Emotional diners and rational eaters – Constructing the urban lunch experience

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Lunch is an urban phenomenon relatable to people of all age groups. Nationally-legislated free lunches for children at day-care, schools, universities and at workplace canteens have a long history in the Finnish welfare society. In this article, the meaning-making of having lunch is shown to be mainly - but not solely - rational, and the sensory and emotional information received from the environment is verbally and rationally interpreted by the interviewees. In comparison, local food events are experiential and embodied in terms of the senses. It is asked whether there are common elements between those two contexts of eating and if some of the findings from the experiential side of eating might be applied to everyday eating occasions, thus contributing to urban conviviality.

Keywords: lunch restaurant; sensory experience; food event; pop-up restaurant; ambiance; urban development

Introduction

Lunch is an urban phenomenon relatable to people of all age groups. In Finland, which is the geographical and cultural context of this study, national legislation guarantees free lunch for children in day-care, primary school, and workplace canteens and have a long history in Finnish welfare society. Various lunch restaurants form accessible networks that spread out over most types of urban settings. However, lunch remains as one of those activities that are often taken for granted (see Bell & Valentine 1997, 20-25; and Wahlen 2011).

There are several reasons why lunch should be investigated by using qualitative methods. As for consumer choices, the significance of human experience is increasing as exemplified by urban lifestyles that are ever more sensation-seeking (Zukin 1998). A place for eating is one of the most important choices, as workplace lunch (Raulio 2011, 15-16) affects both health and working life. Lunch as a workday's midday meal is seldom considered as a luxury meal but rather a practical break to renew energy between morning and afternoon working hours.

A nutritious workday lunch is considered an important part of a healthy working environment. In Finland, the role of the worksite canteen is seen as a tool to promote a nutritious and healthy diet. Food selections made in work site canteens match nutrition recommendations more closely than in other lunch places. Items such as vegetables, fruits and berries, boiled potatoes, vegetarian dishes and fish are more common in worksite canteens than in other lunch venues (Raulio 2011, 55).

According to the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL 2017) approximately 70% of women and 60% of men have the possibility to have lunch at worksite canteens. However, only one-third of the Finnish working population uses this opportunity. Thus, less than half of those having the possibility use it.

Despite regular health promotion, the popularity of worksite canteens in Finland has not increased over the decades; the frequency of worksite canteen use has been quite stable for over two decades, and a slight decrease in use can be seen in all socioeconomic groups (Raulio *et al.* 2005, Raulio 2011, 5). The key question is how to maintain the positive aspects of workplace lunch achieved by welfare state policies (Raulio 2011, 69-70) – and even increase its popularity?

Society in the 2010s has many differences compared with that of the 1970s, when the systems of the welfare state were most consolidated (Kosonen 1987; 1993). Changes in the macro economy, production, urban development and lifestyles have shaped our entire food environment to better meet increasingly individualistic needs and demands (Bell & Valentine 1997, 219-257). Moreover, new phenomena are constantly evolving. For example, various pop-up restaurants strive to stretch conventional eating occasions to the limits. These include a venue in an old electric power plant in the countryside, where top-notch fine-dining dishes, prepared from local ingredients, were served in a sonic environment comprised of environmental sounds or locally-meaningful songs. For the restaurateurs, these kinds of

experiments are like antennas for probing new directions for their own business (Bardone & Kannike 2018). On the other hand, pop-up restaurants would not be so popular without a corresponding consumer demand (Jones & al. 2017).

Today, places for having lunch are rather diverse. The history of the workplace lunch reveals that the basic features of restaurants are inherited from the earlier stages of their genealogy, for example, the factory canteen, although the ownership has shifted towards private contractors (Tainio & Tarasti 1995, 9-18). The diversification of eating places goes hand in hand with the processes of urban development and constantly evolving urban life-styles (See Parham 2015, 71-129, Bell 2003). Based on this idea, we can hypothesise that pop-up restaurants carry a message from the near future, which does not necessarily mean imitations of globally trendy flavours and designs but, instead, something very unique and local (Johnston & Baumann 2015, 61-85). If we accept this stance, pop-up restaurants could be studied as a part of the same evolutionary path that lunch restaurants have followed.

Food and urban development can be seen as different, but not totally separate, aspects of a city. Accordingly, strongly regulated urban planning might change the relation between food and city. It is easy to find cases, where food has been hidden down in the underground floors of department stores in city centres due to strict functional zoning or gentrification. From there, food has no chance to vitalise public urban life and space (Franck 2005b, Parham 2005). Yet, the role of food could be significant in this regard. The concept of conviviality helps us to grasp the relation between food and urbanism. The term was first used in academic discourses in social sciences in the 1970s by Ivan Illich (1973). His aim was to criticize socially alienating features of industrialisation and its institutions. In the field of urban design, conviviality refers usually to sociability and liveliness. Urban theorists have made efforts to bring out, how these qualities could be supported by spatial arrangements. Christopher Alexander & al. (1977, 436, 454, 696, 818) have introduced ideas how to intertwine urban space, eating, food purchase and food production for attaining lively urbanism. Henry Shaftoe (2008) presents explicit design principles, where he mentions food as one of the psychological and sensual constituents of urban conviviality. Still, there are not too many definitions of the concept, but based on Shaftoe and others, Rodriguez & Simon (2015) have introduced their expanded version, which is appropriate in our present urban conditions: "*Conviviality describes a type of social life in urban places. Convivial places are*

characterized by being friendly and lively. Convivial places promote tolerance and mutual exchange of ideas among the people and groups that inhabit them."

