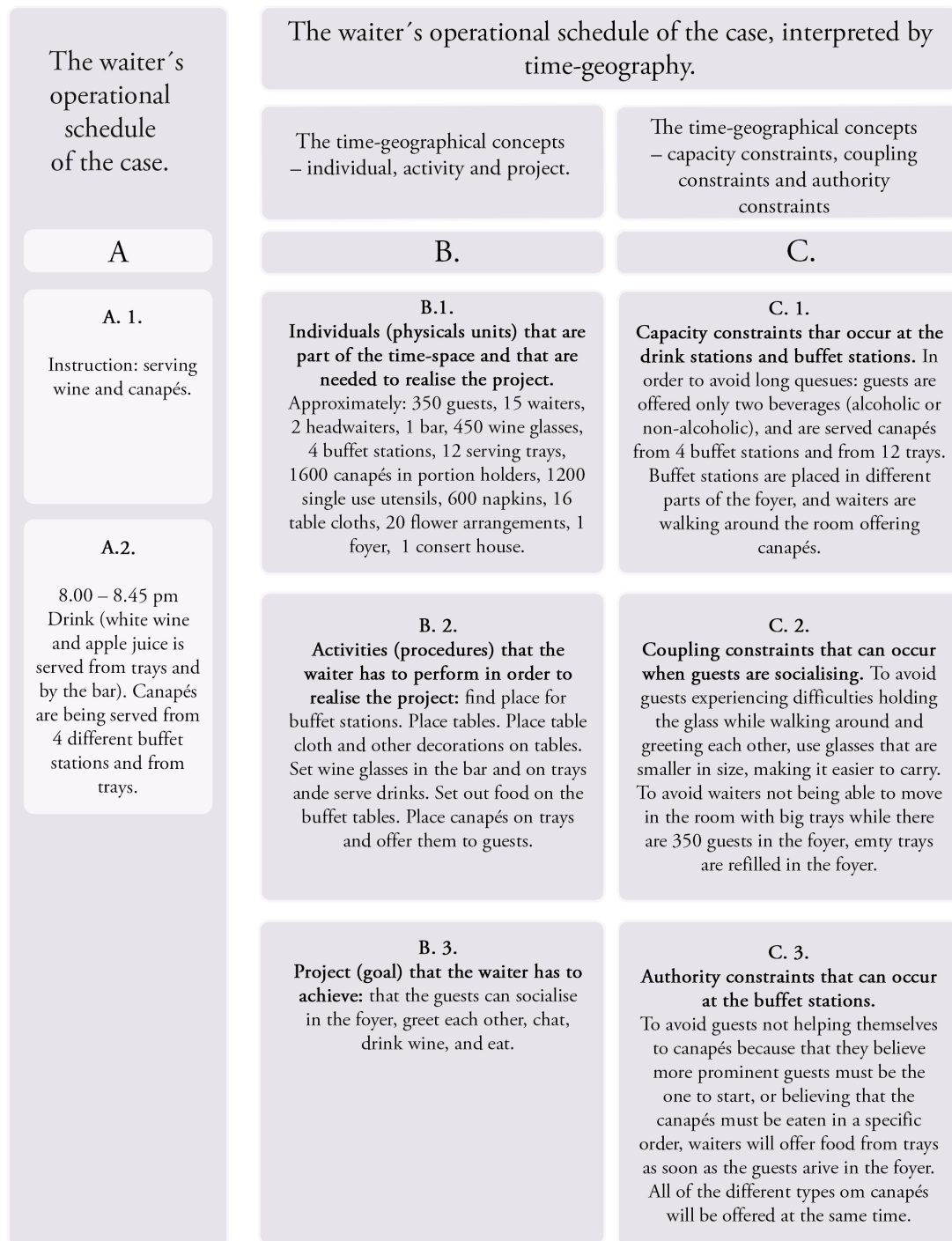
## INVESTIGATION OF THE WAITER'S CRAFT BY TIME-GEOGRAPHY

Events and procedures require both time and place in order to be carried out. The concept of time-space is central in the understanding of time-geography (Hägerstrand 2009). Time geographical key perspectives include the *individual*, the *activity*, and the *project* (Åquist 1992). An individual is a human or non-human physical entity present in a time period (Hägerstrand 2009). People perform a diversity of activities in order to create projects and thereby reach their goals (Hägerstrand 2009). In time-geographic research it is important to find out what enables and what prevents projects from being carried out (Ellegård 2019). The analysis of what is a *constraint* for a project is central in a time-geographical perspective (Hägerstrand 2009). The

*constraints* are divided into three groups: *capacity*, *coupling*, and *authority*. Time-geography can enhance craft research (Eriksson et al. 2019) as the waiter's craft skills and vocational knowledge can be described and interpreted by the use of time-geographical perspective (Eriksson et al. 2019; Eriksson, Jonsson and Öström 2020).

