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Using dialogue to express memories from a meal designer’s gastronomic professional practice

ABSTRACT

A meal consists of both tangible and intangible dimensions. Menus and photos may be the only documentation from a meal, but experiences are rarely saved beyond memory. The aim of this study is to design a method for documenting intangible aspects of the professional experience of a meal craftsman, based on the memories associated with the files in an archive. By sorting the archive according to a specific process of documentation we managed to revive and document also the intangible aspects of these meals. In order to access the intangible aspects, a version of the Socratic method of dialogue was developed and used. This is exemplified by a case. The dialogues reunited intangible aspects from the memories of the designer, such as motives and drivers, with the tangible archive documents.

Keywords:

Gastronomy, documentation, meal design, intangible, dialogue

INTRODUCTION

Designing meals is a craft, although in many ways an intangible craft. The crafted matter of a meal includes certain tangible and persistent items such as menus and utensils, but significantly it also includes food and drink which are still crafted tangible items but with a short lifespan because they are intended to be eaten. Furthermore, there are intangible aspects of the meals, such as the skilled waiter's and meal-designer's craftsmanships. These latter aspects are often considered purely experience-based, and seldom documented at all.

Meals are certainly temporary, they take place at the moment and too often leave traces just as memories. However, the memory of a meal is something that is preserved over time and could be a rich source of information. In a meal-designer's memories there are information about the creation and usage of staples and utensils, with answers to how the meal was carried out. In this paper we develop a method for documenting such information.

In this paper we view gastronomy from a craft perspective. Craft should be understood as an approach to actions, and exists in all professions (Sennet, 2008). Gastronomic crafts always take place in a flow (c.f. Adamson, 2007) and can similarly to other crafts be explained as "practical problem solving through the skillful use of materials, technology and aesthetics" (Sjömar, 2017, p. 96). It is also in line with Pye (1968) who discusses the meaning of the skill and emphasis that risk taking is central to the performance of craft.

Gastronomy

Early sociologist Georg Simmel was interested in the meal as an intermediary between individual and community (Simmel 1910/1993, Symons, 1994). From Simmel's point of view the act of eating was strictly individual, but the wider gastronomic meal was also a symbol of community in addition to contributing substance to satiate hunger. Elisabeth L'orange Fürst (1995) departs from Simmel's reasoning, and from her point of view substance is cooking while symbolizing is the social mediating process. She highlights how the aesthetic aspects of gastronomy can develop the meal from being individually eating of food towards also creating the conditions for a social activity. The ethnologist Christina Fjellström (2003) has a slightly different point of view when she uses Simmel's (1910/1993) reasoning on substances and symbols to define two different traditions of knowledge in Swedish meal research, one natural science oriented and the other social science-humanities oriented: "One can find that there are two fundamental issues that have governed research. The first is that food is a health-related issue, the second is an understanding that food has a more existential significance." (Fjellström 2003, p.11). She calls for more interdisciplinary meal research projects, in order to bridge this dichotomy and avoid a division into an objective and a subjective meal science. The ethnologist Håkan Jönsson (2012) views this from the ethnologist's point of view, and makes aware that the meal is becoming a growing social actor in the formation of knowledge since gastronomy is developing into "food and meal performances with high content of knowledge, in order to stimulate the well-being of the participants" (Jönsson, 2012, p. 11). This gastronomic revolution of knowledge shows that the symbolic values of the meal are becoming increasingly important in society. Interest in gastronomy as symbolic value is reflected in a great public interest in cooking through media such as TV, newspapers and podcasts (Jönsson, 2013). Sociologist Johanna Mäkelä (2000) who departs from the structuralists Mary Douglas (1997) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1997), argues instead that the meal can be described based on its contents and number of dishes, or based on the meal pattern (timings, number of meals, as well as the mixture of cold and hot), or based on where and with whom people eat. This can be described as a more substance-oriented approach.

Tangible and intangible gastronomy

In gastronomy, as well as in many other crafts, there is an interest in collecting tangible items in archives and museums, such as dinner menus, food wares, cookbooks and kitchen utensils. These items are cataloged and saved for the future. However, craft researcher Gunnar Almevik (2016) argues that descriptions for how such saved objects were used are often lacking, i.e. how the sensual aspects were a significant part of the knowledge the craftsman had in his work with the objects. Thus, the objects are

somehow removed from their context. Similarly, in terms of a meal, no tangible object alone can answer the question of how the meal was carried out, or what practical skills and what serving ritual was linked to the various meal items. Rarely there are answers to how often the meal equipment were used, what level of knowledge was required by the professionals or what the assessments were that guided in craft processes such as tablesetting and serving.

