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Gastronauts of Eastern Europe

Experiencing and Digesting Luxury Gastronomy in the Czech Republic

Disertační práce

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedené prameny a literaturu. Současně dávám svolení k tomu, aby tato práce byla zpřístupněna v příslušné knihovně UK a prostřednictvím elektronické databáze vysokoškolských kvalifikačních prací v repozitáři Univerzity Karlovy a používána ke studijním účelům v souladu s autorským právem.

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Summary

This dissertation is based on a research of luxury gastronomy conducted in two luxury restaurants in Prague. The main focus of analysis is on gastronomic experience as an affective commodity and a vehicle of social, economic and political transformation.

The study examines how affect is produced, commodified and how value is generated in luxury "experiential gastronomy." It also analyzes the role of affect in transformation of individuals, the society, consumption practices, entrepreneurial practices, and labor. It shows how experts on gastronomy educate the public on appropriate consumption practices and eating habits. Eating and dining serve as "technologies of the self" (Rose 2004) through which individual and social health and well-being are achieved. Cultivated affect becomes a vehicle of the "purification from socialism" (Eyal 2003) and also plays an important part on the formation of ethical consumer and citizen (Muehlebach 2011).

Abstrakt

Tato disertační práce je založena na výzkumu luxusní gastronomie, který byl uskutečněn ve dvou luxusních restaurací v Praze. Analýza se zaměřuje na gastronomický zážitek jakožto afektivní komoditu a prostředek sociální, ekonomické a politické transformace.

Studie se soustředí na způsoby produkce a komodifikace afektu a vytváření hodnoty v rámci luxusní zážitkové gastronomie. Také analyzuje roli afektu při transformaci jednotlivců, společnosti, spotřebních praktik, podnikatelských praktik, a práce. Ukazuje, jak experti na gastronomii vzdělávají veřejnost ohledně správných spotřebních praktik a stravovacích návyků. Jídlo a jeho konzumace fungují jako „ technologie sebe samého" (Rose 2004), jejíchž prostřednictvím je dosaženo individuálního a sociálního zdraví. Kultivovaný afekt se stává prostředkem „purifikace od socializmu" (Eyal 2003) a také hraje důležitou roli při vytváření etického spotřebitele a občana (Muehlebach 2011).

Keywords

Affect; experience; luxury; gastronomy; hospitality; postsocialism; service work; consumption; value; exchange; discreet economy; expert; expertise; citizenship; calculative tool; habitus; market; economy; politics; embodiment.

However many discoveries one makes, there will always be unknown lands in the world of restaurants.

Horace Raisson[1]

[1] Horace Raisson, *Nouvel almanach des gourmands*, vol 3, p. 21 in Spang (2000: 219).

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 APPETITE FOR TRANSFORMATION

In 1993, the poet Petr Král wrote the following article as an introduction to a series of restaurant reviews *Básnik má hlad* [The Poet is Hungry] for the newspaper *Lidové noviny*:

> Gastronomic reviews to date do not have a great tradition in our newspapers. Nevertheless it is not so minor as it might seem; *hospody* are outright exemplary places of the clash of the old regime with the new, emerging lifestyle. If they are not to be just *kantýny* and money-making machines, if they are to be also an important stage where a fundamental part of private and public life straightforwardly takes place, it is necessary that traditional and new vulgarity which dominate here be subjected to an offensive of opposing values: freedom, resourcefulness, attention to people and things. Ostensibly extravagant qualities like epicureanism, elegance, a sense of poetry can play important roles here. Sometimes it is enough that they create awareness of some old, but fundamental principle.
>
> The most important thing that guides our small chronicle, which we will present weekly, consists in the indivisibility of *hospodský* experiences. As culinary art is essentially the reciprocal union of tastes, the art of running a *hospoda* consists in the ability to create a harmonious whole, where the taste of food and drinks complement the behavior and "bearing" of the servers, atmosphere and furnishing of the hall and the space itself. A restaurant - the same as a poem for Baudelaire - is a space where mutually corresponding "sounds, colors and scents" join into a complete symphony, giving a unique taste to our very existence.
>
> The worst consequence of the communist regime is that they taught those over whom they reigned to disdain ourselves. The habit of neglecting ourselves in regards to food and to the "quality of experiences" overall, passively suffering what is offered and expecting nothing from it is the direct result of the humiliation to which the old regime grew accustomed, and really the seed of death, which it sowed in us. The attempt to once again make *hospody* into places of excitement and fulfilled desires is also the attempt to bring back lost human dignity.[2]

Weil (forthcoming) explains that Král began this gastronomic endeavor after his return from an exile in France. He introduced the literary genre of restaurant review to Czech readers but his main ambition was not so much to inform readers by means of traditional food criticism but rather to help "bring back lost human dignity" to Czech people and society by inciting and cultivating their tastes, desires, and expectations for experiences that had been suppressed by the Communist regime. Restoration of gastronomic traditions and cultivation of

[2] Petr Král in Weil (forthcoming), translation by Weil.

desires and tastes became, in Král's writing, key for "eradicating the remains of socialism." (Weil forthcoming)

Král's statement that *hospody* were "places of the clash of the old regime with the new" represents a more general discourse on postsocialist gastronomy, hospitality and restaurant industry (Hajdáková 2013a). The hospitality industry under socialism became an epitome of ineffectiveness of planned state economy and flawed morality of opportunist individuals.[3] After 1989, hospitality industry and the host-patron relationship became "good to think with" as they provided a frame for negotiating the economic transformation, new inequalities, changes in consumption and production of services, the re-imagination of tradition, traditional value of *pohostinnost* [hospitality] and its role within *pohostinství* [hospitality industry], and the place of the Czech Republic in the newly open world (Hajdáková 2013a: 75–79). Just like Král's reviews, general discourse on hospitality and gastronomy in the 1990's was predominantly focused on the level of service rather than on food and cuisine. The negative influence of socialism was in imposing "unnatural" control and standards – in the name of equality – on the society, the market and relationships. In the sphere of hospitality, it had created relationships defined by the imperative *já pán—ty pán* [me boss—you boss], instead of the imperative *můj host—můj pán* [my guest—my boss] and thus "destroyed natural evaluation and perception of services."[4] (in Hajdáková 2013a; see also Holy 1996: 149–163.) Socialist "degeneration" also destroyed culinary arts and traditions which had been established in previous eras, mainly under the First Czechoslovak Republic. Gastronomy and hospitality of this era have been portrayed with a hint of nostalgia and regarded as of European, even "world-class caliber."[5]

As postrevolutionary Czechoslovakia opened up to a larger world, individual and social well-being – as objects of desire – were confronted with new food products, influences, and new food settings leading to both excitement as well as suspicion and anxiety and the need to redefine consumer moralities. (Caldwell 2009: 104) The necessity to pay attention to how food, gastronomy, hospitality, and food settings affected one's body as well as public morality mapped onto discourses of transformation. In this study I invite readers to see hospitality and gastronomy as tropes of postsocialist transformation of Czech society through which moralities of the past and present are negotiated. More than twenty years after the Velvet Revolution, the Czech Republic is postsocialist in the sense that the socialist past is

[3] See Hajdáková (2013a: 75). The condition of hospitality industry in late socialism is well portrayed in the 1980 film *Vrchní, prchni!* [*Waiter, Scarper!*].
[4] Brodilová and Křížková (2009: 8–9), translated by the author.
[5] Ballík (2007: 6).

seen as still having an influence on the present (Hanser 2008: 14). In the case of hospitality industry and culinary arts, there is significant consensus among professionals as well as the general public that this influence is profoundly negative. Socialism still serves as a point of reference which shows "abnormality" of socialism as opposed to what should be "normal" (Fehérváry 2002). The desired transformation should take the form of restoration rather than revolution (Weil, forthcoming) and therefore, tradition needs to be rediscovered and, as I will argue later on, the society needs to be "purified from socialism," (Eyal 2003; Vargha 2010).

"One would just grab a sausage with bread, fill their stomach quickly and go back to a protest or a meeting."

In 2013, I was contacted by a journalist from the weekly magazine *Reflex* to answer a few questions regarding the "current obsession with food." The final published article started with the following introduction:

> There used to be times when food did not play any kind of key role in our lives: cooking used to be a bore, something like cleaning, that better be avoided and food itself was considered a necessity that one does not think about too much. … People used to go to pubs, with a good atmosphere, a nice waitress, or a good bartender. When these were later replaced by places with good beer or interesting rum, things still seemed to be on the right track. Today, people make decisions based on where the food is good – and the idea of patronage is disappearing as well because of the need to constantly look for new places offering new experiences.[6]

"Then something changed,"[7] the article continues and claims that topics of conversations at dinner parties have shifted from politics to food because a well-fed person has no interest in arguing. "The problem is," says Varyš, "that whereas light drinking loosens the tongue and the atmosphere, food clouds it. With a person whose stomach is full you only talk about food."[8] Later on in the article, he cites the philosopher Stanislav Komárek who interprets the current interest in food and other private pleasures as a sign of decadence. "Who was interested in food during the revolution in 1989/1990? One would just grab a sausage with bread, fill their stomach quickly and go back to a protest or a meeting."[9] While Král appealed to restoration of lost human dignity through the cultivation of taste and delight,

[6] Varyš (2013: 32-33).
[7] Varyš (2013: 34).
[8] Varyš (2013: 34).
[9] Komárek in Varyš (2013: 35).

Varyš expresses a concern that overindulgence in pleasures might be a sign of decadence. This illustrates the importance of negotiating the right level of indulgence in private passions and public life and examining the role of pleasure and desire in politics, economy and transformation.

In her study of the transformation of Chinese attitudes to food and sex, Farquhar (2002) examines the connection between individual appetites, desires, bodies, and political changes and shows how politics and history are embodied. She notices the connection between medicine and the cultivation of enjoyment and the way it affects bodily experience. "Certainly, appetites are real experiences of actual bodies. But we become aware of desire only as it wraps itself around things (particular foods or bodily activities, objects we wish to hold, remembered or imagined situations); …" (Farquhar 2002: 2) and these objects of desire are grounded in history and politics. Experience, she explains, is mobilized by discourse and power; through embodied experience, the body is experienced as if it were "made to order," made to correspond with what it desires. Therefore, if the body and its desires are cultivated enough, the body has the power to feel well and satisfied. (Farquhar 2002: 76-77) Eating, as a "technology of the self," is driven by desires and appetites that may lead to the experience of "feeling well" provided that discourses and bodies are made compatible. Farquhar argues that discriminations and desires are political: for example, "the contemporary middle-class Chinese body rejects the politics of the egalitarian Maoist past. This rejection itself is politics, but it is one that can often be forgotten in technical elaborations of specialized knowledge and connoisseurship." (Farquhar 2002: 55)

In this study, I look at gastronomic experience in the context of politics and transformation and show how desires and affects, as "technologies of the self," work as embodiments of politics and economy. The sphere of luxury hospitality provides a model for illustrating how eating, experiencing, and digesting are dominated by political, economic, and moral discourses of transformation, but also how, through the embodiment of politics and economy, these discourses are further reproduced. The affect and emotions that are generated in people through luxury gastronomy are not only products and commodities that are produced by "experiential gastronomy," but are also embodiments of discourses of transformation.