During the time of planning a meal, an operational schedule is written. It contains information about the timing of serving, the kinds of drinks, the serving procedures, etc. The operational schedule is delivered as an instruction to the waiters before they start the procedures of furnishing and table setting. In this case, the schedule contained no descriptions of why and how the procedures were to be carried out or the purpose of the meal (Figure 1, section A). The lack of this information can be explained by the fact that the procedures carried out by the waiters are often a routinised tradition (Hedman 1999; Bokstad and Eriksson 2006; Ingelsson 2016), and also the fact that serving procedures are often done in a simplified way (Lundqvist 2006) and few assessments are made about alternative ways to perform them. However, from a craft research point of view, this unspoken information which is trusted to be implicitly understood by the waiters is interesting as it includes the knowhow of the practice.

I started the time-geographical investigation with the intention to detect the (for me) hidden information contained between the lines of the waiter's operational schedule (Figure 1, section A). I intended to capture this wordless information, lingering within and between the procedures and in the spaces before and after a performance—information which is never noted in the text and which is frequently taken for granted. Through my experience as being responsible for the event,



**Figure 1:** Sections A, B, and C: The waiter's operational schedule interpreted by time-geography.

my extensive experience as a waiter, and the related practical knowledge within me, I began to reflect on the content of the procedures. Questions about where, when, and who are included in the examined procedures appeared before me through my interpretation of craft procedures to correlate with the following time-geographical perspectives: *Individual* (Figure 1, section B.1), *Activity* (Figure 1, section B.2), and *Project* (Figure 1, section B.3).

Under section A.1 in Figure 1, the “Instruction: serving wine and canapés” is a project created to achieve goals, which is the time-geographical definition of a *project*, thus I need to define which goals this project is supposed to achieve. One goal could be, for example, to allow the guests a chance to socialise (Figure 1, section B.3). Information about goals is often unexpressed in an operational schedule but is part of the knowledge that I possess both as a waiter and as a designer of the meal event. By using the concept of *activity*, which defines what activities needed to be performed in order to realise the project, different craft procedures were visible, such as table setting and finding the right places for the buffet tables (Figure 1, section B.2). By using the concept of *individual* (Figure 1, section B.1), it was possible to visualise further aspects of the craft knowledge, for example managing 15 waiters, 450 wine glasses, and 48 wine bottles. Through this identification, further questions could be raised about that which is invisible and that which is taken for granted—for example, how to handle 450 wine glasses.

When the *individuals*, the *activities*, and the *projects* had been identified, it was possible to provide additional information based on the three terms of constraints—*capacity*, *coupling*, and *authority* (Figure 1, section C)—and how I as a waiter and as a designer of the meal event planned and executed the