The anthropologist David E. Sutton (2018) argues that both traditional recipes and renewal by improvisation are necessary parts of cooking, since cooking both relates to traditions and needs to adapt to constantly changing conditions. The ability to handle the choices and adaptations required to prepare a meal is often transmitted through an oral tradition (Sutton, 2001), and therefore meals are created based on a combination of memories of previously experienced meals along with the direct sensory impressions that are perceived in action. Memory is therefore, despite its intangible nature, an irreplaceable source of impressions in meal making. Memory shall not only be seen as something from the past but also as an active part of the creation of meals, and can therefore even be treated as a sixth sense (Korsmeyer & Sutton, 2011). This calls for a development of methods that pay attention to both tangible and intangible dimensions when studying professional practice in gastronomic professions.

The idea of this study came up when an archive was sorted, consisting of documents, menus, photographs and objects from a professional practice as a waiter and designer of meal events. This kind of major meal events are constituted by what Peter Lugoshi (2008) calls "hospitable moments", i.e. events where meals are in focus, with the purpose of establishing or strengthening relationships in order to achieve social or political goals. Such events can be achieved by creating engaging and entertaining interactions based on the meal experiences (Hanefors & Mossberg 2003). In our case, in addition to artifacts saved in the archive, the experience of designing the events was still preserved in the memory of the person who had used the artifacts for his design during a 20-years-long career. It was thus two different compilations of the same person's professional practice that needed to be reunited. The aim of this study is to design a method for documenting intangible aspects of the professional experience of a meal craftsman, based on the memories associated with the files in an archive.

METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

This study applies a hermeneutic method of dialogue, inspired by the Socratic dialogue as it is described by Bengt Molander (1990) (see also Wortel & Verweij, 2008; Alsanius et al., 2009; Saran & Neisser, 2004; Skjervheim, 1957/1971). Socrates believed that every human being carries within herself the understanding of what knowledge is intended for, hence Socrates used dialogue as a method to get people to develop their views of knowledge. Such a dialogue is an open and continuous hermeneutic process, it can be described as a methodologically oriented process, whose purpose is not limited to knowledge in facts but also covers development of the ability to reach further knowledge (Gadamer, 1960/2004; Ricoeur, 1984; Bachtin, 1991). In comparison, a somewhat different variant of dialogue is given by the pragmatic perspective of dialogue, which places emphasis on more explicit purposes that are outside the dialogue itself: for example, to stimulate reflection on practical knowledge, to establish links between the personal and the professional, or to develop linguistic communication of practical knowledge (e.g. Göranson, 1990; Hammarén, 2008; Ratkić, 2009).

When Paul Ricoeur (1984, p. 57) wrote "to understand a story is to understand both the language of 'doing something' and the cultural tradition from which proceeds the typology of plots", he described the basis of a scientific method in which communicated practical knowledge is united with the understanding that comes from the cultural traditions people live within. Hans-George Gadamer (1960) and Paul Ricoeur (1984) argued that the exploration of such interpretative knowledge is possible, and that dialogue is a suitable method for that – given that the dialogue is an open and continuous as a process such as described above. Bengt Molander (1990; 2017) stresses that such a dialogue does not only to take place as communication between people, but also takes place when practical knowledge is explored as a dialogue between man and material. Dialogues on practical knowledge is about much more than defining and transferring concepts, because it also contributes to creating traditions to how the concepts can be used and developed. An example of this is how craft making and artefact analysis is used on textile crafts artefacts by Päivi Fernström (cited in Kokko et al., 2020). Another example of

this is Terje Planke (2001) where a boatbuilder's stories as well as actions are used for an ethnological study of traditional boatbuilding. Terje Planke emphasizes how the conversations with the boat builder in connection with his work are a rich source of knowledge –they are much more than just an oral presentation that accompanies the craft, because if the stories are also looked at from the point of view of how they continuously develop the art of reaching new knowledge, they are also about *bildung*.