In her study of the origins of the restaurant, which was first a restorative broth, a bouillon, before it transitioned into business, Spang (2000) also discovers a connection between gastronomy, social transformation and individual well-being:

> Well before historians had traced the restaurant, as an institution, to the Revolution, cooks and eaters had treated *restaurant*, in its bouillon form, as a symbol of culinary upheaval. Grandiose as it may sound, the restaurant was inscribed – right from its beginnings in a tightly sealed soup kettle – in debates about modernity and historical change. (Spang 2000: 42)

Spang argues that the invention of the restaurant was a result of the emergence of the desire of the eighteenth-century Parisian urbanites and intellectuals to satisfy their individual needs for restoration through food. This did not only involve eating specific meals, but also eating them at specific times and paying a specific price, which was not possible in traditional food settings. She shows that restaurants did not originate as a result of the French Revolution which allegedly put court cooks out of work and thus forced them to open restaurants. She shows that restaurants first appeared before the Revolution concomitantly with the advances in medical science which started paying more attention to the individual.

> If the proliferation of public tables placed restaurants within a set of newly expanded and overtly political contexts, their function was also highlighted by revolutionary uses of medical rhetoric uses that often deployed that language of distinction and individuality in novel and confrontational ways… In dozens of polemical tracts on the condition of the body politic, the discourse of health and well-being acquired a pointed national significance. (Spang 2000: 93)

Restaurants became places that were neither public nor private, in the sense that they satisfied individual needs and desires but also encouraged revolutionary imagination and discussion of "French national character."

Experience of taste is not individual. Parkhurst Ferguson (2004: 16) argues that pleasures represent a "privileged setting for the formation of social identity." Through pleasures and constraints, says Parkhurst Ferguson, we construct ourselves and our connection to the world. Eating is individual and corporeal, but through aesthetization, intellectualization, words, technology, marketing tools, etc., it becomes a part of the public order and in that sense, cuisine translates the natural and corporeal into social. (Parkhurst Ferguson 2004: 8–23) I want to look at *gastronomický zážitek* [gastronomic experience] in its movement between individual and social, as embodiment of politics and economy, and an affective commodity.

In this study, I show how cultivation of affect and desire becomes not only a "technology of the self" and a way of improving oneself and one's well-being, but also a prerequisite for the transformation of society, "purification from socialism," (Eyal 2003) and

a way of becoming an ethical consumer and citizen. In the first chapter, I offer a theoretical discussion of experience through the notion of affect and suggest the connection between individual experience and politics. In the second chapter, I look at three contemporary experts on gastronomy who educate the public on appropriate consumption habits and encourage people to cultivate their desires and affectability not only for the sake of their own well-being but also for the sake of culture and society. The third and the fourth chapters are based on my fieldwork in two luxury restaurants, Verdi and Gusto. I use the case of Verdi to show how luxury is created through discreet work and discreet economy. In the case of Gusto, I focus on the role of affect in the production and consumption of gastronomic experience. The fifth chapter focuses on the analysis of value production within experiential gastronomy. In this chapter, I introduce the *quantum moment* to analyze the workings of value of affect. In the sixth chapter, I argue that affect serves as a calculative tool and through affect, not only politics, but also economy, become embodied and I show the role of affect in creating a moral consumer and an ethical citizen.

1.2 FIELDS AND METHODS

My first research of restaurant environment was in 2008 when I worked as a hostess in Restaurant X, a luxury restaurant in Prague, for the period of five months and subsequently wrote my Master's thesis *The Social Making of the Illusion of Hospitality*. The fieldwork influenced my further research in two important ways: First, I realized that postsocialist hospitality industry in general and Czech hospitality industry in particular, offered an exciting, rich, yet understudied research area. In this my study contributed with only a very limited insight therefore I decided to continue pursuing my research further in my doctoral studies. The most important outcome of this research was the finding that luxury hospitality was defined by *discreet economy*, a combination of gift or symbolic exchange and economic exchange. I began to uncover the embeddedness of the market in culture, social relations, and morality. In Restaurant X, hospitality was performed through exchanges in which economic interests, calculation, and excessive labor were discreetly hidden behind disinterest, gift giving, and display of emotions. This moral economy was reproduced beyond the space and time of the restaurant by waiters who, so to speak, did unto other waiters as they would have wanted their guests to do unto them. Discreet economy, I argued, was a vehicle for the market

and postsocialist transformation.[10] The findings serve as a basis for the present study. Second, as my first fieldwork experience, it taught me about my own limitations as an anthropologist as well as about the limitations of ethnography itself.[11] I discovered the disadvantages of being both a researcher and a worker when I realized I was unable to focus on either one fully, and I learned about the importance of full disclosure of my interests right upon my entry. Last but not least, I realized that it was not enough to share work space and work time with my informants but that I also needed to meet them outside of the restaurant. These two realizations informed my present study and the strategies and methods I used to pursue my research.

I started fieldwork in June 2011 and finished in September 2012. My first field site was Verdi, a relatively newly opened restaurant owned by two critically acclaimed Czech chefs, Robert and Boris; and the second field site was one of the best and most critically acclaimed restaurants in the country, Gusto.

1.2.1 VERDI

Verdi was located in Hotel Palace, in the center of Prague. It was an elegant restaurant that could host up to seventy guests although restaurant attendance would reach its full capacity only on special events. The clientele included both foreigners and locals, some of whom where regular guests.

Both owners were chefs in their late thirties, who owned and managed several other restaurants and had other business activities too. Robert was also a TV personality and appeared as a judge in a cooking reality TV show. At the end of my fieldwork, he remained the sole owner of the restaurant. Boris took charge over another luxury restaurant. Verdi opened only a year and half before I started my fieldwork there and thus suffered from the disadvantages of an unestablished venue. It had high rankings in various traditional and internet-based reviews and was praised for both service and its food, which was mostly based on traditional cuisine and local and seasonal ingredients. The restaurant participated in all kinds of food festivals and food events and gradually attracted more clientele. However, throughout my fieldwork, it struggled with inconsistent levels of popularity and attendance.

As a new restaurant, it was not attractive to many experienced service industry professionals and therefore, the fluctuation of workers was relatively high. The restaurant also cooperated with a vocational school and would accept some of their more accomplished and

[10] Hajdáková (2013a).
[11] See Hajdáková, Iveta (2013b) .

ambitious students as apprentices paying them very little but offering a valuable work experience. Most of the apprentices were between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. Other service workers were in their early twenties and cooks in their thirties.

I found out about Verdi through a friend who recommended it as a good potential field site. She put me in touch with Chef Boris and soon after our initial contact I met with the manager Peter. Peter was very welcoming and shared a lot of information with me regarding the restaurant's operation, clientele, and the events they organized. The staff were welcoming and curious about my research, which created a space for long and engaged conversations, socializing outside of the restaurant, sharing of knowledge, emotions and observations, and long-term contact.

I worked mostly with servers with whom I shared workspace but had a lot of opportunities to interact with cooks as well. I would help servers with anything they needed – serving, cleaning, preparation, washing the dishes and so on, but I reserved the right not to work if I needed to take notes. I would spend entire shifts in Verdi on some days; on other days, I would spend only a few hours there. Sometimes, when I passed by Verdi, I stopped by to see my research partners and just talk. These conversations were often as informing as proper participant observation and they helped build my relationship with workers. With some of them, I developed relationships based on genuine curiosity and interest in each other's work. Some would even recommend guests for interviews if they thought the guests were open enough. Manager Horst, for example, once asked two guests for an interview on my behalf.

The major problem that I had not anticipated was the inconsistency in the restaurant's attendance and the fluctuation of workers. I could hardly observe interactions between workers and guests on "a typical busy night" or "a typical slow day" and for a while considered changing my field site. Despite my initial interest being mostly in work and worker-guest interactions and the making of luxury, I soon found out that with all the apprentices around me, I could study the process of "learning how to serve" and "learning luxury." Since luxury restaurant is usually not the place to start a career with no previous experience or education, I have never observed these processes of learning in other, more established luxury settings.. I consider myself incredibly lucky for meeting one of my most cooperative informants, or better, research partners, Felix, and for being able to watch his career path from an unsuccessful student at a vocational school to a professional waiter and sommelier enthusiastic about his work. A year after I finished my fieldwork at Verdi, he was excited to meet me and tell me how successful he was, how much he was earning, and even

gave me the latest issue of a review of Czech restaurants where he was praised for "almost a watchmaker's precision" in wine pairing.

Although I later decided to focus my research more on gastronomic experience rather than on the organizational aspect of the restaurant, the observations I made at Verdi illustrate how gastronomic experience and luxury were created through discreet economy and affective work. In this work I show how workers learned to manage their emotions in order to be able to produce a proper state of mind in customers (Hochschild 1983: 7).

1.2.2 GUSTO

Gusto was a small restaurant that could serve less than fifty people at a time even though there would be about ten cooks, six servers and a bartender present during every shift. The restaurant only opened for dinner and usually offered two tasting menus – a short one of about six courses, and a long one of about twelve courses. Guests were encouraged to allocate enough time to properly enjoy their dining experience as their meals were accompanied with amuse-bouches, explanations, and wine pairing. This often resulted in a three to four-hour dining experience, which continued as they departed with a sweet gift.

I first contacted Gusto's PR department in spring 2012 but it was not until June that I was able to meet with Chef Oliver to discuss my research. Even then, he said it would be better if I started my research once the restaurant reopened in July after a summer break. In the end, I was given only two months to do my participant observation in Gusto's kitchen and therefore decided to spend as much time there as possible. I would spend entire shifts in Gusto's kitchen, standing for as long as sixteen hours in one of two spots designated for my observations. Being one of the best restaurants in the country, Gusto got a lot of attention but Chef Oliver was always willing to share his work with anyone who was curious. He was happy that I was willing to spend more than just a few hours in the restaurant because he believed that no one would grasp the workings of the kitchen in one day, not to speak in a few hours, as some journalists had done before me.