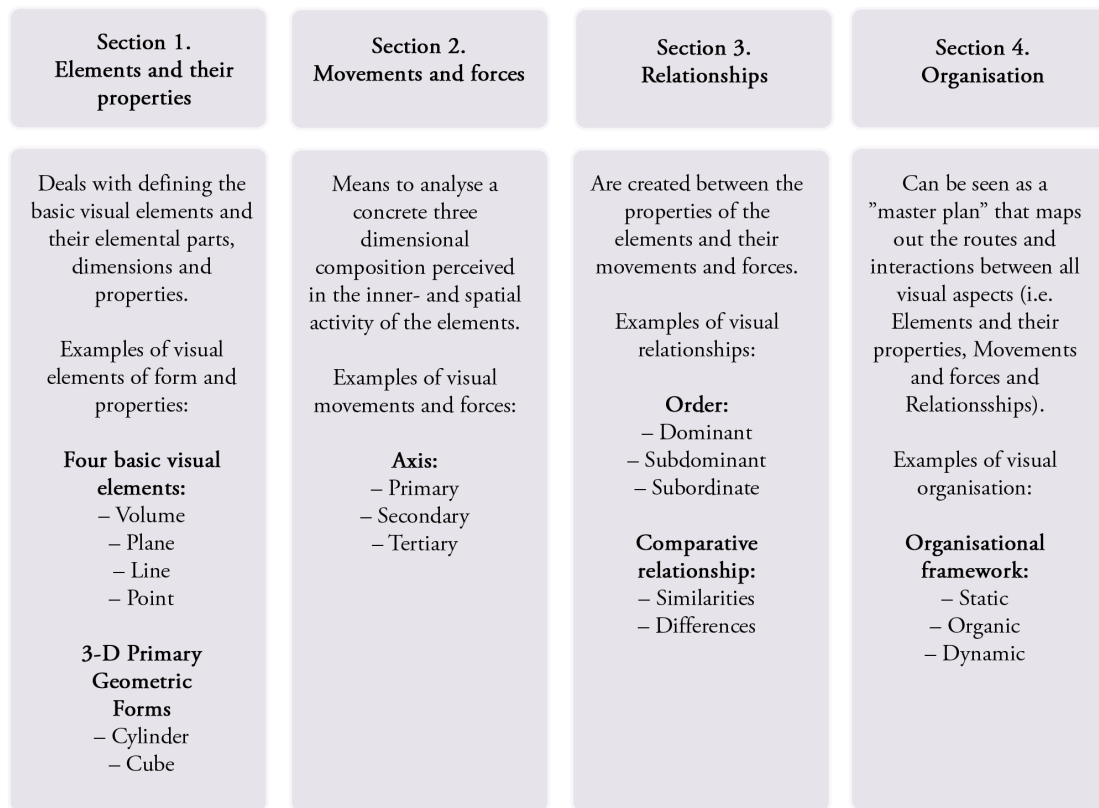
craft procedures. Risks about capacity can be prepared for by having a well-equipped *mise en place* station. When wine has to be served to 350 guests, my long experience as an expert waiter tells me that long queues can pose a capacity problem. In order to prevent such queues from appearing, I chose to offer only two types of beverage, alcoholic or non-alcoholic, with the hope that this will lead to a quick choice for the guests, as they stand in the queue.

As an expert waiter, I have to be aware of which constraints could arise in terms of authority (Figure 1, section C.3), such as norms, culture, and who has the highest status within the context of the conference and, thus, may be offered wine and canapés first. Risks related to the social interaction between the guests are minimised through careful planning. When I plan a meal, I must analyse potential risks and limitations. I do so by thinking through various scenarios that might occur during the upcoming meal event. The gathered information tells me that there was no hierarchical order among the guests during the time of serving the cocktail. To avoid uncertainty between the guests about authority, I chose to serve wine and canapés directly to the guests when they arrived in the foyer.

## INVESTIGATION OF THE WAITER'S CRAFT BY THREE-DIMENSIONAL VISUAL ANALYSIS

The crafting procedures and the design of the physical space—such as the furnishing of a dining room, the setting of tables with utensils, and the placing of food on plates—all generate three-dimensional spatial context. The result of these crafting procedures can be perceived in different ways by the guest. The waiter's craft and creativity can be compared to the sculptor's, as both practice the skill and the ability to pay attention to the aesthetic dimen-





**Figure 2:** A simplified version of the taxonomy of the three-dimensional visual analysis, with its four different sections (after Akner-Koler 2007).

sion of an object. In the field of Culinary Arts and Meal Science (CAMS), practical skill is combined with science and working methods with an artistic content (Gustafsson 2004; Gustafsson et al. 2006). In a similar way, different knowledge forms, including the aesthetical aspect, are linked together in the description of craft as the practical solving of problems through a skilful use of materials, technology, and aesthetics (Sjömar 2017, 96). This study thus has an aesthetic perspective, and according to Shusterman (1992; 2000), aesthetic is the understanding of the science of sensuous cognition. The word *sensuous* is defined as “fusion of our senses”

and the word *cognition* as “to know” (Shusterman [1992] 2000). Furthermore, Shusterman states that the body is the locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation and aims to enrich not only our abstract knowledge but also our lived somatic experience and performance (Shusterman 2012). Thereby Shusterman defined the term *somaesthetic*, seen as a framework to promote and integrate the diverse range of theorising, empirical research, and meliorative practical disciplines concerned with bodily perception, performance, and presentation (Shusterman 2012). Somaesthetic comprises an interdisciplinary research where body, mind, and culture