The philosopher Anders Lindseth has shown how narrative essays can be used to explore one's own and others' professional practices. Anders Lindseth (2004; 2007) has used Paul Ricoeur's concept of dialogue and developed a methodological approach to such reflective encounters between the own and the others that gradually leads to a better understanding of the person and his experiences. What Anders Lindseth favors is a kind of narrative method for exploring professional practice, where the expressions and twists that the professional uses in his stories teach us how to approach it in our interpretation of the same story (Lindseth, 2007).

Dialogues and pre-understanding in research on meals

Dialogical meal research in Scandinavia is so far dominated by a pragmatic dialogue tradition. In research on professional skills where food and drink have been in focus (Herdenstam 2004; 2011), the pragmatically oriented method dialogue seminar (Hammarén, 2008) were used. There is also dialogical research on product development and teaching at university level (Herdenstam et al. 2018; Herdenstam et al., 2020). Cecilia Magnusson Sporre (2015, pp. 85 - 87) and Lotte Wellton (2017, pp. 45 - 47) also discuss the importance of understanding their own practical knowledge in order to be able to communicate their pre-understanding scientifically. They have both used their professional experiences as chefs in their scientific analyses. The practical pre-understanding brings an experience-based insight into their research, an insight that these researchers have used in their theoretical analysis. Similarly, also the waiter's professional practice has been studied, where the practical skills has been combined with a theoretical purpose to provide explanations of meal service with a craft science perspective (Eriksson et al, 2020). Taken together, this shows that dialogue methods have a potential to explore professional knowledge in meal context, but it also shows that this far the dialogical approach has been limited to some mainly pragmatic applications.

METHOD AND MATERIAL

In order to concretize the topics for the coming dialogues, first an outlined overview and description of the professional experience was needed. In this study we used a framework for our documentation process inspired by how Gunnar Almevik (2012; 2017) describes documentation in Heritage studies (Table 1). According to Almevik documentation consists of eight activities with an increasing degree of abstraction from the first activity *observation* and further through *identification*, *registration*, *inventory*, *mapping*, *classification*, *typologization* and ends with *characterization*. In our study the six initial activities were performed individually by the meal designer-researcher, and the results that emerged there became the basis for the two final activities which were performed as dialogical conversations between a co-researcher and the meal designer-researcher. The co-researcher is a PhD student, whose studies are based on *bildung* theory and dialogue method for the purpose of exploring how gastronomy is used by people to influence their society.

TABLE 1. Eight activities in a documentation process in Heritage studies (Almevik, 2017, pp. 239).

<i>Observation</i>	The art of seeing the basic preconditions of documentation. Observation means perception of an object.
<i>Identification</i>	A naming procedure. Objects get their identities by the names given to them. The names are linguistically distinguished in relation to other identities.
<i>Registration</i>	A collection of data about an object. Registration involves some form of mediation.
<i>Inventory</i>	A structured registration, where the types of data to be collected are determined in advance.
<i>Mapping</i>	An inventory whose data is located on a map.
<i>Classification</i>	A system for grouping objects based on properties.
<i>Typologization</i>	A form of classification based on the object's form. In building history research, types refer to form (e.g. cottage) and categories derived from functions (school building).
<i>Characterization</i>	A phenomenologically derived description of an object as a whole. It is a designation of dominant properties, or rather intersections in the interplay between the object's expression and the viewer's impression.

This study is autobiographically influenced, whereas a researcher explores his own craftsmanship and professional practice based on his archived material. The researcher then further explores his previous designer-profession in dialogues with another researcher. The study is autobiographical rather than autoethnographical, because it does not focus on cultural social phenomena but on the personal story (Shacklock & Thorp, 2005; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). It is important to be aware that there is a risk of being controlled by bias in autobiographic research. The method therefore treats previous knowledge in a reflective way (c.f. Davies, 2008), by the two researchers continuously discussing this problem during the research process.