Chef Oliver introduced me to the staff and after my initial introduction; other members of the staff would introduce me to everyone else. This friendly atmosphere where everyone knew everyone else was an important aspect of Gusto's philosophy and Chef Oliver's idea of how a restaurant should be run. I was welcomed as part of a community of people professionally interested in food and therefore was invited to taste everything, go out with cooks after work, eat *personálka* (meal prepared for the staff and eaten together in the dining area of the restaurant), ask as many question as I wanted, and even to have dinner there with

my boyfriend. However, I was not a fully participating member of the kitchen staff not only because I was not a cook but also because I was a woman in what was entirely a men's domain. The only other women were two elderly dishwashers from Ukraine and the Pastry Chef Lenka. However, Lenka was about to leave Gusto due to diabetes and celiac disease she had developed which made it impossible for her to remain at the position. On my first day, Lenka immediately took me to her part of the kitchen and showed me what she was working on. Similarly, dishwasher Irena took care of me, brought me cakes, coffee and told me stories about her life. Cooks were more reserved and even though many of them gladly participated in my research and interviews, I felt like I did not learn much about their private lives. Most workers were in their early to mid-twenties so not only did I not belong in the kitchen because of my lack of professional knowledge, education, experience, and my gender, but also because of my age.

In this study, I am not offering complex ethnographies or analyses of restaurant environment although it was my initial intent. I do not think that my fieldwork in Verdi and Gusto offered me insights into a typical luxury restaurant, such as Restaurant X did. Therefore, this study is not a sociological description of an organization, such as Fine's (1996) work on the culture of restaurant work. After critical evaluation of the data gathered from participant observation and interviews, I decided to focus on the production and consumption of gastronomic experience within luxury settings, which allowed me to build on my previous research of Restaurant X; on my background in economic anthropology and gift theory; on my newly developed interest in expertise and symmetrical and post-human approaches, and in food studies. I believe that my focus on experience and affect also allows me to create a genealogical perspective that captures historical transformations and postsocialist developments in the Czech Republic.

Besides participant observation and formal and informal interviews, I also draw on other data, such as interviews with experts that have appeared in the media, interviews with journalists and experts that I conducted, restaurant reviews, and other sources and observations. Corresponding to this eclectic methodology is the genre of my ethnographic writing, namely in chapters four and five where I give accounts of the two restaurants. These can neither serve the purpose of comparison, nor of ethnographic description of the complexity of restaurant culture. What I wish to illustrate, however, is the role of affect in its diverse, multi-layered forms and transformations.

Unlike in the case of my first research of Restaurant X, I did not encounter any problems with any of the participants. I believe that this was thanks to my decision to

carefully formulate and completely disclose my research interests, which was something I had not done back in 2008 thinking that it might raise suspicion. Perhaps my previous experience and age helped as well but most importantly, this time I met with curious and open research partners who were willing to participate in my endeavor.

Whenever I was asked questions about my research, I answered them openly and was always ready to reciprocate the gift of cooperation in any way I could. This also proved more productive and pleasant than my decision to reciprocate the opportunity to conduct research with unpaid labor as I did in the case of Restaurant X where I eventually ended up in a subordinate and suspicious position.

My research partners and I agreed on anonymization of research data. I changed the name of every person as well as the names of the restaurants mentioned in the study. For the purposes of anonymization, I do not include bibliographical sources and other information which could help identify the restaurants and research participants. I am aware that a knowledgeable reader might easily be able to identify them nevertheless.

2 "*Homo experiens*"

Food studies represent an exciting, diverse interdisciplinary scientific field. Within anthropology, food and eating practices have had a prominent position, especially in the structuralist tradition (Lévi-Strauss 1965, 1969; Douglas 1966, 1972, 1974), which has inspired further research into social inequalities manifested in the attitudes toward different foods and eating practices (mainly Bourdieu 1984; Goody 1982). Other important traditions in the area of food studies include research of the relationship between food and identity (Appadurai 1988; Mennel 1985; Parkhurst Ferguson 2004; Spang 2000; Czech studies include for example Pokorná 2009); studies in material culture (Miller 1998; Roseberry 1996; Ries 2009); and everyday life (Sutton 2001; de Certeau 1998). Currently, food is becoming a research focus within Science and Technology Studies (STS) (Mann 2011; Moll 2008, 2010).

Studies of postsocialism have also been focusing on food, especially in the context of shortage, transforming consumer practices, home economies, globalization, etc. (e.g. Caldwell 2004, 2009; Ries 2009; Farquhar 2002).

As an object of exchange, food has also been studied within economic anthropology (especially Munn 1986). Food is embedded in social relations and heterogeneous networks, within which it "travels" across various "regimes of value" (Appadurai 1986; Keane 2001), i.e. specific cultural contexts within which value is produced through exchanges. I have studied the production of value within the regime of work, inequalities, postsocialist transformation and discreet economy (Hajdáková 2013a). The relationship between food and value may also be studied in other regimes, e.g. in the regime of aesthetics and materiality of food (Roosth 2013; Dolphijn 2004), memory and tradition (Sutton 2001; Appadurai 1988), production of authenticity (Robinson a Clifford 2012; Zukin 2008), senses (Sutton 2010), or expertise (Roosth 2013).

One of the possible analytical keys for studying gastronomic experience is the concept of affect (Clough 2007), which may be broadly defined as "impersonal intensities," which belong neither to subject or object nor to the space between them (Anderson 2010: 161). These intensities play an important role in the current form of capitalism. Affective aspect of food has been analyzed in Dolphijn's (2004) philosophical work, and the relationship between food, affect and political transformation was studied by (Farquhar 2002; 2006). Muehlebach (2011; 2012) points out the role of affect in the formation of belonging and citizenship. Affect and the intimacy it creates define what Muehlebach calls the "moral neoliberal," whose

belonging takes the form of "ethical citizenship," through which "citizens imagine themselves as bound together by moral and affective rather than social and political ties, and primarily through duties rather than rights." (Muehlebach 2011: 43) Similarly, Thrift (2010) looks at the role of affect in the creation of "technologies of public intimacy" (Thrift 2010: 290), which help create "generally *digestible* environments, i.e. spaces "with the capacity to alert us to that which was previously unable to be sensed." (Thrift 2010: 295).

This study offers an ethnography of gastronomic experience. It is based on my long-term research of luxury, gastronomy, fine dining and of what is called *zážitková gastronomie* [experiential gastronomy][12] in the Czech Republic. I will look at gastronomic experience as a result of multiple elements, discourses, actions, materialities, subjects, objects, bodies, senses, knowledge, which are mobilized together into an event that affects agents in various ways, ideally creating a memorable experience in consumers. An experience is not limited to a series of causes and effects located in particular space and time but it is rather an affective process of *zažívání*, which in Czech means both experiencing and digesting, and for which I shall use the term *digesperiencing*.

> žíti *žiji* 1°: uzdraviti se, zotaviti se z nemoci, vyhojiti se. Trvá v mor. *ožit* okřáti (a spis. *ožíti* vzkřísiti se, sic. *ožit), požit* zotaviti se. Tomu odpovídá lit. *gyjú gijaü gýti* zotaviti se, *iš-gýti* — mor. *vyžit* okřáti, *atgýti* = *ožitf nugýti* vyhojiti se. Některé přípony činí toto *žíti* přechodným a to ve smyslu nabýti něčeho, dostati něco, normálně ve smyslu zesílení tělesného i majetkového, zmohutnění, nasycení, prospěchu, tedy všestranného „zotavení" tvora dříve slabého, chorého a chudobného. Tak i lit. *i-gýti* získati si (majetek, slávu, rozum, přízeň), dostati (zdravou barvu) apod. Č. *užíti* něčeho = ve svůj prospěch vzíti, přibrati, *požíti* sníst, vypíti (ale i *p.* šňupavého tabáku, sic. *užil si* = šňupl si), sic. *požívat* = míti požitek (jakýkoli); k *požíti* přitvořeno *sžíti* Jg t/v, dále *zažíti* dobře stráviti, mor. *vyžit* vy tráviti *(husešče nevyžila), zálivný.*
>
> Machek V. (1968) *Etymologický slovník jazyka českého*

The word *zážitek* is related to the verb *zažíti*, which means to digest well but also to spend (time) well, and shares the root with the verb *žíti*, to recuperate, revitalize, gain in the physical and material sense, and to enjoy.[13]

Abrahams (1986, 54-56) notes that experience has become a part of personal economy and identity and functions as a resource which grants authority, truth and authenticity. According to Williams (1983, 126), since the 18th century, the word *experience* has been used in two different senses: "as (i) knowledge gathered from past events, whether by conscious

[12] I assume that the concept of "experiential gastronomy" is not known, or at least, not popular in the English-sepaking world, to the extent it is popular in the Czech Republic.
[13] Machek (1968).

observation or by consideration and reflection; and (ii) a particular kind of consciousness, which can in some contexts be distinguished from 'reason' or 'knowledge'." The first sense of the word refers to progress based on past lessons and also to experiment. The second sense relates to active awareness in the present during which the whole being and consciousness is activated, such as in the case of aesthetic or religious experience (Williams 1983, 127). The letter, despite being personal, may be offered to be shared "not only as truths, but as the most authentic kind of truths" (Williams 1983, 128). There is a discrepancy between the two senses of the word in regards to the role of consideration, reflection and analysis which are involved in experience in the first sense but are excluded from experience in the second sense, which is defined by immediacy and authenticity (Williams 1983, 128).

Corresponding to the discrepancy to some extent is the difference between the notion of authentic experience and the notion of habit and routine. Handler and Saxton (1988: 249-250) draw attention to the difference between authentic and inauthentic existence as developed by Heidegger. According to Heidegger authentic existence is concerned in all its possibilities and dealings with the whole being, as opposed to inauthentic existence which confines instrumentally to the world of social conventions and habituation and is not linked to the whole of one's being. This further corresponds to the understanding of freedom in the works of European existentialism and phenomenology that oppose freedom to habit. American pragmatism, on the other hand, sees habit as a necessary condition of thought, education and freedom (Valverde, 1998: 35-42).