**Figure 3:** Wine glasses set on the drinks table. Photograph by Hans Lundholm.



**Figure 4:** The buffet tables. Photograph by Ragnar Lundgren.

could be seen as deeply co-dependent (Shusterman 2012). Akner-Koler (2007) based her research of aesthetic as a perceptual experience primarily on Shusterman's thoughts on a pragmatist aesthetic.

In this study, a simplified version of the taxonomy of three-dimensional visual analysis, with its four different sections, is used as a theoretical basis (Akner-Koler 2007). The four sections are: Elements and their properties; Movements and forces; Relationships; and Organisation (Akner-Koler 2007, 78–165) (see Figure 2).

The investigation consisted of examining the photographs taken at the dining event. Pictures of the furnishings, table setting, and serving were analysed in order to test whether details or the holistic compositions of them could be described by the use of the concepts from three-dimensional visual analysis. For example, I tested whether I could find ge-

neral forms, described by concepts, as visible objects/elements on the tables and if they may be interpreted as volumes with different properties such as cubes, cylinders, or rectangles. Below are examples.

*Wine glasses set on the drinks table* (Figure 3). The glasses from which the wine is served can be described, in a simplified way, as cylinders (Figure 2, section 1). The motif can be described as easy-to-read or it can be said that “not much is happening” in the composition of the table setting. This may be because the properties of the glasses (Figure 2, section 1) in terms of the form are similar (Figure 2, section 3) to each other. There is also no distinct hierarchical order (Figure 2, section 3) between the glasses. The composition, the setting, of the glasses lined up in parallel rows can be described as a static organisation (Figure 2, section 4). It is likely that a static setting of glasses will lead the guests to choose the glass closest to the table edge.





**Figure 5:** Glass objects on the buffet table. Photograph by Ragnar Lundgren.



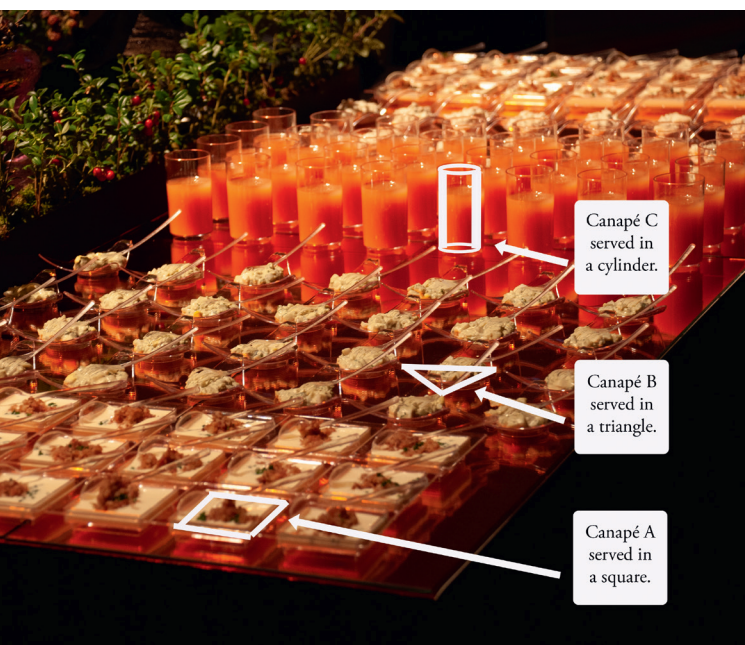
**Figure 6:** Placing canapés on the buffet table. Photograph by Ragnar Lundgren.

*The buffet tables* (Figure 4). The motif can be described as the tables being very distinct in the room. This may be because their properties regarding form and space (Figure 2, Section 1) can be described as cubes. The buffet tables have a different form in relation (Figure 2, section 3) to the guests' properties (Figure 2, section 1). The volume of each table is distinct because of its properties (Figure 2, section 1) and contrasting black side panel in relation (Figure 2, section 3) to the bright floor.