If we take a closer look at cities on the level of their basic structures, the fundamental role of food becomes obvious. The food system as a whole (primary production, logistics, waste and material circulation, supply and consumption) forms a part of urban infrastructure just like streets, water pipes, sewers and energy systems. Although the food system, apart from customer interface, is relatively invisible, it has an effect on urban structures, vitality and conviviality, if we think about logistically optimised supply network with hypermarkets or, on the other hand, the effect of farmers markets and restaurants on urban space (Pothukuchi & Kaufman 1999). Bell (2007) points out the socially important meaning of eating out, as well as its vitalising role in urban settings, even though many scholars label it as calculating consumption-driven urban economy. According to Finkelstein (2014, vii-xix, 163-168), food and restaurants have a remarkable role in helping to construct urban identities, as food and public eating habits make visible the essential features and patterns of culture and social life.

The vitalising potential of food is widely utilised in urban development and regeneration. Presentation of food strengthens the multisensory experience of cities due to food's visual and olfactory capabilities. Eating places and food are significant for the entire urban sensory environment (Fernando 2005, 20-25). In addition to this, food places generate positive pedestrian traffic and entrepreneurship, and they create jobs and vitality (Franck 2005a; 2005b). Consequently, food has gained a standing in urban planning and design. Some cities have launched special food strategies, and have even started to apply certain principles and practices of "food planning" (Donovan & al. 2011). Different parts of food systems can be utilised in various cases of urban planning and development like, for example, in dealing with the problems of shrinking cities (Parham 2016, Neill 2016), or integrating the passive outer fringes or in-between zones of cities into functional urban areas (Hasnaoui Amri 2018).

Our analysis focused on the lunch experience using thematic analysis as the main methodological tool to find the patterns of meaning-making. The data [1] of the research is comprised of group interviews from two lunch studies and the study of fine-dining events. In cultural studies, it is argued that "all meaning is 'meaning in context'" (Kleine III & Kernan 1991, 311). Thus, if the context of eating changes, the meaning-making of eating also changes. In the research, lunch is compared with the experiential side of eating: fine-dining style pop-up restaurant events with the theme of locality. It is shown how the meaning-

making of having lunch is mainly rational, and the sensory information received from the environment is verbally and rationally interpreted by the interviewees. This could be explained by the fact that lunch is one of the routine practices in everyday life and everyday routines usually appear as inconspicuous, unremarkable and unrecognised (Wahlen, 2011). Further, it has been shown that people find it difficult to verbalise experiential elements, for example, aesthetic aspects of everyday food (Paakki *et al.* 2019).

In comparison, local food events are mainly experiential and embodied in terms of the senses. It is asked whether there is something in common with those two contexts of eating and if some of the findings from the experiential side of eating might be applied to more everyday eating occasions. Our aim is to find starting points for maintaining the positive aspects of the lunch culture in Finland that was mostly established during the era of strong welfare state politics from the 1960s to the 1980s (Prättälä 2003). To succeed in this, we should have ideas of how to improve the attractiveness of mundane lunch restaurants in our emergent and in increasingly experience-seeking cities.

Historical background

The evolution of lunch culture goes hand in hand with urban development, which, in turn, is tied to macroeconomic fluctuations and prevailing modes of production. Consequently, in our study, lunch is associated explicitly with workplace eating. From this point of view, the modern lunch in Finland originated in the industrialisation that started on a large scale in the 1870s.

Industrialisation gave birth to a wage-earner society, where the workers were expected to take care of their own eating. However, some of the larger industrial plants were in themselves miniature societies with their own schools and hospitals, and socially-responsible employers provided lunch for their workers voluntarily. In the 1890s, the government established the industrial safety administration with an aim to improve the conditions of work life. The labour inspectors working in the organisation advised the companies to build lunch canteens for workers. From the 1940s, the goal was to ensure that every employee could have a decent meal during working hours, as the growing industry enticed increasing masses of workers from the countryside to expanding cities (Tainio & Tarasti 1995; Raulio 2011, 17).

The most important phase of constructing the Finnish welfare society began after WWII in the 1950s. Industrialisation, migration from rural areas and urbanisation entailed social problems that had to be met by strong social policies (Kosonen 1987; 1993). Raising the standard of education and work life required an organised food supply during the workdays. Inexpensive lunches for work places and free meals for schoolchildren were consolidated as a part of the welfare state systems. Of course, institutional meals were also a good medium to control workers' and pupils' comings and goings for the sake of efficiency (Bell & Valentine 1997, 187-189). Workplaces were located farther away from housing areas, as suburban development accelerated in the 1960s. Until then, cities grew organically by extending the existing urban fabric (e.g. Kostof 1992, 54-69).

In the 1970s, the government expanded the welfare state to public health, employees' working conditions and nutritional education. The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health gave recommendations for workplace lunches in 1971, and the National Board of Building published design standards for workplace canteens in 1979. Since the 1990s, neo-liberal ideology gained more ground in welfare state politics, as well as in urban planning. Employees were supposed to take more responsibility in their coping at work, while lunch services were privatised. The state's catering services were incorporated, and allowances for workplace catering were decreased in the budget (Tainio & Tarasti 1995). At the same time, profitability in traditional manufacturing industries declined due to increased global competition. Factories were shut down, and production lines were moved to low-cost countries.

The structural hierarchy of cities started to dissolve, which involved both physical environments and institutions. Around the turn of the millennium, defunct industrial plants, or so-called "urban fallows" (Oswald & Baccini 2003, Ylä-Anttila 2010), experienced a re-incarnation as incubators of creative industries and start-up ICT companies. A varied selection of lunch restaurants and cafés continued expanding in city centres. At the same time, new office parks, accompanied by commercial lunch services, mushroomed around the accessible areas near ring roads (Suomen ympäristökeskus 2012). Despite structural reforms, a remarkably large part of the manufacturing sector has stayed afloat. In addition, the continuation of free school meals has not been seriously questioned, although the idea is sometimes brought forward in political debates.