In the field of research on professional knowledge, it is not uncommon for interviews to take place with colleagues or others with whom the researcher already has a professional relationship. Mani Schutzberg (2019) discusses how this phenomena is rooted in a need for a certain degree of acquaintance with the profession in order to be able to carry out the movement between the own and the other (c.f. Lindseth, 2007) that is needed to create meaningful interpretations from the research material. However, this acquaintanceship may also be problematic, as a power relationship often arises from the fact that the researcher understands the interviewee's activities well while the interviewee does not understand the researcher's activities equally well (Kvale, 2006). Such a power relationship can inhibit the dialogical exchange in conversations, and might end up with the researcher controlling the conversation by asking questions based on his own research interests to which the respondent becomes dependent to give answers (Mishler, 1999). In such interviews objectified issues tend to dominate while humanities issues are easily lost because these are more dependent on an interpersonal dialogue. A genuine dialogue, on the other hand, has no predetermined questions or dependent answers and is driven by mutual interpretations. When two researchers in the same professional field engage in a dialogue with each other a very equal conversation can take place. This study was designed to make such a dialogue both on an interpersonal level and as a dialogue with a tangible archived material.

The meal designer-researcher and the co-researcher had dialogic conversations on ten occasions over the course of three months. These were on average one hour long. Four of the conversations were audio-recorded and excerpts from these recordings were transcribed in verbatim.

Material

The archived material consists of working documents from the meal designer's entire career between the years 1995 and 2015, approximately 400 cases. The cases contain e.g. tenders, idea proposals, sketches, floor plans, check lists, shopping lists, name lists and photographs of the finished designs (Figure 1). Many of the photographs are taken by professional photographers. There are also movies from some of the arrangements. Even the planning and preparations of the events are to be followed in calendars and notebooks. Furthermore, financial documents such as receipts and wage statements are archived. The archive also contains specially designed utensils such as glasses, plates and trays. Accordingly, the tangible material of the study is extensive.

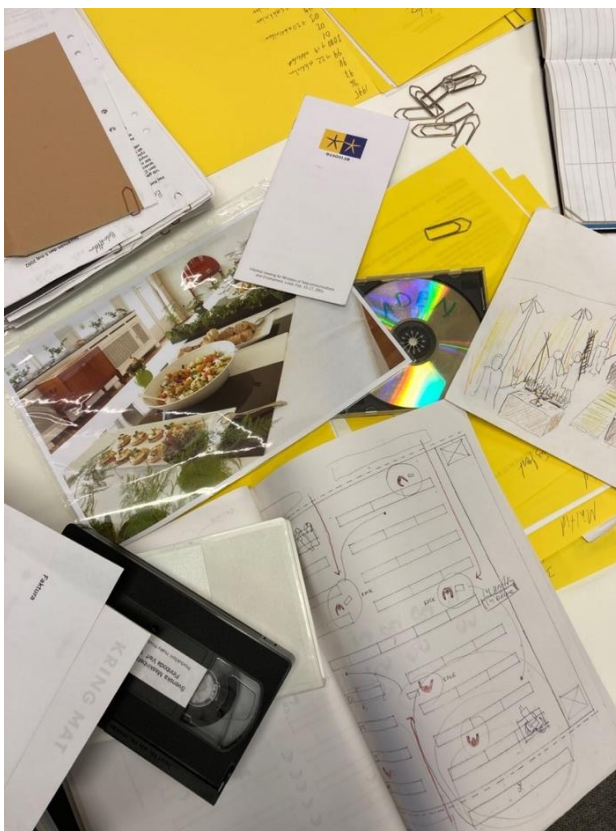


FIGURE 1. Archived material.

In order to illustrate how the process of documentation was carried out, a case has been selected from the archived material: a press breakfast at a trade fair for interior design. Stockholmsmässan, an exhibition facility in Sweden, twice a year hosts the Nordic interior design fair Formex (www.formex.se). This is a major meal event arranged to establish and strengthen relationships with and between the invited guests (see Lugoshi, 2008 and Hanefors & Mossberg, 2003). At the opening of the fair, a press breakfast was arranged where about 250 journalists were invited to have breakfast and information about this fair. Formex put large resources on the press breakfast intending to get media publicity. The meal designer was assigned to arrange this breakfast, by choosing food, table utensils and decorations, and thereby guide the meal experiences of the journalists.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There is a need for methods for intangible documentation in gastronomy. Our result is the development of a method based on memories to be applied to research on gastronomic craftsmanship. Our approach, to view impressive memories as intangible gastronomy, is most likely a new approach to documenting a material of gastronomic crafts. The memories of the craftsman who created and used the material has that way rarely been included in gastronomic documentation.