*Glass objects at the buffet table* (Figures 5) and *Placing canapés on the buffet table* (Figure 6) show the buffet table close up. When analysing the motif in Figure 5, one might notice the glass vases first. This may be because the vases have properties (Figure 2, section 1) that are different in shape from standard vases. Attention to the vases is enhanced by the centred primary axis (Figure 2, section 2) which emerges through the shiny base in the centre of the table. The primary axis (Figure 2, section

2) is enhanced by the long and narrow flower arrangements. The properties (Figure 2, section 1) of the glass vases are enhanced by their relationship (Figure 2, section 3) to the table surface, which has similar properties (Figure 2, section 1) of glossiness as the vases. When analysing the motif in Figure 5, the static organisation (Figure 2, section 4) of the canapés is distinct.

*Canapés set on the buffet table* (Figure 7) appear both different in form and similar in colour. There are different properties (Figure 2, section 1) in the shape of the bowls in which the food is served: canapé A is served in a square dish, canapé B is served in a triangular dish, and canapé C is served in a cylindrical glass. But on the other hand, there are similarities (Figure 2, section 3) of properties (Figure 2, section 1) in terms of colour between canapé A and canapé B. Both of these canapés are different (Figure 2, section 3) in colour to canapé C, which is orange.



**Figure 7:** Canapés set on the buffet table. Photograph by Ragnar Lundgren.

### COMBINING THE ANALYSIS OF TIME-GEOGRAPHY WITH THE ANALYSIS OF THREE-DIMENSIONAL VISUAL ANALYSIS

The first part of this study showed that through time-geographical concepts it was possible to verbalise the waiter's craft knowledge regarding time, space, and logistics of a meal event. The second part of the study showed that three-dimensional visual analysis may be used to describe the waiter's craft procedures from an aesthetic perspective. In this third part, I test whether a combination of these two parts together with my autoethnographic perspective based on my collective professional experience can support a verbalisation of my craft knowledge applied in performing the craft procedures of furnishing, table setting, and serving. Thereby, I will try to verbalise the craft knowledge



**Figure 8:** The foyer. Photograph by Ragnar Lundgren.

needed by a waiter in designing a meal event. Some examples will follow:

In order to avoid capacity constraints that could result in the guests not registering the buffet tables among the 350 guests in the foyer, I chose an aesthetical approach to attract attention to the tables. The square surface of the buffet table was enhanced by long, black tablecloths placed over the entire table that draped down to the floor, giving an impression of a solid black cube. The contrasting white floor surrounding the cube reinforced the bold contours of the cube, bringing the buffet tables to the attention of the guests (see Figure 8).

When the guests had registered the buffet tables, I wanted their attention to be directed towards the table surface where the canapés were located. As a meal event designer, I had the client's mission





Similarity between  
decoration on buffet tables  
and serving trays.

**Figure 9:** The serving tray. Photograph by Ragnar Lundgren.

in mind, which was to enable guests to stay at the buffet tables for a long time and to keep them interested in and engaged with the food. Thereby, my ambition was to create the best conditions for the canapés in order to highlight the Swedish food:

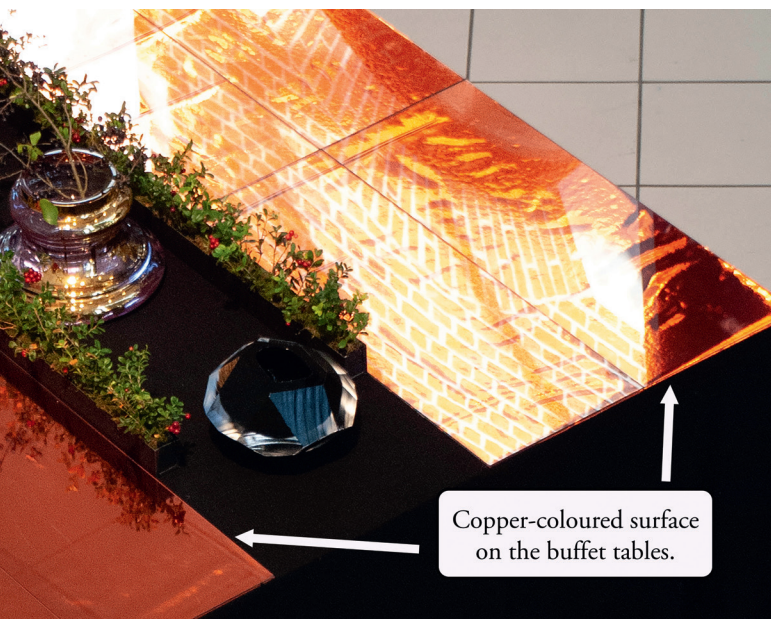
To bring attention to the table surface, I placed two rectangular copper-coloured surfaces on the table top to create a contrast with the black sides of the cubic table. In the same way, the copper colour was similar in colour and shades to the canapés (see Figure 10).