Habit and experience come together in acts of consumption. Appadurai (1996) argues that even though many consumption practices are aimed at freeing the consumer from habit, every act of consumption is dependent on techniques of the body (Mauss 1973), therefore to a certain repetition, habitualization and inertia. Consumption becomes meaningful not only because of symbolic context, but also because of materiality and temporality – it has to take place in the right space and time, in the presence of the right people and things and it has to be performed through the right techniques of the body (Appadurai 1996, 75-76). In this sense, consumption in modern society becomes a form of work and even civilizing work (Appadurai 1996: 81; Elias [1939] 2000).

Through consumption practices one desires to craft their lives. Rose (1999: 103) says we "are obliged to make our lives meaningful by selecting our personal lifestyle from those offered to us in advertising, soap operas, and films, to make sense of our existence by exercising out freedom to choose in a market in which one simultaneously purchases products and service, and assembles, manages, and markets oneself." Thus, consumption offers the

arena for practicing freedom to choose one's identity and lifestyle and therefore, it is endowed with the power to grant authenticity to an individual, their life, and lifestyle. However, as Handler and Saxton (1988) show in the case of historical reenactments, authenticity is a problematic value that is difficult to produce and maintain. Similarly, Zukin (2008) points out that despite its roots going back to the era between Shakespear and Roussau, authenticity is a concept of consumer society (Zukin 2008: 728) and a tool for attributing value in seemingly objective terms. Authenticity in that sense serves as a representation, an attribute, and value, rather than being an immediate experience (Zukin 2008: 728).

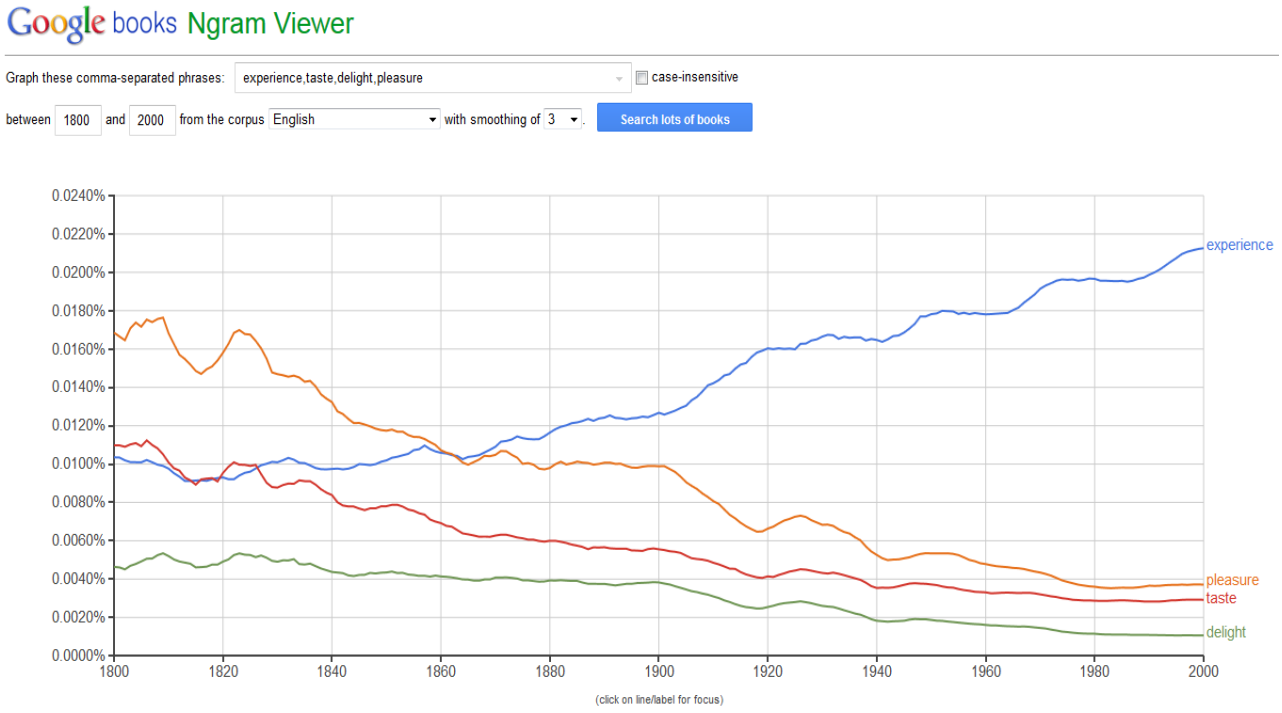
In studies of tourism, authenticity is understood as a tool for production and appropriation of values but rather than focusing and criticizing the illusion of authenticity, attention is directed at consumers and their experience (Robinson and Clifford 2012: 573-574). Miller and Rose (2008: 114 – 115) notice an ambivalence in efforts to understand the meaning of consumption. On one hand, consumption enables self-realization, on the other hand, it is oriented on profit and therefore embedded in relationships of power and inequality and thus appears as false. Robinson and Clifford remind us that there are various ways of producing authenticity in tourism but what matters is the outcome of the process, a satisfying experience in which authenticity plays a role in both essentialist (practical, referential) and existentialist (individual perception and interpretation) sense (Robinson and Clifford 2012: 579).

To draw upon this problematization and criticism of authenticity or inauthenticity of consumption, I follow Rose and suggest a symmetrical approach that allows for the study of experience while avoiding the problem of authenticity. This approach does not reduce gastronomic experience to a mere illusion created by consumer society which produces inauthenticity rather than authenticity or appropriates authenticity as a value, but instead shows how gastronomic experience is produced through the interplay of multiple value-producing agents and events. Miller and Rose (2008: 116) suggest looking at consumption as a group of new "productive" techniques that "make possible new kinds of relations that human beings can have with themselves and others through the medium of goods." We may understand gastronomic experience as *factish*, to borrow the term from Latour (1999 in Danholt 2012). As Danholt explains, the term *factish* captures the nature of an object as both constructed and constructing. In this ontology, Danholt explains, "'the real' and 'the constructed' are not opposites, but interwoven" in the sense that "facts and technology need allies, networks, centers of calculations and infrastructures in order to *become* facts; it means that without anything and anyone to transport, translate and employ them, they would never

acquire their status as facts." (*ibid.*: 3) In that sense Latour's "the more constructed – the more real" (Latour in Danholt, 2012: 3) can be applied to gastronomic experience. Moreover, the term also allows for capturing experience as it "emerges," rather than as something that is "caused."[14]

Looking at gastronomic experience as an example of *factish* which needs to be constructed in order to be real allows for a broader understanding of experience and authenticity which goes beyond the subject and her mind and body and allows for tracing of the interplay of multiple processes and heterogeneous agents that interact with and affect the subject.

Fig. 1



Google Ngram Viewer shows an increase in the frequency of the use of the word "experience," compared to, for example, the decline in the frequency of the word "taste," "delight," and "pleasure."

[14] Interestingly, Thrift (1999: 34) notices that thinking in terms of complexity "might be seen as one of the harbingers of something more, the emergence of a structure of feeling in Euro-American societies which frames the world as complex, irreducible, anti-closural and in doing so, is producing a much greater sense of openness and possibility about the future." He warns that his may also be a continuation of imperialism through time as opposed to previous forms of imperialism through space. (Thrift 1999: 60)

2.1 AFFECT AND EXPERIENCE

Thrift (2010: 290) argues that some capitalist commodities have to demonstrate "allure", which generates "sensory and emotional gratification" (Thrift 2010: 292), and public intimacy, which encourages the display of emotions and passions once regarded as private (Thrift 2010: 294). In the case of service industry, this may also be achieved by immaterial labor (Hardt 1999), which produces "feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion—even a sense of connectedness" (Hardt 1999: 96).

In my understanding of affect, I draw on Thrift (2004: 60) who argues that affect is a form of thinking. Inspired by Spinoza and Deleuze, Thrift invites us to see the subject as connected to the environment and other subjects. The subject is not an individual whole but "an infinite number of capacities to affect and be affected" (DeLanda 2002: 62 in Thrift 2004: 62.) Affect is not a reaction but an action that generates events. Affects are "the nonhuman becomings of man" (Deleuze and Guattari according to Thrift 2004: 63). A thing is not defined by its form, substance, matter, etc., but instead by its longitude, latitude, or intensity; it is openness and its autonomy is the autonomy to affect and be affected. Thrift further explains that affect is related to "one's sense of aliveness," i.e. "continuous nonconsious self-perception (unconscious self-reflection or self-referentiality)." (Thrift 2004, 63.)

Latour (2004, 206) suggests that we think of the body as an "interface that becomes more and more describable as it learns to be more and more affected by more and more elements. The body is thus not a provisional residence of something superior – an immortal soul, the universal or thought – but what leaves a dynamic trajectory by which we learn to register and become sensitive to what the world is made of." The body, for Latour, is not a substance, but an articulation of differences and a potentiality for learning to be affected.

As Thrift (2004), Dawney (2013), Anderson (2012), Muehlebach (2012) have shown, affect is not private in the sense that it is a space that is open for the workings of politics, power, biopower or "microbiopolitics," to use Thrift's (2004: 58) term. As Anderson (2012: 33) points out, since value can be generated from all aspects of life, it is no longer necessary to organize life into structures and productive processes and it can be left open to the unanticipated, to change and 'freedom.' This is possible because under the conditions of contemporary liberalism and capitalism, subjects are governed precisely through their freedom (Rose 2004: 62). Following Bennet, Rose (2004: 73) argues that in the spaces of

well-regulated liberty, such as museums, department stores, and – I would add – restaurants, individuals are

> scrutinized by one another, providing the spatial and visual means for self-education. In all these topographical technologies of civilization, persons were to be governed not through imposing duties, but by throwing a web of visibilities, of public codes and private embarrassments over personal conduct: we might term this g*overnment through the calculated administration of shame*. Shame here was to entail an anxiety over the exterior deportment of the self, linked to an injunction to care for oneself in the name of the public manifestation of moral character.

In this study, I will look at the politics behind the consumption and production of gastronomic experience through affect and affectability of one's embodied self. I will look at the moralities of affect and the process of *digesperiencing* and I will show how "government through the calculated administration of shame" produces value in a luxury culinary settings.