In our study the meal designer-researcher first prepared the material by systematically sorting the archive (Figure 1). This sorting of the archived cases concretized the content of each case, largely based on tangible aspects. This provided a starting point for the subsequent dialogues and enabled the co-researcher to get a quick overview of the material and familiarize himself with each case. Thus, when the dialogue began a tangible understanding of each case was already established, and the dialogue could focus on developing an understanding of the intangible aspects of the actual case. Including all these activities meant that a more holistic view of the meal could be achieved and documented.

By carrying out the various activities one by one, the two researchers’ views on the archived material could gradually be moved from a substance-oriented perspective to a distinctly symbolic perspective (cf. Simmel, 1910/1993 & Fjellström 2003). This corresponded to a movement from a structural perspective at the beginning of the documentation process to an interpretation-based perspective in the concluding activities. During this process memories were combined with the archived documents and the stories that arose were documented (cf. Korsmeyer & Sutton, 2011; Lindseth, 2007).

Below is an in-depth description of the implementation and the results. Therefore, all activities presented in the following sections are important parts of the result. The working process can be followed through eight activities (c.f. Almevik, 2017): two overviewing activities; four descriptive activities and two dialogical activities (Table 2a, 2b and 2c).

Overviewing activities

The overviewing activities *observation* and *identification* were carried out by asking "questions of what" to the material. These steps meant that the archive file was briefly sorted, given its own identity, and thereby became searchable. The result was a superficial overview of the professional experiences preserved in the archive. For examples of questions and answers see Table 2a.

A characteristic for of the overviewing activities is that they only deal with explicit structures in the material and therefore lack intangible perspectives. From George Simmel’s (1910/1993) and Christina Fjellström’s (2003) point of view, these overviewing activities are limited to a substantial approach to the meal. However, these activities had to be performed in order to clarify the basic structures of the material, which was needed before moving forward with the descriptive activities in the next step. To sum up from our case: The overviewing activities of observation and identification answered questions of which projects were carried out by the designer of meal events. In our case: a press breakfast for the Formex fair on January 18th 2007, archived with text and photographs (Table 2a).

TABLE 2A. Overviewing activities: Observation and identification.

	Activity	Implementation	Case
Overviewing activities "Questions of what?"	Observation	What does the archive file contain?	Text and Photographs
	Identification	What is the name of the project?	Press breakfast, Formex fair 18 January 2007

Descriptive activities

The descriptive activities *registration, inventory, mapping and classification* were carried out by asking "questions of how" to the archive. For examples of questions and answers see Table 2b. All the descriptive activities had in common that they were performed through a focused review on the material. They provided a comprehensive overview of the professional craft practice. This allowed both the structures that had been made aware in the overviewing activities and the memories of the meal designer to be reunited. For example the client, the number of guests, the location as well as tangible aspects such as the form of the food and the decoration of the tables were made visible (see table 2a and table 2b). These descriptive activities were about compiling a pre-understanding of the material (c.f. Ricoeur, 1984; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Wellton, 2017). In this way, the properties of the material were clarified, which was a basis for the following work with the dialoguing activities. The descriptive activities are based on pre-understanding, but are still limited to viewing the meal based on a substance-oriented content (c.f. Mäkelä, 2000). This justifies the further processing that took place in the next step.

As a summary from the case: The descriptive activities registration, inventory, mapping and classification, give answers to how the project was carried out. This was a meal arrangement, at Stockholmsmässan. The theme was "mirage", there were 250 guests, and the meal designer had an overall responsibility for the event. The guests' tables were decorated with high reeds, long twigs, as well as with marble crushers and *Sansevieria trifascata*. The breads had different tastes, and the cakes had unusual taste, color and names. (Table 2b) and (Figures 2 - 4).

TABLE 2B. Descriptive activities, registration, inventory, mapping and classification.