My role as a designer of the meal event also included choosing the bowls for the canapés:

I chose a diverse range of individual items to set on top of the buffet tables. The individual items—the canapés, the bowls, the serving trays, and the decorations—can be described as having properties which consisted of many differences

in shape, material, and colour. Different forms of the bowls increased the clarity of the different types of canapés that were offered, and helped guide the guests to separate canapés from each other. For example, the bowls were distinct geometric forms such as cubes, triangles, and cylinders. Thereby, it was my intention that it would take a longer time for each guest to explore everything on the buffet table. In collaboration with the chef, Christer Lingström, we designed each canapé to express colour and texture variation that would express different culinary experiences (see Figure 7).

The plan for furnishing the buffet tables in the foyer was that the taste of Swedish food, experienced through the canapés, would be possible to achieve at the same time as conversations were going on between guests:



**Figure 10:** The buffet tables. Photograph by Ragnar Lundgren.

In order to avoid capacity constraints which could mean that the guests did not reach the buffet tables and thereby did not get the opportunity to taste the Swedish food, I chose to offer canapés from trays. For the guest to understand that the trays were associated with the buffet tables and the food served there, the colour and decoration of them was the same as the colour and decoration on the buffet tables. The canapés were also set up on the trays in the same static organisation as they were on the buffet tables (see Figures 7 and 9).

My role as a designer of the meal event also included choosing the wine glasses:

To avoid coupling constraints between guests and wine glasses, I chose a wine glass in a smaller size. The properties of the glass were characterised by it being easy to hold and not too large, which means that the glass could not be filled with too much wine. This was a conscious choice made to enable guests to walk with the glass and, at the same time, greet other guests (see Figure 11).



**Figure 11:** The foyer. Photograph by Ragnar Lundgren.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The meal environment with all its physicality, such as the furnish in the room and the utensils on the tables, can be likened to “sceneries” in a “landscape,” albeit on a smaller scale. The room in which the meal takes place is important for the guests’ experience, but also the table setting is important and can itself also qualify as a room (Gustafsson 2004). When the guests arrive and interact with the meal, they will affect the room, the “landscape,” just as the waiter will do. The physical material, such as glassware and china, arrive into the “landscape” through the waiters’ serving procedures during the meal. Time is crucial for an experience. How long the glassware and china are in the dining room for before they will be brought away has an impact on how the restaurant experience is perceived. But aspects such as the point in time at which the waiter



will serve the food will also have an effect. The waiter changes the environment, the small landscape, by his or her craft procedures for table setting and serving. The aim of this study was to investigate research methods that could be used for verbalising a waiter's craft in designing a meal.

*When I, as a waiter* look at the pictures, the time schedule, and other materials in this study, I can see, for example, that drinks should be served at a certain time, that the canapés are served from buffet tables and trays. As a skilled waiter, I am familiar with the presented situations and can thereby pass several layers of questions that an inexperienced person would first have to get answered in order to understand the material. This is in line with Almevik (2011), who points out that craft procedures have their own internal logic that can be difficult to detect for inexperienced individuals or laymen standing behind. With my knowledge of practice, I know which procedures must take place before anything else can be performed, as a craft procedure has to follow a certain order. If I, in the role of a waiter in a situation of preparing a meal event, were to study the material, my questions would have a logistical focus. What is to be done? Where can the white wine be cooled? Are the canapés hot? These questions need to be answered in order to perform the waiter's craft with the aim of achieving efficiency, ensuring quality, and a lot of other practical issues.