3 'One Who Cannot Eat Well, Cannot be Happy:' the Experts' Perspective

> The moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the nonliving, man or animal, but since *one must* eat in any case and since it is and tastes good to eat, and since there's no other definition of the good (du bien) *how* for goodness sake should one *eat well* (bien manger)? And what does this imply? What is eating? How is this metonymy of introjection to be regulated? And in what respect does the formulation of these questions in language give us still more food for thought? In what respect is the question, if you will, carnivorous? The infinitely metonymical question on the subject of "one must eat well" must be nourishing not only for me, for a "self," which, given its limits, would thus eat badly, it must be *shared*, as you might put it, and not only in language. "One must eat well" does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but *learning* and *giving* to eat, learning-to-give-the-other-to-eat. One never eats entirely on one's own: this constitutes the rule underlying the statement, "One must eat well." It is a rule offering infinite hospitality.
>
> Jacques Derrida, "Eating Well"

Two years ago, a friend from Italy visited me in Prague. The last time he was there was in 2000 when he was eighteen. This time he wanted to revisit the places he remembered so we first went to the restaurant *U Bronců*, where he ordered the same meal as in 2000, took a picture of the meal and sent it to his friend who had accompanied him on the trip fourteen years ago. Later that day, we went to a trendy café where Lele was intrigued by a poster depicting various ways of making coffee and asked me for an explanation.

It was a campaign of *Kávový Klub* [Coffee Club], called *Piccolo neexistuje!*[15] [piccolo does not exist!], aimed against the idea and name *piccolo* which is a name used in the Czech Republic for an espresso. The Coffee club was founded in 2010 "as a response to the need to promote knowledge about fine preparation of coffee in cafés as well as at homes in the Czech Republic." On the campaign's website, one could see a picture of an espresso saying "this is an espresso" followed by the explanation: "There is no variation to espresso, there is no piccolo, no small or large espresso. There is only espresso." An association with Magritte's picture of a pipe that says "This is not a pipe" came to my mind. Magritte's picture makes one reflect on the relationship between a physical object and its representation. The campaign of the Coffee Club lacked the sophistication of Magritte's painting as it defined the "correct" espresso with radical normativity.

[15] *Piccolo neexistuje!* http://www.piccoloneexistuje.cz/

The attention to norms is a part of the search for authenticity and interest in "the right" consumption practices that are characteristic of today's food culture (Johnston and Baumann 2009). Knowledge and expertise play the key role in what Zukin (1991) calls the "reflexive consumption." According to Appadurai (1996: 41), commodities are complex social forms which represent a specific distribution of knowledge regarding the production and consumption of the commodities. Authenticity, which becomes increasingly important in the world of mass production, is inherently connected to knowledge and expertise and therefore plays a key role in the production of value of commodities (Appadurai 1996: 44 – 47).

According to Vargha (2010: 213), the struggle for the establishment of the right knowledge is of particular importance in the context of postsocialist transformation as it translates into questions of transformation, modernity, progress, and the relevance of socialism. I argue that in Czech expert discourse on gastronomy, knowledge and expertise serve as a means of "purification from socialism" (Eyal 2003; Vargha 2010).

Fehérváry (2002) shows that consumption practices in the postsocialist world are governed by the "discourse of the normal," which links the sense of self-value and dignity of individuals with a relatively high standard of living. "Normal" refers to pre-socialist bourgeois mode of life, which was interrupted by "abnormal" socialism that prevented the society from following the "normal" course of development. In Czech expert discourse on gastronomy, expertise and knowledge become conditions of "normality" and "culturedness" as opposed to negligence and amateurism that supposedly characterized socialist and postsocialist gastronomy.

Back to Normal

> Normal food ended before the war, sometime around [19]38-39, and that went on until [19]89. You cannot easily remake a 50-year-long tradition. Four or five generations of cooks have been influenced by what the previous regime or the war offered and that is simply fatal. And consumers were influenced even more. People just got used to restaurants being bad and take it as a fact. And it will last in them even longer.
>
> Zdeněk Pohlreich[16]

In this chapter, I focus on the role of experts in mediating gastronomy between tradition and modernity, socialism and capitalism, the global and the local, and professionalism and amateurism. I will show how experts on gastronomy build upon the discourse of the normal

[16] In Čermáková and Burza (2010).

and link particular standards of consumption to culturedness, self-respect, happiness and well-being of the nation and individuals. I will explore the specific characteristics of Czech discourse on gastronomy as it is produced by three "celebrity experts" – a chef, a gourmet and a critic – and I will show their efforts to establish appropriate knowledge and educate Czech consumers on appropriate consumption of food.

At stake according the expert discourse on gastronomy is not only knowledge itself but also the tradition, culture, national values, health, and self-confidence and happiness of the nation as well as of individuals. In this context, the need to educate the public on matters of gastronomy and food, gains moral connotations. (compare with Vargha 2010). We can see this also in the case of the campaign against piccolo:

> It's not so much the presence of the word piccolo in menus that bothers us; it is rather the degradation of the concept of espresso. A café that offers piccolo (even if it is of reasonable taste and the right parameters) also always offers espresso that does not represent anything that could be drinkable. That's exactly what we would like to disappear from cafés – the terrible thing called by "wordly-minded Czechs" the "presso". The only thing that can remain is the perfectly balanced and excellent tasting espresso, which a barista is able to pour, extract, describe and present.[17]

The role of expertise in the area of coffee preparation is to purify the concept of espresso, to establish a appropriate commodity trajectory for coffee and to prevent espresso from following deviant trajectories (Appadurai 1996) specific to Czechs. Coffee, therefore, is not only about taste, it is about the right taste, name, preparation, and about the right way that expertise is transferred via description and presentation. The *motto* of the campaign *Piccolo neexistuje!* saying: "Help us reinstate the culture of coffee" also implies that properly educated consumers can also become "civilizing agents" and bring about the lost culture of drinking coffee.

The experts I will talk about have all achieved the status of experts after approximately 2007. Until then, the field of popular gastronomy was dominated by actors and singers, i.e. the cultural elite, and not by culinary professionals. Thus, to legitimize their role of experts, they use their professionalism to distance themselves from amateurs. In the discourse that they produce, amateurism becomes a characteristic of socialist mode of cooking that needs to be dealt away with in order to reinstate that which is normal and cultured. The experts fight against food substitutions which, for them, become representations of the socialist mode of

[17] http://www.piccoloneexistuje.cz/faq

gastronomy influenced by shortages; whereas what the experts call for is a return to simplicity, purity and quality in gastronomy.

Similarly to the moral entrepreneurialism of Jamie Oliver as analyzed by Hollows and Jones (2010), all the three experts are also entrepreneurs who make explicit the connection between entrepreneurialism, consumption and morality (Hollows and Jones 2010: 308). However, in the Czech context, moral entrepreneurialism maps onto the discourse of postsocialist transformation, where the establishment of the correct knowledge and consumption becomes, among other things, a means of purification from socialism (Eyal 2003; c.f. Vargha 2013).

3.1 ZDENĚK POHLREICH (*1957): CONNOISSEURSHIP AND TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF

Zdeněk Pohlreich is a celebrity chef, famous for his merciless criticism of restaurant owners and workers in the Czech Republic, which he has been expressing in the media and mostly in his numerous TV shows (*Ano, šéfe! Na nože! Šéf na grilu*, *Vařte jako šéf*, *Česko vaří s Pohlreichem*). He comments on Czech consumption and entrepreneurial practices and Czech society in general and has said that his show *Ano, šéfe*, which depicted the backstage of unsuccessful restaurants, was a study of Czech entrepreneurial culture.[18]

The fact that Pohlreich graduated from a vocational school grants him the status of a professional as opposed to amateurs who are the target of many of his negative remarks. He often emphasizes the fact that he emigrated from the Czech Republic to the Netherlands and later to Australia. Thus, he has professional experience from abroad which distinguishes him from other Czech chefs. Since his return to the Czech Republic (after 4 years of living abroad), he has been working in top restaurants in Prague and started his own business. His professional trajectory allows him to be accepted not only as an expert on food but also a critic of Czech cuisine, entrepreneurial and consumption practices, as well as of Czech transformation from socialism.

Pohlreich claims that the greatest problem of Czech gastronomy is "un-professionalism of restaurant managers, their misunderstanding of the basic principles of capitalism."[19] What he understands as these basic principles are honest work, professionalism, free market, fair

[18] Krekovič (2013), Čermáková and Burza (2010).
[19] Krbcová (2013).

competition and proper relations between suppliers and buyers of products and services. Pohlreich was a supporter of the former president Václav Klaus and his liberal, libertarian, anti-ecological and euro-sceptic ideas. He criticized Václav Havel for not being thorough enough in the way he dealt with the Communist party after the revolution. Pohlreich thought that noone with communist history should have been allowed to do business freely or work for the state.[20]

From a libertarian that he was in 2009, in 2013, he became an advocate of regulatory mechanisms in gastronomy. He claims that only professionals should be allowed to run restaurants, and there should be limits as far as the number of restaurants in an area. He compares expertise in restaurant business to that of elite ice-hockey teams, dentists and surgeons and claims that the fact that anyone can open a restaurant business is „absurd."[21] Czechs, he said, don't have respect for professionals, experts and top craft because they are a nation of do-it-yourselves. For this, he suggests, socialism is to blame.

> … with some exaggeration, we can say that it was socialism that laid the ground for this gastronomic misery we are in until today. It killed several good generations of cooks and created the breeding ground for culture, where people are used to ignore work and craft.[22]

Pohlreich's expert authority is based mostly on him being an entrepreneur and a professional in restaurant industry, and therefore he is particularly adversarial towards amateurism, negligence (*šlendriánství*) and food substitutions. To strengthen his expert authority and to attempt to establish the right knowledge of gastronomy, Pohlreich often criticizes amateur celebrity chefs, Jiří Babica and, recently, Láďa Hruška.

Unlike Pohlreich, Babica did not graduate from a vocational cooking school. He worked abroad after the Velvet Revolution and therefore lacks the authority of an emigrant that Pohlreich has. Babica's other entrepreneurial activities are in the area of sports (ski edge-sharpening), which, in the eyes of other experts, puts his dedication to professional cooking into question. Moreover, the image of his TV persona is based on cooking for "normal people." His popularity has been higher than Pohlreich's at times, at other times, it was lower.[23]

[20] Kalenská (2010: 43).
[21] Holec (2012); Braunová (2013); Krbcová (2013); Krekovič (2013).
[22] Pohlreich in Krekovič (2013).
[23] Kalenská (2010).