	Activity	Implementation	Case
Descriptive activities Questions of “ how?”	Registration	<p>1. What does the contents of the archive file look like?</p> <p>2. How was the project organized?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education and course activities - Exhibition - Meal arrangement <p>3. How can the responsibility for the meal designer be described?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall responsibility - Sub-responsibility - Subcontractor 	<p>1 printed matter, 2 pages of notes, 1 invocie, 15 photographs and calendar notes.</p> <p>Meal arrangement</p> <p>3. Overall responsibility</p>
	Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How many guests participated? - Who was the client? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 250 guests - CIO for the Formex fair
	Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can the location and environment be described? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stockholm, Stockholm Fair, C-hall - A trade fair environment
	Classification	<p>How can the project be described as a whole, based on its characteristics?</p>	<p>The theme of this fair this year is "mirage". This means that things are not really what they first say to be. Things can be perceived differently, ambiguity, etc. For example, the breakfast bread had different filling, biscuits had unusual flavors, colors and names - but were familiar in shape and size.</p> <p>Guests' tables were decorated with sand and 1 meter high reeds or decorated with 1 meter long twigs from hawthorn trees other tables were filled with marble crushers and bouquets of mother-in-law tongues (<i>Sansevieria trifascata</i>).</p>



FIGURE 2. The decoration of the tables by reeds and *Sansevieria trifasciata*. Photograph; Ragnar Lundgren.



FIGURE 3. Table setting by breakfast bread, biscuits and twigs. Photograph; Ragnar Lundgren.



FIGURE 4. Table decoration with twigs and reeds. Photograph; Ragnar Lundgren.

Dialogical activities

The dialogical activities typologization and characterization were carried out by the co-researcher asking "questions of why" to the meal designer-researcher. The typologizing activity was rather formal with questions and answers, such as "Why was the press breakfast carried out like this?" The characterization was more personal and expressive and made up by narratives. The characterization could be led by open questions such as "Why then?" but also prompts like "Elaborate on that!". The characterizing activity was governed as little as possible by questions and answers, and the most pronounced characterizations were completely independent stories. The purpose of the characterization was to document the symbolic aspects of the meal design (see Figure 2c).

The two dialogical activities are typically not limited to acquiring the already reachable knowledge from the material but are also gradually develops the ability to acquire an even richer knowledge from the material (see Gadamer, 1960/2004; Ricoeur, 1984; Bachtin, 1991). The dialogical activities require an alternation between familiarity and unfamiliarity with the material, and were therefore carried out by the meal designer-researcher and the co-researcher together. This enabled the descriptions that had appeared in the previous activities to be both developed and deepened, so that also e.g. motives, motivations and meanings could be documented. The co-researcher's unfamiliarity with the material created a curiosity for him that stimulated the meal designer-researcher to further develop his understanding of the material, in line with Bengt Molander (1990; 2017). Such a developed understanding could be termed post-understanding (see also how Ricoeur 1984 uses the term "refiguration").

TABLE 2C. Dialogical activities, typologization and characterization.

	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Case</i>
Dialogical activities Questions of “ why?”	Typologization	Why was the press breakfast carried out like this?	To capture guests' interest, curiosity and attention for the Formex Fair's theme "mirage" through a sensuous experience of table setting, decorations and food.
	Characterization	Why then? Elaborate on that!	See the dialogue sections 1-3 below, which gives a developmental description of the project's significant whole.

We found these dialogical activities to be useful in order to document the symbolics of the meal design (cf. L'Orange Fürst, 1995; Fjellström, 2003). In the dialogue, our study finally came to include the whole of Simmel's (1910/1993) definition of the meal as both substance and symbol. Such an approach can be useful for understanding Håkan Jönsson’s (2012; 2013) viewpoint that the meal has acquired an increasingly knowledge-bearing function in society. Moreover, the symbolic aspects are of great importance for the study to be compatible with studies of practice in crafts, where know-how is carried out in action (Eriksson et al., 2020). The characterizing texts have a narrative form and exhibit a gradual in-depth processing of the material. They contain both stories rather bound to the tangible archive material, and a longer intangible stories where the memories of the meal designer have been expressively revived. Below are examples of characterizations.

Dialogical excerpt 1 is a relatively short characterization of what the educational purpose means to one of the documented events:

Meal designer: I do kind of designing here. Maybe it's... There's... Maybe it'll remind you of an exhibition. People can say, "Oh my God, Lars, this is like putting myself in an exhibition." "Yes, but this isn't, it's a meal." "Yes, but it's like an exhibition, what you've done." "Yes, good to hear, I say, but the purpose here is different... -Because here the guests get in and get to grab everything. Become part of everything." For me, this's really important: "The table is set. You are welcome! The room is yours!"