*When I, as a researching waiter*, look at the material, I ask other questions. The purpose of my questions, instead of ensuring production and quality, is to get closer to the knowledge which is tacit in the pictures, in the operational schedule, and in other materials in this study. It means paying attention to my own procedures and reaching for what is taken for granted, trying to answer *what I do* when

I do it. The source material tells only a small part of the whole picture, therefore other approaches are required. I use research methods to get closer to the source material and categorise it, to analyse and interpret it in order to find the hidden aspects of the craft, which will take me closer to verbalising the waiter's knowledge.

In this study I have undertaken the research process in several steps. Throughout the study, my source has been my own experience as a waiter: first, through the perspective and approach of time-geography (Hägerstrand 2009), which gives a structure for capturing craft procedures over time in space; secondly, through the use of a visual language, a taxonomy, from the three-dimensional visual analysis (Akner-Koler 1994; 2007) which provides a structure that enables a dialogue of three-dimensional reality. Thereafter, I combined these two perspectives.

As a craft researcher, based on my significant craft experience as a waiter, I know that some of the restaurant's crafting procedures are more successful than others, allowing me to critically review crafting procedures in a case study. I find throughout the research process that the waiter, like other craftspeople, handles a number of different activities in order to anticipate and prevent risks that could be obstacles in the successful progression towards the planned goal.

### Time-geography - Shows and Predicts Risks

When a craft procedure is linked to the time-geographical concepts *project*, *activity*, and *individual* together with *capability*-, *coupling*- and *authority-constraints* (Hägerstrand 2009), it is possible to distinguish the craftsperson's many different choices about risks in time and space that he/she is faced with, as discussed by Eriksson, Jonsson and Öström

(2020). The use of the time-geographical concepts enables a dialogue in a holistic way about the logistic parts of a meal event, discussed by Mossberg (2003). Through time-geography, the amount and the diversity of the waiter's judgements, according to *mise en place* (Jönsson 2012), will be made visible. This study shows that it is possible to predict a waiter's many different choices about risks in time and space by using time-geography in the analysis. This is supported by the results of earlier studies of craft researchers, regarding a gardener, a blacksmith, and a waiter (Jarefäll 2016; Eriksson et al. 2019).

It is in the role of craft researcher combined with being a skilled waiter that I am able to discover the many choices and decisions which are taken in a craft procedure in order to predict risks, for example. This is in line with what Pye (1986) states about a craftsperson's risk taking and predictions of risk. In the same way, I, as a craft researcher with significant experience as a waiter, can understand that a waiter must make many different complex assessments at each step of a craft procedure to ensure its quality. This can be compared to Schön ([1983] 2013), who argues that professional practice includes complexity and uncertainty. This sorting and systematising, on a detailed level, by using the time-geographical concepts make the *logistical* parts in terms of the time and the room of the waiter's craft emerge in an enhanced way. By using time-geography, this logistical part of the waiter's craft can be verbalised as after-each-otherness and beside-each-otherness (Hägerstrand 2009).

### Three-dimensional Visual Analysis - Shows Accuracy and Attention

By using the three-dimensional visual analysis (Akner-Koler 1994; 2007), this study shows that it is possible to identify and discuss a waiter's ac-

curacy performed in his/her craftsmanship with the purpose of directing the guest's attention. When a craft procedure is linked to the three-dimensional visual analysis and its four sections (Elements and their characteristics, Movements and Forces, Relationship, and Organisation), it is possible to find and verbalise the waiter's conscious, but also perhaps unintentional aesthetic choices related to furnishing, table setting, and serving.

This means that it could be possible to extend the discussion of the tangible factors in a restaurant context, as Wood (2000) discusses, by using an aesthetic vocabulary. For example, Spence and Piqueras-Fiszman's (2012) discussion of the weight of a glass could instead be a discussion about the *properties* of a glass. Also Michel, Velasco, and Spence's (2015) discussion about colour on plates could be described as the *relationship* between different plates. In the same way, Sobal and Wansink's (2007) and Garcia-Segovia, Harrington and Seo's (2015) discussions about furnishing and table setting could be described as the organisation of the room as *static*, *organic*, or *dynamic*. It means that the waiter's craft knowledge about the aesthetic dimension of meal design can be discussed on an abstract level in line with Akner-Koler (2007) and thereby can be understood on a theoretical level instead of being looked upon as a mundane task routinely executed in a flow—something that Marchand (2016) mentions as a problem.