In the eyes of experts, Babica[24] represents socialist and postsocialist mode of cooking defined as "making something out of nothing," where the "ends justify the means." Not only is this approach explained as the "Czech do-it-yourself" culture and is associated with negative auto-stereotypes of Czechs; it is mostly considered a negative result of socialism which was brought about by shortages in food supply under socialism. To discredit Babica, experts explicitly make a connection between him and socialism. For example, a "gastronomy expert" Ondřej Nuemann says that "he is the Klement Gottwald of cooking,"[25] which is an analogy that may refer to anything from Gottwald's role in the Communist party, his poor family background, lack of class, or problems with alcohol. Another expert on gastronomy, Vladimír Poštulka, says that Babica "produces hodgepodge meals such as ones that used to appear on menus of socialist [restaurants].[26] Pohlreich says that what this "joker does is ignorance, cheating and poor taste."[27] He further accuses Babica of "destroying the Czech nation's taste buds."[28]

> It's simply Czech do-it-yourself, like for example Přemek Podlaha. Yes, Babica is a Přemek. All of us here are such Přemeks. At least many of us...[29]

One of the problems of Czech gastronomy and the culture of eating, according to Pohlreich, is that people are not willing to pay for quality, which is another remnant of socialism and an ongoing misunderstanding of capitalism.

> For generations, an absolute tolerance for *šlendriánství* [negligence] has been supported here. Customers accept anything bad as long as it's cheap.[30]

He thinks people's priorities need to be changed and suggests that Czechs eat less and watch the quality rather than quantity. He describes the Czech Republic as the "garbage can" of

[24] In 2014, the television station TV NOVA replaced Babica by another host, Ladislav Huruška (*1978). Like Babica, Hruška (who has recently ended his contract with the TV station) is an amateur who cooks "cheap and tasty" meals for "normal people." He is also the author of cookbook which has become the best-selling book ever published in the Czech Republic. (*Knihy Dobrovský*) Hruška is from a different generation of celebrities and Pohlreich attributes his fame to the power of media and marketing and some people's hunger for "whoever offers them experiences for free and instant miracles. Or someone who will give them affirmation that it is possible without money." (Jansová 2014)
[25] *Aha!* (2009).
[26] *Aha!* (2009).
[27] *Aha!* (2009).
[28] *Aha!* (2009).
[29] Kalenská (2010: 42).
[30] Krekovič (2013).

Europe where "bad eating habits are considered the national heritage."[31] This, he claims, means that Czechs do not have respect for themselves. Thus he associates consumption practices with a broader idea of what "good life" means (c. f. Fehérváry 2002).

> We are willing to accept substitutions; we lack not only self-confidence but also education in the basic attributes of human life.[32]

For Pohlreich, as well as for the other two experts, food substitutions become an epitome of everything that is bad in Czech gastronomy – amateurism, negligence, dishonesty, bad quality, and low self-respect of consumers. Getting rid of substitutions is a requirement for "something normal" and consequently, also leads to a better life. He explicitly links consumption practices to a broader idea of what "good life" means (c. f. Fehérváry 2002):

> If people start cooking well at home, then maybe we are at the beginning of something normal. I am certain that four out of five restaurants in our country do not have the right to exist; in Europe they wouldn't have it either. The only thing they fight with is the price. And they suppose that this nation will be happy with very little. Everyone eats things that must kill them in the long run, they are incapable of respecting themselves. Maybe I'm weird but I think that food is terribly important. And one who cannot eat well, cannot be happy.[33]

Pohlreich's focus and opinion has been changing. In an interview published in late 2014,[34] he is much more appreciative of Czech gastronomy and the quality of chefs. However, he is still very critical of Czech consumers. On behalf of his forthcoming TV show on French cuisine, he offered his view of the difference between the French and the Czechs:

> French cooks are under the pressure from customers. In this area, people are quite educated and have good eating habits. When the French sit in a restaurant they talk about two things, about women and about where they will eat next. They do not talk about politics or football like us. To put it simply, they know how to live and also have different priorities. Here, it's: a car, a house, and McDonald's. The French, on the contrary, know how to live food. We are primarily interested in the portion-price ratio. But it's true that it is changing rapidly.
>
> **Do you think that the relationship of Czechs to food will be improving?**
> To be honest, I think that Czechs do not really know how to live. Food is for us about filling our stomachs. It is not as elegant as in France or Italy where it is

[31] Braunová (2013).
[32] Čermáková and Burza (2010).
[33] Čermáková and Burza (2010).
[34] Jansová (2014).

more cultured. But of course, it isn't only about food. It's in other fields as well, like design. We simply cannot enjoy beautiful things in life. But that, of course, cannot happen in a few years.

To this comment, the interviewer immediately reacts with a comment on socialism:

Those 40 years of the regime simply left their mark on the quality of gastronomy.
I hate this universal excuse or justification. I think that it has been 60 years. The last good food was served here before the war. On the other hand, gastronomy can function very well even in not-too-good conditions.

Afterwards, Pohlreich explains his view of the entrepreneurial environment in the country, critiquing "giant, dirty, and absolutely uncontrolled competition. Everything lacks good restrictions and good entrepreneurial environment." Cultivated desires and appetites, the appreciation of "beautiful things in life," quality, good and honest professional work, could lead to happier lives and better market. On the other hand, settling for a stomach filled with heavy traditional food or, in the worst case, with food substitutions, is linked to the past and the "rejection to learn something new."[35]

To summarize, Pohlreich's advocacy for professionalism is linked to his vision of a functioning capitalist system. Expert knowledge should be possessed by professionals and by lay people as well, at least to the degree that they should be able to make informed consumer choices, but better yet, lay people should be able to trust and therefore respect professionals. These represent not only the conditions of working capitalism but also of good life and something "normal." (compare with Fehérváry 2002). Just like the other two experts, Pohlreich claims that consumption is related to well-being and through the right consumption practices, one can achieve happiness. Therefore, experts put so much emphasis on affectability of consumers. Connoisseurship and following one's pleasures become "technologies of the self" to use Rose's terminology, through which consumers become better human beings and better citizens.

[35] Braunová (2013).

3.2 ROMAN VANĚK (*1969): GASTRONOMIC PURITY

Vaněk has been called "the gastronomic revivalist of the Czech Nation,"[36] "probably the most influential man of Czech culinary business"[37] and "the first man of gastrobusiness."[38] His professional trajectory is different from that of Pohlreich. He graduated from a vocational school of art, worked as a photographer, and in 1989, he was involved in the publishing of *Studentské listy*, a magazine published by the Czechoslovak student movement. In 1993, he started working as a businessman, importing shoes and later wine from Brazil. His professional interest in gastronomy began in 2004 when he started attending cooking courses. In 2007, he founded *Pražský kulinářský institute* [Czech Culinary Institute] and later a publishing house that focuses on gastronomic literature. He has also published several well-selling cookbooks. He completed his vocational education in gastronomy in 2011 when he graduated as a cook. (*Pražský kulinářský institut*)

Pražský kulinářský institut offers cooking classes but Vaněk's vision is to create a "world-wide literary-culinary and journalistic space" where people can buy relevant literature "or touch the new books of superprofessionals."[39] "In the near future, the institute should function as a culinary meeting space and ... a think-tank."[40]

Vaněk is famous for his online TV show *Peklo na talíři* [Hell on a plate] aimed at disclosing sloppiness, deceptions, amateurism and bad quality of Czech gastronomy and food industry. The show received several awards and Vaněk's popularity is still growing. He is particularly popular in the blogosphere and social networks and is considered one of the most influential people in Czech gastronomy. His current online TV show, *Jídlo s.r.o.* [Food, Ltd.], focuses on the production of food.

The issues that he has been famously raising awareness of include amateurism, bad quality of food products and gastronomy, vocational education and Czech eating habits. Based on his professional trajectory there are certain similarities and differences between his agenda and that of Pohlreich with whom they are friends. Both criticize the socialist approach to cooking and the amateurism of professionals. Unlike Pohlreich, Vaněk is more inclined to call cooking an art as opposed to craft[41] and is more welcoming to dedicated amateurs who

[36] *Bux.cz* (2012).
[37] Šídlová (2013).
[38] Šídlová (2013).
[39] Šídlová (2013).
[40] Šídlová (2013).
[41] Kalenská (2010); *Bux.cz* (2012).

are interested in cooking as a life-style activity.[42] This is likely related to the fact that his business activities are focused on raising consumer awareness and interest in gastronomy among the lay public.

Like Pohlreich, Vaněk sometimes refers to his political activity in the revolutionary years. His criticism of the influence socialism had on gastronomy is slightly different with less focus on the lack of competition and free market and emphasis on insufficient food supplies, norms regulating meals, hostility towards intellect and creativity, and the destruction of Czech gastronomic tradition.[43] Unlike Pohlreich, who does not think much of Czech traditional cuisine, which he finds too heavy, unhealthy and time-consuming, Vaněk is more in favor of the traditional "grandmother's cuisine" that he portrays with a hint of nostalgia.[44]

Despite his criticism of socialist gastronomy, he does not explicitly adore capitalism and the workings of free market. Instead, he criticizes corporations and producers' lack of sense of morality and national sentiment[45] when he criticizes domestic production of food.[46]

Food for him, is the most important thing in one's life as it can affect one's soul. Therefore food deserves attention and food consumption needs to be informed.[47] He considers it his mission to spread knowledge about food and it is precisely knowledge and expertise[48] that is necessary to do away with the negative influence of both socialism and capitalism – on customer's part it means demanding to know ingredients and processes of food production, reading labels, and refusing food substitutions; on producer's part it means being transparent, honest, and build trust in customers.

Despite his advocacy of the art of cooking and the creativity that it involves, he is famous for being a critic of "creativity" and "imagination" of Czech cooks. One of his famous sayings that has already gone popular is "the greatest grave of Czech cooks is their own creativity. Don't be afraid of simplicity and use common sense."[49] By creativity he means the approach to the selection of ingredients that does not respect original recipes. He says:

> Substitutions – that's basically what began during totality, if you don't have this, use that, and that is basically the greatest murder of Czech gastronomy ever. If I

[42] ape (2013).
[43] *Bux.cz* (2012); Wilková (n. d.).
[44] Burza (2013); Wilková (n. d.).
[45] "[T]the pork can, where there´s 20% of pork, was produced by a Czech for a Czech…" (Plavcová 2012).
[46] *Bux.cz* (2012); *Peklo na talíři*; Holec (2013).
[47] *Bux.cz* (2012).
[48] Votrubová (2012).
[49] *Hyde Park* (2013); c.f. Kolinová (2012).