(Dialogical excerpt, 1)

The dialogical excerpt 1 deals with the difference between exposing a meal as an exhibition or teaching about a meal, versus performing the meal as an activity that is actually carried out. Something important that is stressed here is that the guest is treated as equal to the meal designer in this meal, unlike how it would be in exhibitions or in teaching where the designer/teacher would be more authoritarian. In intangible terms, this dialogue excerpt gives a limited insight into the way the meal designer thinks about the importance of the projects, but still gives the reader an idea of how the meal designer would argue for his way of transferring knowledge.

Below in dialogical excerpt 2, there is a characterization of how the work is done when the meal designer deals with holdbacks and opportunities by taking control of them:

Meal designer: So therefore, I always do an ocular inspection. Then I'll go over there and count those tables. And measure them. Because if I just call and ask, they say "Well, these are regular tables". "They're regular standing tables that are found everywhere." And I never trust that. Because I need the exact measure. Exact number. Exact height. That is also something that they take for granted: they do not think there will be any differences. But if I'm going to build something on a standing table like that, then I must order a round table top with exactly this measure.

[The meal designer shows on a table in the room]

So, I'll make sure. I'm doing a visual inspection to find out all the limitations. And holdbacks. And see what kind of opportunities there are.

(Dialogical excerpt, 2)

Thus, dialogical excerpt 2 has a detailed characterizing content, which let us experience what attention means for a meal designer. Next dialogical excerpt 3 is a continued characterization of the possibilities of design that are opened up by being attentive and adaptable:

Meal designer: And for me this is something important I tend to return to. When I'm here: when the meal is completely individual. - It's not to about pointing out what I think is the right thing.

Co-researcher: Yes.

Meal Designer: It... I can do that over here, but down here it is: There the reality is different. It's just that "present" is the best.

Co-researcher: Elaborate on that!

Meal designer: It's actually the case over here, "There's a plan." There's a place. There's material. There are things that are put together. You have a thought, you're the organizer, but the guests are in a "present" state. This is where it happens. It's something of a pseudo-world. It's an enchanted - maybe a funny word- but it's a artificial world. One set up a certain number of parameters to manage any "moment". And then you have to keep standing and looking, "what's going on?" "Does it work?" "Does anyone need anything?" "Has anyone fainted?" Is it: "no, the serving has to wait for a while, no more red wine right now, let's hold on just a little more now". "... Now, let's go inside!".

Because I read the conversation at the table. "No. Hang on a little. Can't you see they're talking, "It's great that they're sitting there." "We may actually hold on here for a little while. It doesn't matter if we wait for 30 more seconds." "We see how they're leaning back: then you enter with the wine bottle." Instead of entering and interfering just while sitting and having such interesting conversations. I can actually hang on! And stand there on the sidelines and wait a little while.

Co-researcher: Because you're part of the dynamics? You don't want to control? You'd control too much if you entered?

Meal designer: Yes, yes!

Co-researcher: You would interfere with what happens by itself?

Meal designer: Yes.

Co-researcher: So the meal is automotive?

Meal Designer: Completely!

Co-researcher: Completely?

Meal Designer: No, not completely It's just an art of its own. It's an own form of art. And it should be directed as its own form of art.

(Dialogical excerpt, 3)

The Dialogical excerpt 3 is a particularly rich characterization, which in intangible terms offers an insider perspective not only to the way the meal designer acts, but also to his way of thinking during the actual action.

To sum up the dialogical activities based on our case, typologization and characterization are about the way the meal designer thinks in action. For example, to engage with the interest and curiosity of the guests and direct their attention towards the theme of the actual case "Mirage", a multisensory

experience was created. In order to succeed, the meal designer needed to be attentive and adaptable "to find out all the limitations. And holdbacks. And see what kind of opportunities there are." It should not be like an exhibition but a meal where guests "get in and get to grab everything. Become part of everything". A driving force for the meal designer is to see the meal as "an art of its own ", and furthermore, the meal designer believes that "it should be directed as its own form of art " (Table 2c).

Summary and implications

The overviewing and descriptive activities in our study provided a documentation of the tangible aspects of meal designing, by George Simmel (1910/1993) and Christina Fjellström (2003) referred to as substantial dimensions of the meal. In the dialogical activities also the intangible aspects of meal designing were documented, i.e. the symbolic dimensions of the meal. Thereby the dialogical activities have a key function in how they can supplement substance-oriented documentation with symbolic perspectives, which is exactly what Christina Fjellström (2003) argued that research needs in order to achieve a holistic perspective on the meal.