Economic and cultural fluctuations continue to shape our cities and their food systems to this day in various ways. The simultaneity of new and old layers also generates diversity. More traditional factory and office canteens, as well as campus canteens of universities and technology centres, continue their existence in parallel with sushi and vegetarian restaurants and trendy lunch cafés. Work and urban life have splintered into various genres and brought about a wide array of lunch places. (See Bell & Valentine 1997, 168-217)

The aforementioned historical layering justifies the cases we have chosen for the research. The "blue-collar lunch" represents a lunch that is directed towards manual labourers, and originates from the heyday of the industrial city. The "white-collar lunch", in turn, represents a lunch served for office workers, with roots in the rise of informational cities (Castells 1989) with their landscaped office sites and green campuses. The third case, the "pop-up restaurant", stems from the emergent, sensation-seeking contemporary urbanism (Parham 2015, 123; Jones & al. 2017).

Methodology

The starting point for the study is the lunch experience, which is decisive when choosing where to eat lunch – or choosing lunch at all. This solution also posits the main challenge for our study, because lunch is a complex multisensory experience with emotional and cognitive dimensions. The article concentrates on the various parameters that construct the dining experience such as visual and sonic aspects of a space, background music, setting and different aspects of food. At best, it should be analysed in its full richness without reducing the experience into simplified constituents. (See also Mann 2015.)

Still, there are several reasons that favour taking the human experience as the main subject of the research. First, experience is the most important factor that affects customer loyalty (Clark & Wood 1999; Naehyun & al. 2012). Second, lunch experience and attached meanings have potential to affect healthy food choices (c.f. Spence & Piqueras-Fiszman 2014, 271-301; see also Dijksterhuis & al. 2005). Third, a positive and relaxing lunch experience decreases work-related stress (De Bloom & al. 2014). Finally, all three of the above aspects have a shared, albeit indirect, impact on how lunch places contribute to the creation of convivial urbanism, since urbanism is made by people that occupy urban space and maintain services by using them. As urban sociologist Susan Parham (2015, 123) puts it: "…restaurants

designed to ‘give something back to the street’ are seen as more convivial than entirely interiorized examples that operate as private worlds…”

To some extent our research parallels and draws from Mann’s (2015) ethnographic research *Tasting in Mundane Practices*, especially when blue collar lunch is being studied. Mann’s work will be further elaborated by introducing a white-collar restaurant and a pop-up restaurant and making a comparison among the three of them. Individual elements constructing the sensory environments and overall ambiances of the restaurants will also be studied.

Methodologically, the lunch experience is composed of ontologically-diverse factors, such as qualities of food available, location and design of the place, customer demographics, sonic environment, and many other factors – in other words: the whole foodscape (Yasmeen 1996, Mikkelsen 2011). There are many different effective factors, and unanticipated combined effects make analysis even more complex. For example, food itself, in addition to being a source of energy, includes sensory aspects such as taste, nutritional and health attributes, as well as aesthetic dimensions. Further, the qualities of the built and sonic environments are anything but simple to grasp.

The comprehensive and ontologically hybrid nature of human experience leads us to search for methodological tools from the direction of ambiance and atmosphere theories. The concept of ambiance is defined as a space-time qualified from a sensory point of view; it relates to the sensing and feeling of a place. Ambiance involves a specific mood expressed in the material presence of things and, in addition, it is embodied in the way city dwellers are. The concept takes into account the lived experience of people as well as the built environment of the place, thus making it both subjective and objective (Thibaud 2011).

The concept of ambiance makes it possible to bundle the different sensory modalities of lunch experience into one integrated aggregate that can be scrutinised by the methodical toolbox of thematic analysis. The informants should first be encouraged to discuss their experiences. The actual object of the multisensory experience is not the individual factors regarding food, spatial or acoustic design, but rather a diverse mix of factors constituting an ambiance (see also atmosphere, c.f. Böhme 2017; Pallasmaa 2012, 48, 71; Edwards & Gustafsson 2008). Further, ambiance is not something to be experienced on its own, but it is also produced (Thibaud 2011). In a social situation, like a workplace lunch, the customers

also contribute to the production of ambiance. Thus, the social content of the situation is manifested, at least to some extent, in the ambiance, where it can be analysed (ibid. 2011).

In lay knowledge, it is often suggested that rationality and emotions contradict each other. To some extent, this Cartesian dichotomy is also supported by the interviewees of our studies who describe having lunch mainly with rational meanings and pop-up restaurant experiences mainly with affective and aesthetic meanings. However, in spite of ontological differences, emotions and rational thinking are part of the same processes and there is no such thing as purely rational action or thinking (*e.g.* Kirman *et al.* 2010, Barbalet 2002).

In this paper, the term experience includes emotions, which are discussed as a part of the holistic experience by the participants of the pop-up restaurant study. As proven in other contexts as well as here, "emotions are not only physical but also social and cultural, and they are mediated, sustained and recalled with the help of material objects" (Aaltojärvi 2014, 171). In terms of pop-up restaurants, emotional experience was conveyed with the help of professionally constructed locality in the environment and in the dishes served. In marketing studies and in studies of food tourism, it has been maintained that consumer experiences are sensory experiences and the value of different events are derived from sensory meanings through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell associated with the experience (*e.g.* Schmitt 1999, Everett 2008). Emotional meaning, in turn, extends the experience further and incorporates ranges of emotions (*e.g.* Richins 1997).

