

CHALMERS

Let's Eat Together

Methods and Tools for Inclusive City Design Practice

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Abstract

This thesis studies how the practice of eating together impacts on liveable city making. In this thesis, the practice of eating together is called *commensality*, which is a collective action that creates shared environments. Through time these environments are turned into recognized meeting places where locals gather. They are called *eatscapes* in this thesis. People who use eatscapes develop urban rituals and collective experiences that later become urban vernaculars in their localities. These eatscapes and urban vernaculars are essential material agents for turning a locality into a liveable city. Thus, this thesis studies the relationships between the practice of commensality, the urban vernacular and liveable city making.

The studies were done through case-based explorations of existing food entrepreneurs in real-life contexts to understand how eatscapes are structured and shaped by commensality or vice versa. Exploring the relationship between the practice of commensality (social) and the built environment (spatial) in a real-life context requires researching *design* in real life. Consequently, the explorative and experience-based methods and tools of *eatscape typology, checklist, catalytic act* and *matrix* were developed in this thesis. These designerly methods and tools are not only based on the specific skills that are traditionally used in the practice of architecture and urban design, but also on experience-based methods that involve interaction with subjects in real life for learning, reflecting and knowing. The results from the explorations show that designers can learn a lot from food entrepreneurs, who have insights on the urban vernacular and the production of eatscapes that have an impact on liveable city making. Furthermore, the concepts of eatscape and commensality are much more than room-shapers for liveable cities; more importantly, they are instruments for building community and making city design more inclusive.

This thesis is not a how-to guide for designing eatscapes or for inclusive city design, but rather a reflection of designers' explorations. This way of approaching *city design*¹ is an opportunity for architects and urban designers to engage and embed social sustainability into the design practice by establishing design ritual. Ultimately, this thesis calls for designers to shift the focus of their design practice from primarily visual-based to a more explorative and experience-based approach.

Keywords: Commensality, Liveable City, Eatscape, Urban Vernacular, Design Ritual, Experience-based, Inclusive city design

¹ *A design practice, which reconciles the intellectual abstraction of urban design and the formalism of architecture with the plural forces of the everyday city. (Chase, Crawford, and Kaliski 2008b) p. 104*