Further on in this study, the three-dimensional visual analysis has been expanded to also include the experience of colour, which is not included in the original taxonomy. Therefore, it will be possible to use the method of analysis to detect and describe a colour as a property. As an example: "the black buffet tables have contrasting properties to the colour of the floor." In this way, the taxonomy can be

useful in restaurant research, where the experience of colour is of great importance to the guest's appreciation of food and drink, utensils, and furniture (Spence and Piqueras-Fiszman 2013; Michel, Velasco and Spence 2015).

This identification and possibility to discuss a craft procedure through the use of the three-dimensional visual analysis (Akner-Koler 1994; 2007) allows the *aesthetic* parts in the waiter's craft of furnishing, table setting, and serving to emerge in an enhanced way. By using three-dimensional visual analysis, the aesthetic part of the waiter's craft can be verbalised as properties, movements, relationships, and organisations.

### The Multimethodological Approach Verbalises the Waiter's Craft in Designing a Meal Event

The waiter's craft procedures can be understood both as logistic organisations performed in order to avoid constraints between individual, activity, and project (Hägerstrand 2009), and as aesthetic dimension in order to distinguish and map out interactions between components (Akner-Koler 2007), i.e., furniture, utensils, and decorations. The waiter's profession is based on embodied, situated, and materially and socially mediated craftsmanship that requires many years of attentive and accurate practice to reach expertise and connoisseurship. By linking perspectives from time-geography, which provide information about risks and predictions, together with taxonomy of three-dimensional visual analysis, which provide information about attention and accuracy, it is possible to find both methodologies and terminologies in order to *verbalise* the waiter's craft knowledge.

This study shows that functions and materials for meal-design can, as Risatti (2007) writes, be seen to be so simple that they are forgotten, but they have

significance. For example, how the glasses are set on a table can affect how long it takes for guests to enter a room. Lugosi (2008) states that a hospitable meal, for example, is a provision to fulfil basic needs, to create a shared, experiential space in which the guests become part of a social entity. But he will not explain how the craft procedures are to be executed for this wide range of hospitality; it is possible through a combination of methods from both time-geography and three-dimensional visual analysis.

Students at university levels have worked with a simplified version of the three-dimensional visual analysis, the *aesthetic compositional concepts*, in order to explain a design process in a meal context by focusing on the guest's perspective of a meal. The guest's perspective can be compared to Shusterman's (2012) concept of *somaesthetics*, as a lived experience where body, mind, and culture are deeply co-dependent through a performance. A meal event is a lived performance, experienced personally by each individual guest. When designing a meal event, the waiter and the student need to understand, according to Shusterman (2012), that every guest has their own body as a locus. The challenge in the designing of meals is to understand what a client and his/her guests expect. The waiter's craftsmanship consists of understanding and creating conditions for each individual guest, both logistically and aesthetically, and moving closer to the utensils and materials in order to be a part of the meal event.

The waiter's craft procedures are difficult to distinguish, but by using two methods with different scientific perspectives, it becomes possible to both distinguish and verbalise these procedures. The combination of research methods enabled a discussion about meal design performed through the waiter's choices of utensils, materials, and craft procedures. I want to point out that this study shows

that it is possible to understand and link perspectives where logistics and aesthetic dimensions work together to direct the guests' attention. By leaning on expert knowledge of multiple past events, the meal event designer can anticipate risks and opportunities that might present themselves to the guests and can thus facilitate and direct the guests' attention and behaviour towards an interaction with the space, furnishings, utensils, and the offerings. The *aesthetic compositional concepts* can be seen as a tool for students, waiters, and other professionals within the restaurant arena. This tool can be used for further investigation, and as a way for communicating the intangible circumstances necessary for a meal experience—something that is demanded by Finkelstein (2004) and Stierand and Wood (2012). Through a use of *the aesthetic compositional concepts*, both the aesthetic dimension (which describes *how* something of the waiter's craft can be verbalised) and the logistical dimension (which describes *that* a craft procedure has been performed, and *where*, *when* and by *whom*) can be verbalised. However, I found that the most important contribution of this study was the combination of methods of analysis in order to verbalise a waiter's craft knowledge of the process of designing a meal event.

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