Rationality is manifested in the comments of the focus group interviews conducted about having lunch. In those cases, rationality connects to functionality and the meaning of lunch as a rational action to eliminate hunger and to support working capacity. This recalls the discussion in marketing about "rational economic consumer choices" that are driven by utilitarian meaning where customers seek out functional value (Arnould *et al.* 2004). However, as stated earlier, it is also important to notice how the routine practices in everyday life such as work lunch and everyday routines usually appear as unrecognised and emotional elements such as aesthetics in everyday food are often difficult to verbalise (Paakki 2018).

Field research

In March and June 2016 empirical lunch research was carried out in the Finnish cities of Seinäjoki and Tampere. Three groups, two of them consisting of six participants and one of

five participants, were observed and interviewed. Two groups with university educations, one of women and one of men, had lunch at a staff canteen located in Seinäjoki (called "Idea") in a complex of buildings comprising over 80 organisations and companies. The restaurant is popular among white-collar workers. The third group, composed of men with vocational educations, had lunch in Tampere at the lunch restaurant (called "Edu"), popular among blue-collar workers. Research groups were divided by gender and education, which are important factors affecting one's attitudes towards food and eating (*e.g.* Germow 2008, Mäkelä 2002, Raulio & Roos 2012, Raulio *et al.* 2012). Each group was observed having lunch on two consecutive days. The researchers modified the eating environment for the second day's lunch, which was followed by a focus group interview.

The sampling was composed of representatives of male and female interviewees and white collar and blue collar groups in order to collect data from diverse eaters and diverse eateries. Focus groups and interviews were selected as a method because interaction between interviewees and interviewers are prone to lead to answers and comments, which would be left unnoticed in online or paper questionnaires with fixed questions. This is also why open-ended questions were used in data collection (Alasuutari 2011, 151).

In the words of Robinson (1999, 905) a focus group is "an in-depth, open-ended group discussion of 1 to 2 hours' duration that explores a specific set of issues on a pre-defined and limited topic. Such groups consist typically of between five to eight participants and are convened under the guidance of a facilitator". A set of discussion themes was prepared, but talk was not limited to them, and respondents were encouraged to converse with each other and comment on the remarks of others. As Puchta and Potter (2004) suggest: the researcher may direct the conversation if some subject needs more elaboration, some theme is uncovered or some of the participants do not have a chance to talk. The themes of the interviews were food choices, lunch routines, lunch environment (including table setting, space, and sonic environment), and emotions and feelings before, during, and after lunch. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and they were transcribed for analysis.

During the fall of 2015, the restaurant *Juurella* organised a pop-up restaurant tour called *Matka maakuntaan* ("Going to Province") in three rural towns in South Ostrobothnia. The restaurant was open two evenings in each venue and group interviews were conducted during one evening in each place. Three groups, six people in each, men and women aged 18 to 63

years, were recruited to take part in the study. In every group, there were three local and three non-local people, and every group participated in only one dinner. Participants did not have to pay for the dinner.

In the restaurant, participants were seated at different tables, 2 to 4 people in each group. The duration of the dinner was about three hours and was followed by group interviews lasting 31 to 42 minutes, depending on the group. At the beginning of the group interview, the participants were given a list of questions concerning the overall experience, food, location and space, sonic environment, lighting, customer service and scheduling. The group interviews proceeded as free conversations with topics from the given list, and the researchers did not participate unless one of the themes had not been commented. We wanted to observe if the participants emphasised some themes or questions more than others, and if there were differences between the groups in this respect. The group interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Case 1: Blue-collar lunch

The *Edu* restaurant is located in Tampere, which is the third largest city in Finland with 230 000 inhabitants and the second largest urban region of the country with a population of 380 000. Edu is located in the city centre next to the railway station in an area that includes an old industrial depot area recently renewed as an active part of the city centre with event venues, workplaces and various services. The restaurant's popularity is based, at least partly, on its favourable location on the edge of a large square that is easily accessible by walking and both public and private transport.

The interviewees struggled to explicate their opinions about the environment of the lunch restaurant when asked what kinds of feelings the restaurant space evokes. When replying to the questions about the environment, the respondents changed the subject and started to talk about rational aspects of having lunch. This is shown in the answers in which the interviewees considered Edu as "purely a place for having lunch" but not suitable for evening dining, or you "just eat and then leave" (*M61, M48, M57*).

In the comments above, it is shown how rationally having lunch is made meaningful and how the respondents separated emotions and feelings from the functional lunch experience. Further, lunch is explicitly set apart from dinner, hinting that the environment of a dinner

restaurant is different from a lunch restaurant. The same rationalisation of the Edu restaurant as a place simply for eating occurred when the interviewer commented the second day's modified table setting. At first it appeared not to have any effect on the eating experience (M58). However, in the follow-up comment, the tablecloths were acknowledged by two other interviewees, that they brought a home-like atmosphere to the luncheon site, thus creating an isolated "own space" for the diners (M57 and M48).

In other phases of the interview, the 40-year-old and 57-year-old interviewees pointed out that the lunch experience in the second, modified day of lunch research felt more peaceful. Nevertheless, the respondents found also a rational reason for this; they did not have to search for vacant seats in the popular restaurant since the researchers had *reserved* a table for them (M40, M57).

Edu is a lunch restaurant offering mostly heavy, meat-based hot food. Every day, the restaurant offers dishes such as jumbo meatballs, chicken breast or salmon fillet. On the research day, entrées included veal schnitzel, open burger and stuffed cabbage rolls. There is always an option for a cold salad. To accompany those dishes, customers could choose mashed potato, french fries, potatoes in cream sauce, rice or boiled potatoes.