> am to cook a meal, which has been created somehow, I cannot simply substitute it with just anything.[50]

This advocacy for gastronomic purity and simplicity and the refusal of substitutions does not only correspond to current trends in gastronomy but in the postsocialist context it is attributed with the meaning of "purification from socialism" (Eyal 2003).

> Who was cooking in this country after 1989, who was making gastronomy popular? They weren't cooks, they were mostly actors and singers. Nothing against devoted amateurism but… If those of us, who once in a while sing something at home and say a joke in a party of friends, were to make music and theatre, it would probably not be [great] either.[51]

This quote expresses Vaněk's idea about the role of experts. Cooking TV shows in the early nineties were indeed dominated by actors and singers whose cultural capital had grown in importance during the Velvet Revolution. Actors and singers were "experts in culture" and they were endowed with the power to make causal everyday activity special, entertaining, and cultured. It was the process of cooking that was important, rather than meals *per se*. Cooking became a social activity shared via TV between the cultural elite and common people. While entertainment is still an important part of cooking on TV, much more attention today is paid to knowledge and expertise. The focus is not so much on the pleasure of eating but on the expertise and the process of cooking.[52] In this way, not only do new experts claim their position in the field of gastronomic expertise and remove non-experts from their previous positions, they also claim and gain cultural capital based on their emphasis on the culture of eating and culinary traditions. Thanks to their political trajectories, they are also capable of competing with the previous cultural elite, the actors and singers.

3.3 PAVEL MAURER (*1959): RAISING GASTRONOMIC AWARENESS

In the spring 2014, I went to a two-day food festival in Prague that was organized by Pavel Maurer (*1959), a food critic and publisher of the most influential review of Czech restaurants. As I walked around the gardens of Prague Castle, trying to decide where to spend

[50] Dostál (2012).
[51] *Xman.cz* et al. (2009).
[52] Parkhurst Ferguson (2004: 162 – 165) explains that the popularity of cooking show is similar to the popularity of spectator sports, it shows unrestrained performance and hyper-aestheticized battles that help sublimate aggression.

a *Grand* (special *Prague Food Festival* currency) and while avoiding crowds of people, I read snippets of common-sense wisdom written on signboard that lined the pathways. These appeals were giving an impression that the purpose of the whole event was to reinstate morality, rather than make profit.

> Let's keep returning to the family table.
> Let's support farms and bioproducts.
> Let's cultivate regular meetings with friends over a meal and drink.
> Let's think about what we put into our mouth.
> Let's discover new tastes, let's be gastronauts.
> Every meal deserves appropriate preparation.
> Let's not underestimate regularity and moderation.
> Let's find time for a meal and enjoy it.

Maurer organizes food festivals and has other business activities related to gastronomy. He regularly comments on gastronomy in his radio show *Glosa Pavla Maurera* on *Český Rozhlas* [national radio]. Unlike the other two experts, Maurer is not educated in gastronomy. He graduated from Charles University in journalism and after the Velvet Revolution worked in advertising. He started publishing the review of Czech Restaurants in 1997 and in 2007 started organizing *Prague Food Festival.*[53]

He does not claim to be a professional food critic but considers himself a "gastronaut."[54] His *Grand Restaurant Selection* roots its reviews and restaurant evaluations in "popular vote" rather than on expert opinion although it has recently added some expert evaluations as well. He justifies the method of "popular vote" partly by stressing the merits of lay expertise as opposed to the expertise of Michelin critics and partly by discrediting other Czech experts on gastronomy who, as he claims, are not real experts as there are no top experts on gastronomy in the Czech Republic.[55] By top experts he is referring to people with formal education in the area of food journalism. In his critique of the level of Czech food journalism, he maintains a position against food bloggers, food lovers, and amateur critics, while at the same time he is able to support lay expertise in the form of quasi statistical data.

In his commentaries, he appeals to connoisseurship, ecological and ethical concerns and health issues rather than to knowledge and expertise *per se*. He is an advocate of moral and ethical, yet assertive consumption. Each one of his radio commentaries ends with a variation of the motto: *Prosím, Nejezte blbě*! Which could be translated as "Please, don't eat

[53] Michal (2010).
[54] Hrdinová (2013).
[55] Michal (2010).

badly." Sometimes, he varies the motto to either "Don't eat and drink badly" or "Don't eat, drink, or live badly."[56] Maurer criticizes Czech gastronomy[57] and Czech cuisine, which, he thinks, is not anything to be particularly proud of, compared to the cuisine of countries such as France, Italy, China or Mexico.

> Compared to other foreign cuisines, Czech cuisine ranks very poorly. Although some cookbooks from pre-war era prove that people in our region used to cook with variety and gastronomy was of considerable quality, we have never achieved worldly recognition. Let's finally accept the fact that our gastronomy is about as interesting to the world as the cuisine of Dagestan or the American state of Oregon. We are not Italy, China, Mexico, or France which have significantly influenced our planet. From the global perspective our cuisine appears provincial, considerably fat, and unhealthy. There is no reason to be proud. All of us, however, have a reason to think every day what we put on our plate.[58]

With his attention to proper consumption, decent behavior, idealization of foreign gastronomy and eating practices, he not only falls more into the category of a gourmet but also reminds of the broader fascination of Czechs with etiquette and cultural and civilized behavior, which is related to the discourse of the normal (Fehérváry 2002) that finds the way of living under socialism essentially abnormal. Maurer is not explicit in blaming socialism; he blames the Czech way of living and consuming in general.

> Let's admit that in our country we do all these things [eating and drinking] wrong. We eat really badly. When we look at the menu of the longest-living nations of the world, there is olive oil, lots of vegetables, fish, wine, meat twice a week at the most, and there is also moderation. They eat less but on the other hand, more frequently, and if there's a larger lunch or dinner, it lasts in great relax about two or three hours. No rush. Eating is accompanied with dancing, music is playing, stories are being told, alcohol is drunk and also a lot of water. The tables of the long-living nations offer many kinds of food… Courses vary in their temperature. Simply you don't have to eat quickly in order for the food to stay warm. On the contrary, if you come up with a nice idea, or a game, do not hesitate to suggest it and make it happen. Do not worry. It will not harm your digestion… Believe it or not, last but not least, it is of great importance who we dine with. We can be eating the best food in the world, but if we argue with other diners, something is making us angry, worrying us, we are not relaxing, therefore it is as if you threw that food out of the window.[59]

[56] *Glosa Pavla Maurera*.
[57] "Cooks can't even make a normal meal." (*Glosa Pavla Maurera* 2013d.)
[58] *Glosa Pavla Maurera* (2013a).
[59] *Glosa Pavla Maurera* (2013c).

According to Maurer, Czechs need to learn from other nations, where food is a priority and start eating in order to enjoy food rather than to fill their stomachs. Similarly to the other experts, Maurer links one's capacity to enjoy food and eating to the capacity to enjoy life in general. Czech consumers, according to Maurer, should not only make conscious informed choices but also provide feedback to producers and restaurant owners, especially when they are unhappy about food or service. He says in patronizing manner:

> You have the right and also the obligation to defend yourself [against mistreatment of customers]. You are defending not only yourself but also all of us who will go to the restaurant after you. If we tolerate *šlendrián* [negligence] and deception, it will spring up like mushrooms after the rain. We Czechs are very timid when it comes to criticism.[60]

Maurer says that Czech consumers' gastronomic self-confidence is being raised very slowly.[61] He explains his motto "Don't eat badly" in the following way: "enjoy and do not over-eat. Find the time to eat. Respect good quality local and seasonal produce. Return to the family table. Think about what we teach our children."[62]

To summarize the expert discourse on gastronomy as it is represented by the three experts:

1/ The most common characteristic is the criticism of Czech cuisine and Czech gastronomy in general. By diminishing the value of average Czech gastronomy in comparison to either high cuisine or foreign cuisine, experts support their own capital, i.e. expertise. They identify with high cuisine, the cuisine of countries such as France, Italy, China, Mexico, and thus they maintain distance from Czech gastronomy, criticize it, and legitimize their need to educate the public and to transform gastronomy and consumers into what these experts consider as universal standard of cuisine and life-style. (Compare with Vargha 2010: 214.)

2/ The experts define what is at stake in the transformation of cuisine and consumption practices – it is not only food itself; in their discourse, food becomes the medium for the development of culturedness and well-being of the nation and individuals. The acceptance and support of a universal standard of cuisine and life-style and linking it to the well-being of the nation and individuals maps onto the general discourse of the normal as analyzed by Fehérváry (2002). Fehérváry (2002: 390) shows how Hungarians tried to achieve 'normal' standards of living "*in order to* live an ethical, spiritually-meaningful life…" Similarly, the

[60] *Glosa Pavla Maurera* (2013b).
[61] Compare with Vaněk who says that Czechs are in gastronomic puberty. (Tůma 2013.)
[62] Wilková, (n.d.)

three experts on gastronomy refer to the "abnormalities" in gastronomy industry, food and consumption to define problems of Czech society.

3/ Finally, to achieve the "normal" standard of gastronomy and well-being of individuals, gastronomy needs to be "purified from socialism" (Eyal 2003) – whether it be through moral entrepreneurs (Vaněk, Maurer, Pohlreich), expert professionals (Vaněk, Pohlreich) or through informed reflexive consumers. They need to be purified from socialist negligence, ignorance, bad quality and need to develop taste for quality, connoisseurship and become affectable customer-citizens (Anderson 2012).

For experts, food and gastronomy serve as tropes for defining certain problems within the society such as postsocialist transformation, culturedness and history of the nation, and quality of social and individual life. Postsocialist subjects and their minds and bodies are encouraged to pay attention to their desires and demand their satisfaction in both private and public space. In private space, food is important for individual health, happiness and family well-being, which is why one needs to pay attention to ingredients, origin and food production, as well as to cultured ways of consuming meals. In public space, food offers an arena for negotiating tradition, history and transformation. Postsocialist subject are *obliged to learn to be free*, "to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice." (Rose 2004: 87) Rose explains that the mechanisms of regulation through desire produce "consuming civility" with the help of independent experts, "concerned professionals seeking to allay the problems, anxieties and uncertainties engendered by the seemingly so perplexing conditions of our present." (Rose 2004: 87) This form of expertise helps people actualize themselves and pursue their freedom through the choices they make within the market. Following Abraam de Swaan, Rose explains that lay people become proto-professionals who organize their lives according to expertise of various professions that becomes available to them through mass media or therapeutic encounters. As a result, people are governed through "'responsibilized' and 'educated' anxieties and aspirations." (Rose 2004: 88)

As I argue in this work, affect becomes the tool through which an embodied subject may position herself or be positioned within space and time and transformation. Rather than through rational choice, consumers should make consumer decisions based on their desires to enjoy and be healthy. The subject that is affected by food substitutions remains being a socialist subject, an embodiment of necessity and shortage. On the other hand, a subject that is affected by good food purified from substitutions embodies desires for quality and satisfaction. Following Baumann, Sutton (2001: 117) describes the new postmodern subject

as “the receiver of sensations:” “Because sensations cannot be objectively measured, the occupant of such post-modern body lives in a state of restless uncertainty as to whether any experience is indeed ‘optimal.’ Thus, one must always be as open as possible to ‘new,’ ‘improved,’ products and experiences …” (Sutton 2001: 117) Affected in that manner, the subject that follows desires will become a good, demanding consumer who will put producers under pressure to improve their products and services and consequently also overall level of Czech gastronomy and even society.