Our study shows that dialoguing is a method that illuminates an interplay between continuity and change, such interplay as referred to by Elliot Mishler (1999) and David Sutton (2018) as being distinctive in artistic crafts. By taking advantage of the meal designer's professional craft experience by conducting a critical dialogue about what he sees and what he misses in the archived material, the archive is brought to life and for example motives and driving forces are added to the otherwise lifeless archivists. The result is a material which is available to be read from within the professional's own view of the profession.

The method we developed differs from existing dialogical methods in gastronomic research in how it focuses on the craft's meaning-making, from a humanistic and cultural perspective. This is an important complement to the existing dialogue methods in gastronomy, which mainly has a sensory-science perspective with a more purpose-oriented pragmatic focus on product development and teaching (Herdenstam 2011; Herdenstam et al. 2018; Herdenstam et al., 2020). The method presented demonstrates an approach to archived gastronomic material that could further highlight how and why different tangible objects in museums and collections were part of a meal, what sort of skill was practiced by their users, and how they functioned in a context (cf. Almevik, 2016). The method can also be further developed for applications in an academic environment, to take advantage of stories from the professional experiences of researchers and teaching staff. Many researchers in the gastronomic field have extensive experience from working in the restaurant industry as e.g. chefs and sommeliers alongside their academic competencies (Östergren & Jonsson, 2019). Dialogues could enable researchers to treat these past experiences as a research material from an action-based craft-oriented point of view.

Critical and ethical considerations regarding the method

The autobiographical method in this study enabled the researchers to approach the tangible as well as the intangible professional practice of the designer of meal events. An advantage of dialoguing methods is that the authenticity is strong, and that validity can be directly confirmed by the researchers as they have insight into both the material and the interpretation of it (Wortel & Verweij, 2008). The researcher's participation in the research material can nevertheless be criticized since the autobiographical method is highly subjective. The transparency of the method is thus particularly important to consider, and transparency becomes a question of whether the lines of thought expressed by the dialogue can be followed.

However, interpretable material such as this is made for interpretation by its readers, and every time a third person reads the study it is tested whether the reasoning can be followed. The research quality of a humanistic study such as this is not to be measured on the basis of its ability to demonstrate any general correlations, but is to be regarded on the basis of how good it contributes with interpretive understanding between people (Larsson, 2005).

The two researchers in this study are working in the same research area at the same department, they study postgraduate studies together and are part of a joint research group. There is

therefore a risk that they are guided by bias (Davies, 2012). On the other hand, their common background has created two horizons of meaning that are equal, allowing for particularly rich interpretations (c.f. Gadamer, 1960). By understanding the same research subject, Gastronomy/ Culinary Arts, they are provided with unique conditions for creating meaningful understanding in dialogue with each other, because of a shared ethos (c.f. Schutzberg, 2019; Kvale, 2006).

The academic residence of the researchers also creates a certain distance to the material. The academic tradition of asking critical questions aimed at imbedding the material theoretically is crucial to create the distancing from the material, a distancing which in interplay with acquaintanceship constitutes the basis for a hermeneutic interpretive work. A prerequisite that makes this kind of scientific autobiographical research studies legitimate is that they depend on the academic context to be carried out. For example, with a journalistic or literary approach the same theorizing distance could not have been maintained to the material.

CONCLUSION

Meal research has so far largely lacked methods for intangible documentation work. This study shows the usefulness of combining a structured systematization of the material with the Socratic dialogue as a method for documenting intangible aspects of professional practice, by combining an archived tangible material with intangible memories from the craftsman who established the archive. As the method is based on using the memories of a professional experience instead of the immediate sensory impressions, it also adds a retrospective contribution to the existing dialogical and action-based methods for studying professional craft experience. However, as a partially subjective method there is a risk for bias, and therefore there is a need for continuous critical reflections when such a study is conducted. The dialogical approach can be useful for designers of meal experiences and for educators in the gastronomic field. The usefulness we showed of dialogues for developing activities such as typologization and characterization can also be tested in other contexts. This article is based on an archived material, in other studies another form of tangible material may be the basis for a dialogical study.

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