Those in this group seemed to pursue food as a practical part of the day with no high expectations, with the same feelings about environmental factors. The overall opinion about the environment and food was that if the food was considered good, the environment does not matter much.

Health issues, inspired by the text provided by the interviewer, were briefly discussed. In general, the themes around food were convenience, nutrition and taste. Social aspects and cost issues were also mentioned during the discussion. Convenience was connected to the tight timeframe available for lunch breaks: a 30 to 45 minute break for eating was considered too long, at least as an everyday practice. Location was frequently mentioned as the most important reason to choose a lunch restaurant, but it was not the only factor. Some restaurants apparently had earned their reputations over a long period of time, which had accumulated for a variety of reasons. "Damn good food" often overrides other qualities such as the atmosphere of the lunch restaurant (M 58; M62).

Taste and healthiness of food were often compared to each other in this group of respondents. Between these two aspects, there seemed to be an ongoing internal struggle. This is seen in

the comments from in which the same interviewee gives contradictory views on taste and health in different parts of the interview: at one point he described being used to eat “rabbit food” because it can be made to taste good, and at another point mentions that he does not restrict himself from eating something considered unhealthy, because it tastes good (M58).

The ambience of the luncheon place was considered important when respondents were specifically asked about it. The criteria for a warm home-like atmosphere were simple/rather modest/easy to accomplish. In addition to cloth on the table, another factor mentioned that contributed to building a home-like atmosphere was the attitude of the personnel (M57 and M61). “Even the smallest thing ... if the girl at the cash register is such a grouch, it's a bit rude. Somehow it feels really disagreeable.”

In this focus group, taste and liking of non-healthy food seemed to be the most important aspects, as opposed to the rational reasoning involved in having lunch. The respondents clearly were aware of nutrition guidelines and how to approach eating based on them, but they also brought out the pleasure aspect, the more emotional sides of eating that are manifest in taste and pleasure derived from it. The comments portray the lunch as “mundane eating”, whereas the act of tasting is somewhat different. Tasting is not a matter of subjects getting to know and thus learning to judge their foods. Tasted food is not being known, it is being eaten (Mann 2015, 121). Also, tasting food does not lead to conclusions, but instead leads to seemingly different evaluations co-existing next to each other (Mann 2015, 110).

Ambient background music consisted of Finnish popular music from a commercial radio station. Overall sonic environments were composed of human sounds, such as chat and laughter, and sounds of people’s actions such as moving chairs, plates and cutlery clattering (Aaltojärvi *et al.* 2017). Hardly any attention was paid to the music. One of the interviewees pointed out that he uses radio for playing background music while working at a construction site. The radio plays unnoticed, unless something interesting is broadcast which catches his attention. The answer is parallel to those given in a study on the use of radios in the workplace (Uimonen 1999).

Case 2: White-collar lunch

The *Idea* restaurant is one of the three campus restaurants in the Seinäjoki University Centre, and located less than one kilometre from the core centre of Seinäjoki. Although the city’s

population is only some 60 000 inhabitants, it belongs to a small group of growing urban regions in Finland. The restaurant is situated at street level in premises on the fringe of a building complex. It is easily accessible from all over the campus, but it has no connection to customer flows from the city centre. Moreover, the restaurant is not promoted outside the campus. Consequently, the customers come almost solely from the campus offices.

The focus group interview consisted of well-educated men. The talk about the second day's modified table setting stemmed from the rational reasoning about the setting. For example, a 62-year-old respondent contemplated how he had difficulties in placing the plates on the table (*M62).* In his comment, the table setting is not appropriate and lunch is understood as a material-related routine activity that is almost automatic in nature. In the interview of well-educated women, the rationalisation of lunch came through ecological reasoning of the table setting. For example, a 37-year-old female respondent explained that she is not using the salad plate because without it it's easier to compose a healthy plate model. Furthermore, she was annoyed because they created extra dishes putting a strain on the environment, just like the thick serviettes, which need "a lot of wood" to manufacture (F37). A 50-year-old female continued and discussed the account of the previous responded by saying that during, for example, a seminar lunch break; "*the place setting could be like that, different from normal. The better serviettes and all… but not when we go there on a normal day"* (F50).

In this extract of discussion, the material nature of having lunch is made explicit. Lunch is not considered a special event that should take a toll on nature and environment. It is a part of everyday life, casual and routine, and therefore distinguished from events and contexts that are more rare and festive, such as fine-dining. Thus instead of a singular one, discussants took up diverse subject positions (see Mann 2015, 121): a 37-year-old female preferring not to use salad plate for health reasons took a subject position of environmental consciousness by stating her concern about unnecessary dishes and unnecessarily thick serviettes.

When the interviewer asked the respondents what kind of lunch restaurant would be the lunch restaurant of their dreams, the most usual answers covered the practical aspects of eating: the speed of service, the location of the restaurant and of the price/quality ratio of the food. In other words, also in this case, the lunch break is made meaningful primarily with aspects featuring functional and rational reasoning. There were some comments that approached the experiential side of eating, but they were mentioned under the theme of food and beverages.

On the day of the study lunch, the menu included lamb meatballs with dark rosemary sauce, jacket potatoes with vegetable filling and pea soup. A salad buffet and rice or boiled potatoes were offered alongside the hot dishes.

The main aspects discussed about food were health, convenience and taste. Other topics such as sustainability and locality of food origins while wishes for special treats and surprise elements comprised a smaller part of the discussion. Rationalisation of lunch has similarities with Case 1,but, in Case 2, rationality was broadened to also cover ethical and ecological issues.

In both focus groups of Case 2, male and female, the rational health guidelines had been internalised and they were not questioned as there were in Case 1. Both groups started their discussions with different aspects of health, the main topics being the importance of salad and cutting down carbohydrate and meat consumption.

When compared to the discussion in the blue-collar lunch, talk about health was more wide-ranging and took a longer time. Convenience and taste were both considered important though often presented as competing variables. Schedule, weather or some other convenience factors sometimes prevented choosing a luncheon site located farther away but offering more delicious food than the ones nearby.

'Good taste' of food was discussed only after health issues had been thoroughly discussed in both groups of Case 2. Criticism concerning taste was rationally directed at ready-made meals and industrially prepared food components, such as meatballs. Although personal requirement levels were not considered excessive by the informants, liking of food was sometimes a critical factor in purchase decisions. However, the question of taste was not manifest through pleasure and indulgence as in Case 1, but through "simplicity" and pleasantness in food appearance. If personal requirements of those were not met, the purchase decision was negative, *e.g.*, if "food looks terrible" a customer walks out (F37).

Alternatives included lunch brought from home eaten in the office's coffee room. Personal lunch boxes were justified by rational practices as being faster, cheaper and decreasing food waste at home.

Although the generally-expressed wish for lunch food crystallised in "familiar, good-tasting home food", some wishes for special treats or even surprises were expressed. Desserts, which

are not common in Finnish working lunch services, were acknowledged as acceptable and occasionally even preferable. A glass of wine, even less common at lunch tables, was also cautiously suggested and discussed in mutual agreement among the group of men. As a conclusion, an ideal model for lunch seemed to be familiar, convenient and predictable with some surprise element. The surprise does not have to be big and it could be pursued, for example in the salad buffet with something other than "regular cucumber and green salad" (M33).

There is an extensive body of research documenting how stores use music to evoke emotions in customers and, further, to influence customers' decision-making. It has been demonstrated that loud or fast music leads people to move more quickly (Smith & Curnow 1966; Milliman 1982), whereas slow music in a minor key leads people to spend more time and, consequently, increases consumption (Knöferle *et al.*, 2011) and that music modifies people's first impressions of products (Zander, 2006) and influences their choices when deciding between two competing products (Yeoh & North, 2010). Today's commercial environments are being built with a thorough understanding and exploitation of the uses of the several stimuli simultaneously, such as through lighting, scents, visuals and sound to create desired atmospheres and to influence the consumer's purchasing decisions (Spence *et al.* 2014).

However, many of these studies are based on marketing research where people are portrayed as passive customers, instead of active participants. Also, culture-specific meanings related to music are often neglected. With this in mind, special attention was paid to music. The study was conducted with background music consisting of Finnish popular music from a commercial radio station. The sonic environment consisted of chat and laughter, and sounds caused by people's actions such as moving chairs, plates and the clattering of cutlery. For the women's and men's second lunch day in Seinäjoki, the radio was turned off and background music replaced with specifically selected and composed instrumental music including electronic and acoustic ambient music (Aaltojärvi *et al.* 2017).

Most of the observations regarding the sonic environment concerned the background music: volume balance between the background music and chatter, likes or dislikes about the radio music and ambient music, with a few comments on the acoustic properties of the space. Social interaction was considered important both when having lunch and when dining in the pop-up restaurants. However, in the interviews of pop-up restaurants, background music was considered more important and an essential part of the whole. In lunch interviews, the

respondents noted that background music brought privacy by masking table talk from the neighbouring tables (Aaltojärvi *et al.* 2017).

During the lunch, music was played from two active speakers placed near the respondents table and directed towards them in order to provide a designed sonic environment to the diners. According to feedback, the placement of the speakers was not successful, since the music was considered too loud and disturbing for conversations at the table. Interviewees' perceptions of the loudness may have been affected by the active speakers and non-compressed music which provided better sound quality compared to restaurant's own speaker system with compressed radio contents. In addition, the table was placed next to a window, which reflected the sound. All these factors contributed to the respondents perceiving the radio music as less disturbing in comparison to the selected ambient music. Contrary to scholarly assumptions that background music in a commercial space is perceived positively, the respondents in our study preferred to eat in a peaceful atmosphere without any background music at all (Aaltojärvi *et al.* 2017). Quite interestingly, during the lunch one interviewee pointed out that he did not pay attention to canned music, although the music was on. In familiar environments he had learned to leave it unnoticed, *i.e.* "dishearken" it (Stockfelt 1997; Uimonen 1999). The comments seem to verify the credo behind commercial format radio music-selecting policies: music should be selected and broadcast technically in such a form that it does not distract its potential listener in any circumstances (Uimonen 2011; 2017).

Case 3: Pop-up restaurants

In the case of the *Matka maakuntaan* (Going to Province) pop-up restaurant tour, the fine-dining events were professionally constructed to be multisensory. In addition to food representing New Nordic Cuisine (*New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto*, 2016) and cooked from scratch with local ingredients, each of the three venues portrayed locality in themselves. Further, a musician who communicated the musical theme to the guests selected the background music for the events. A photo slideshow, consisting mainly of local landscape photographs, was incorporated in the venues. In other words, the events were highly multisensory and all the visual and auditory elements were designed to convey the theme of locality to the dinner guests.

The case study consisted of a mobile pop-up restaurant, which set up in three municipalities in the South Ostrobothnian area. In Jalasjärvi, the restaurant was built in an historical linen factory, which was still in operation. The building complex is composed of buildings of different eras. In the small town of Kurikka, the pop-up event was arranged in a small electric power plant museum, located a few kilometres from the town centre. When compared to these two, the third pop-up restaurant in the exhibition building in Alavus felt more conventional. The old traditional log building was converted at the end of 1980s into its present function. The building is located about one kilometre outside the centre of the small town.

The dining environment was a common subject in talks of the eating experiences in the pop-up restaurant events: in the interview conducted in the Jalasjärvi linen factory, the environment and related issues were talked about the most, though food was the favourite topic of discussion in Alavus. In Jalasjärvi, the factory environment was very unusual and different from conventional restaurant spaces. In Alavus, the place resembled a more typical restaurant environment which gave way to more room for contemplation of the food. In Kurikka, the talk mostly covered the overall experience and the general atmosphere of the event.

In the interview of the Jalasjärvi linen factory pop-up restaurant customers, the respondents described the environmental qualities related to the positive feelings they conveyed. This included comments on the restaurant being situated in a factory and how the environment took on a “soft appearance” (F24, F40).

Continuing with the case of the Jalasjärvi linen factory, experiences were also verbalised through reminisces that the interviewees picked up from environmental cues. Memories were simultaneously general and personal, connecting the subject to their immediate living environment and society. For example, a 63-year-old female customer pondered the factory environment as “rough”, which made her think about people who had worked there and remember her own experiences in similar factories (F63).

The quote shows how the environment and related atmosphere convey personal, emotional and subjectively familiar meanings that are connected to general, cultural images of other people in the past. Another kind of reminiscing occurred with a type of nostalgia and remembering the “good old times”. That was usually caught from the surroundings and rural

landscape around the factory building and accounted through sensory evaluation. Interestingly, although they have not experienced the distant past themselves, the youngest interviewees, a 24-year-old female and an 18-year-old male respondent felt nostalgic because of the scenery they considered traditionally Finnish, one including a specific "scent" (N24; M18).

This discussion depicts the embodied sensory experience (see Everett 2008) in which all the senses together convey a powerful emotional experience and links the respondent to an environment, even if in this case the environment was a landscape and not professionally constructed to be a part of the pop-up restaurant event.

In the pop-up restaurant events, food was clearly seen as only one part of the experience and made meaningful as a part of the whole. This was different from the two urban lunch cases in which easy access of reasonably good food was considered the most important criterion of purchase. Health, an important topic of discussions in the two interviews about lunch, was mentioned only once in the three pop-up interviews.

Among the appreciated features of the food experiences were traditional and in everyday, unappreciated local raw materials that were turned into fine-dining delicacies. In the same vein, the surroundings of those events were at the same time very familiar rural landscapes, but still also seen as special and experiential by the respondents. The list of raw materials was long, starting from the ingredients used during the times of food scarcity and famine, such as inner bark of pine, ending with wild flowers and herbs. The elevation of ordinary Finnish raw materials, such as potato and common roach, to a festive dish was noted by the respondents by commenting, how they had to "re-evaluate" the taste of common roach and how it is actually an excellent fish, even though diners agreed that "usually on the coast we usually throw it back to the water" (M42, F54, M55).

Food was also made meaningful with narratives of locality and specific places. The diners, for example, acknowledged how food was integrated into a comprehensive dining experience with close links to the constructed environment representing local history. This kind of connection of certain food and surrounding space – whether carefully decorated or not – was absent in the interviews about lunch. For instance, a 55-year-old male interviewee stated how he recognised a rosebay-willow-herb seasoned butter, which is the provincial flower of the

South Ostrobothnia and that how barn sceneries and pictures of Provincial bird of South Ostrobothnia (Eurasian Curlew) supported the theme of the dining event (M55).

Further, unlike in the lunch interviews, when food was discussed in the pop-up restaurant interviews, the sensory profile of dishes was often described in detail. As mentioned in terms of the environment, this refers to an influential and emotional experience. For instance, a 45-year-old female respondent described the order of senses when encountering a new dish; the taste followed olfactory and visual evaluation: *Surprisingly often it happened, that first you smelled the food, because the dish looked so nice. Only after that did you really startto taste it* (F45).

The research examined music as part of the acoustic design of given spaces, paying special attention to emotions and feelings of locality and whether they could be represented by music selection during the fine-dining banquet. As a result, it can be concluded that acoustic design can be applied in enhancing the positive feelings of locality and overall when visual elements, setting and served food support the given theme of the dinner.

Locality was constructed with the help of archival recordings and music selection, which was chosen to compliment the selected, somewhat unusual dining spaces. The event turned out to be a multimodal experience, which underlined the uniqueness of the given place and time. Music was considered pleasant when it suited the overall environment, the served dishes and connected to the past and memories in a meaningful way, unlike some individual music selections, which disrupted the atmosphere. The research of the triangular relationship of affects, ubiquitous listening and acoustic design require critical attention. In a given space, the subjectivity and aesthetic experiences are constructed, but it happens in a context where our relationship to space and its sounds is in constant transformation.

The recognisability of music plays an important part while affects are being created. This was enhanced by selection of background music and asking diners to listen attentively to some cued numbers. Both background music and attentively listened to music had positive and negative meanings attached to them. In particular, cued performances underlining locality caused strong emotions. The affectivity of music can be further enhanced by narrative means. Furthermore, it turned out that spaces can be designed in collaboration with the people using them by asking for feedback on the event. At the same time, through the construction and

experiencing of the past, both contemporary and imagined locality can be studied (Kontukoski & Uimonen 2016).

Conclusions

In both lunch interviews, lunch was mostly discussed through rational reasoning and aspects of functionality, whether the subject in question was the environment, table set, convenience factors concerning the time frame of lunch break or the location of the restaurant. All the respondents of the lunch interviews agreed that the most important feature of the lunch restaurant is logistical. The timeframe and tasks of the ongoing workday affect which restaurant is chosen. Rationalisation of lunch manifested slightly differently in the groups of blue-collar and white-collar respondents as, in the latter, healthiness was an integral part of the meaning-making and ethical and ecological issues were also brought out in the discussion. The comments about more emotion-driven and even surprising lunch experiences concerned the food and beverages. These were random and included pleasure that is derived from desserts or from a glass of wine. Ambiance and the environment of the place were also considered of importance although of less significance. It should be noted, that although interviewees' argumentation in general is rational by nature, it also contained emotional elements.

As stated, lunch is considered a routine practice and thus it can be challenging for some to verbalise its emotional aspects. The sensory and emotional information received from the environment may thus have been verbally interpreted rationally by the interviewees. The few verbalised wishes for a more enjoyable dining environment in the luncheon interviews may thus be significant signals on the importance of emotional aspects of work lunch. Responding to these signals by paying attention to ambiance and emotional elements of common lunch restaurants and canteens may be a tool to increase the popularity of luncheon restaurants and canteens and thus influence people's dietary habits towards nutritional recommendations.

The connection between environment, food and having lunch was vague in the interview responses. This differs hugely from the respondents' meaning making in the interviews of locality-themed pop-up restaurants, where the respondents described a comprehensive experience comprised of served dishes, surroundings, ambiance and indoor environment of the eating place. Food had a smaller role in the experience and all the elements of the

experience were understood holistically. The pop-up restaurants succeeded in lifting very common and rather overlooked Finnish ingredients and environmental visuals, for example rural landscapes and potatoes, into the centre of the emotional experience.

This raises the question of how to make the unnoticed everyday lunch an experience. Based on the pop-up restaurant interviews, one answer might concern the connection between the environment and food with the environment supporting the served food, and vice-versa. Also, in pop-up restaurants, the known and familiar was merged with little surprises and unconventional aspects, which turned out experiential. At the moment, quite many lunch restaurants in Finland have resorted to sorting out the question of logistics and the customers' perceived need for "basic home food". This can be a satisfactory solution, but it can be said to support the rational nature of having lunch that is not necessarily the most restful and refreshing experience for the worker. Even if the respondents could not very strongly explicate their need for a different, more experiential lunch, it does not mean that there is no need for that; one may not be able to express a need for something that has not yet been experienced.

The concept of unnoticed everyday lunch is somewhat analogous to allegedly unnoticed background music. However, the interviewees paid critical attention to the radio and ambient background music. The sound level and acoustic properties of the space were also evaluated as well as the possibility to have lunch in an environment without music - contrary to the hypothesis of the research. Also, in order to interact with others, having lunch in a group was highly valued in the interviews, as was the ability to have lunch alone in peace without background music. On the other hand the qualities of the thematic dinners of the pop-up restaurants could easily offer ideas in spicing up the lunch experience. Contemporary radio stations and online music services are offering more options for acoustic design or ambient experiments compared to broadcast radio music contents or traditional background music services.

It is possible that a one-sided emphasis on the rational aspects of lunch experience is not enough to keep lunch restaurants attractive in a sensation-seeking urban lifestyle. Disintegration of the dimensions of lunch experience does not support the holistic potentials included in the experience, although this could be enhanced with moderate measures relying, for example, on the spatial means of architectural and urban design. By using these, we can easily affect acoustic qualities of spaces and organise quiet enclaves within spatial

configurations. Further, operating in older premises provides easier encounters with local themes, as older buildings themselves are embodiments of local history. These premises can also be located in unconventional and non-listed buildings, usually with lower rents. By means of urban design, it is possible to create specific lunch routes that link different lunch places together, including the more isolated campus restaurants. Restaurants could open up interactively towards public spaces. As an organiser of public space, urban design would be a useful tool in helping to integrate the different sensory aspects of every-day lunch experience.

Food places have certain potential to form *soft edges* (Gehl 2010, 75) for public urban spaces, and make inviting places for people to gather around and socialise, thus adding to urban conviviality. Many mundane eating places are not considered magnetic, invigorating potential for city life. However, urbanism starts already from the indoor practices and the manner how the role of food is conceived and played in urban context. If this potential could be used to enliven undervalued or secondary public spaces, there is a chance to manifest city's specific, sometimes even rough, authentic atmosphere.

Although the spatial dimension is only one factor in producing an experiential eating occasion, it has a remarkable role as a material platform for a holistically experienced atmosphere or ambience. The sensations of taste, smell, and sounds, as well as visual and haptic sensations get mixed in built space. In an ideal world, the built environment should provide settings for various forms of social life, but in reality, it might hinder some forms, if we think about different citizen-driven eating occasions in public space. Urban design and planning have an important role in utilising the potential of food and food systems in vitalising individual and city life. Various pop-up eating events have typically emerged in a self-organising manner. Quite often, cities consider these kinds of popular grassroots actions a useful development resource, which make them slightly freer of normal spatial regulation. However, *active* food planning that deliberately takes advantage of various food systems in urban design and planning is still rare, although food has an interesting ability to link together different geographical scales from a single restaurant design to a development plan for an entire urban region.

Acknowledgements

This article is written in the VÄRINÄ project, financed by Tekes (The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation, currently Business Finland), and in the SENSOTRA project, which is financed by European Research Council (694893).

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[1] The data was collected between 2015–2017 in the research project "Health Supporting Multisensory Food Environment (VÄRINÄ)", carried out by the authors of this article.