4 The Invisible Hands of Luxury: the case of Verdi

In order to approximate the atmosphere of a luxury restaurant to a reader, I decided to describe a particular event; an event which by no means represented an average day in the restaurant but can be seen as a portrayal of the dynamics in interactions that took place in the restaurant – the ways spontaneity, chaos and unpredictability were managed as they remained invisible to consumers. From physical labor that is displayed in discreet manners and finds its relief in alcohol consumption, anger, and swearing; but also in joking, conviviality, and everyday joys; it also allows for exertion of power over customers despite knowing that they are "always right."

This ethnographic description should illustrate how luxury is produced in a restaurant. As Goffman put it: "All the world is not a stage" (Goffman 1974: 1); there is always a backstage that remains hidden from audiences and it is in this backstage where negotiations of various types take place. What looked to customers in Verdi like a smooth event, a celebration of luxury, was performed by groups of agents, materials and technologies, within the limits of space, time, resources, and allowed interactions. The event had its temporal dynamics, power structure, and order, which were being constantly negotiated and reconstituted.

I wish to illustrate the affective, emotional and bodily aspect of service work but I also want to place it in the larger context of luxury, hospitality, economy, and work. Therefore, in the second part of this chapter I paint a portrait of one of my informants, Felix, to show how he personally coped with the pressures of physically and emotionally demanding work. I illustrate how he overcame negative emotions related to service work and transformed them into a blend of work and play that were enjoyable to him and his customers alike, and generated value for all parties involved. Felix's exceptional drive, with his career trajectory helped uncover the layered meanings given to work and consumption of luxury hospitality. It also points to particular aspects of service work, such as specific skills and knowledge necessary for the performance of luxury service.

4.1 "I HATE PEOPLE"

Three months into my fieldwork in Verdi, there was an event I was waiting for: *Luxury for Fair, La Nuit de Exclusivité* – a fair of luxury brands, such as *Moser*, *Savoir Beds*, *Audemars Piquet*, *Hublot*, *Boucheron*, *Hennessy*, and others. The fair took place in several

rooms, halls and foyers of the hotel to which Verdi belonged. The main station for servers was located in the hotel's gym and was full of boxes, dishes, tables, glasses and Champagne bottles. Technically, the event was organized by Palace Hotel and most servers were outsourced from a catering agency. However, food was provided by Verdi and chefs Robert and Bob were both present as well as all the other cooks from Verdi. The cooks were cooking and barbequing outside in the hotel's patio and served steak from the grill, shrimp, salads, sauces, pastries and desserts. Two cooks remained in the restaurant kitchen and took care of meal orders from the restaurant as Verdi remained open to customers as usual. Guests of the event were served free Champagne, water, beer, coffee and food made in the patio.

I came to work at 6 p.m. when the restaurant, courtyard, garden and the hotel were already full of servers in white shirts, black trousers and orange aprons. I went to change into my uniform and afterwards, one of my colleagues, Roland, took me around the area to show me what was happening. There were a lot of catering workers I did not know, including Tibor, an older waiter with a black eye who came to earn some extra money. Tibor was working in construction at the time because, as he explained, he had burned out from restaurant work and could not stand seeing people anymore. The chef Robert asked me to help out and sent me to talk to the head waitress for the day, Veronika, who, as I later found out, was his wife.

At 7 p.m., guests started to arrive. Veronika gave me instructions and I interrupted her with "I am not a real waitresss." – "This is not good work unless it's your profession," she told me calmly as she put a bottle of Champagne into my hands and sent me to refill guests' glasses. Experienced waiters and waitresses would always be calm about my fear of not doing the job right. "If you don't know what to do, just walk among guests, they'll ask for whatever they need," Veronika assured me.

As soon as I refilled two or three glasses, a guest asked me to bring him a beer, "but make sure it's colder than the one I had before." I ran to find Veronika and asked her for a cold beer. "It's still being cooled," she said, so I ran into the restaurant to ask for a glass of tap beer and brought it to the guest, who, fortunately, had not moved and I was therefore able to find him even though I had forgotten his face. I continued refilling Champagne, gathering dirty plates and maneuvering between people, smelling their heavy perfumes, paying attention not to run into a female guest who almost fell due to her high heel getting stuck among cobble stones.

"I hate people," one of the servers mumbled to himself while the celebrity TV presenter Libor Bouček was talking about luxury, repeatedly introducing all the brands in clichés, such as, "every woman loves diamonds." Guests could buy luxury beds, "that Angelina Jolie and

Brad Pitt as well as the British royal family slept on," win prizes in a ruffle supervised by "a beautiful hostess who was in her third semester at law school." The prizes included a hand car-wash or the chance to fly an Airbus plane. Quite early on I found myself being angry at guests in my head, even swearing, whenever I was asked to do something while having to do something else.

Workers would often expressed anger and frustration in the back of the house but also among guests. If they were in on the restaurant floor, they expressed frustration very discreetly, in a way that guests would not notice anything. Sometimes they would only talk to themselves and express their anger without expecting any reaction from their colleagues but at other times, they shared their anger through non-verbal expressions or in communication. Fine (1996: 69) argues that expressing anger enables workers to reestablish the rhythm of work: "Anger is seen as a means of achieving temporal stability and coping with the behavioral reality of the kitchen. Of course, while anger may have therapeutic benefits for individuals, it also raises collective tension and may be contagious." Anger, frustration, and guest-bashing happened virtually constantly and served a range of purposes – from relief, through team-building, to reestablishment of order and temporal stability. It often seemed to me as if being expressive in front of guests was more exciting and pleasing. Waiter Lukáš would sometimes comment on English-speaking guests in Czech right in front of them, for example when he asked me while we were behind the bar, if I fancied "these darker types" pointing to a black man who was smoking at the bar. On my first day in the restaurant, he became impatient with guests and complained that, like fish, every guest starts to stink after a while. Another waiter took me out to the restaurant's garden once and gave me a mock training on how important it was to bash on guests. "For example: that man looks like a squirrel; the fat woman over there could give a good oral sex if she took out her artificial teeth." Restaurant work was full of tension and expressiveness. I often realized I was talking to myself in my head or even aloud to maintain *surface acting* (Hochschild 1983), as well as to maintain my rhythm of work (Fine 1996).

Maintaining the rhythm of work was crucial, especially on a busy shift such as the one I am describing. Workers' station was extremely chaotic: tables filled with dirty dishes that no one had the time to put aside. A waitress complained about it being too hot and another one added she could not blow her nose because she was after a surgery but felt very uncomfortable sniffing around guests. As she was taking off her high heels to show others her fresh blisters, she said she did not want to go back and serve Champagne since no one was drinking it anymore. Some workers were obviously hiding from Veronika to avoid work,

while others, like the Verdi waitress Natalie, kept their fast pace even though her back was hurting. She would just drink a glass of Champagne and go back to work, never stopping for too long as that could result in a loss of the tempo of her work.

As soon as time hit 10 p.m., many outsourced catering workers immediately took off their aprons and left. All Verdi workers stayed, including Felix, an eighteen-year-old waiter who had been one of my most co-operative informants, together with the waitress Natalie and the managers Peter and Horst. On this day, Felix was not working at the *Luxury for Fair* event but waited tables in the restaurant. As I walked into the restaurant bar to get a Champagne glass for one of the guests, Felix took the bottle of Champagne from my hands and poured two glasses – one for himself, one for Tibor. There were no more glasses left so I decided to rest, straighten my sore back and pour myself a glass of Champagne, too. There were about seven of us behind the bar just resting: Natalie was drinking Champagne as well but Felix managed to multitask and made coffee, served meals, drank a glass of red wine and comment on its flavor, and kept participating in our conversations. Besides offering relief, drinking alcohol was "part of the 'community,' part of the setting, and part of the pleasure of working at a quality restaurant" (Fine 1996: 128).

I returned back to work and was immediately asked by the chef Robert to "start cleaning up, please. Clean everything up, please." The words "please" as well as "chef" were conspicuously overused in both luxury restaurants I worked at in order to maintain a certain level of presentation, language and atmosphere, entirely different from the stereotypical restaurant environment that is often depicted in the media as abusive, violent, loud and rude. The guest who had asked me for the Champagne glass I was still carrying was no longer to be found, to my relief. I continued walking among guests with the bottle of Champagne, trying to take a few moments to reflect. I felt my orange apron was pleasantly covering my body and displaying my role to the guests, which made me, in a way, invisible and part of a crowd of servers. That gave me confidence to look into guests' eyes and make myself visible to guests for a moment. I observed and imitated Veronika's walk and realized that keeping my back straight, my shoulders a bit up and my whole torso a bit disconnected from the movement of my hips, gave my arms stability and allowed me to walk faster and reduced the shaking of glasses on my tray. Then, for a brief moment, electricity went out – a stressful moment for organizers but quite an amusing one for workers and guests alike.

A female guest asked me to refill her glass with Champagne and I managed to do it very precisely. She said "one can see you have practiced." I smiled and said it was my first time. "You should keep that information to yourself," she advised me jokingly. Another guest

asked me to pour Champagne into her water glass. When I offered to bring her a proper glass, she refused and said it was okay. I continued wandering around and was asked by a woman to empty the ashtray on her table with about four cigarette butts. When I returned a few moments later, she was not there anymore. Gradually, as guests were getting slightly drunk, and there was not so much rush anymore, I began to enjoy the work and stopped being concerned whether everything was done properly. I found a tempo of my work and a rhythm of my bodily movement and I established a balance between authenticity and acting and independence and team work. I found myself in what Fine (1996: 71) describes as "flow" thanks to the conditions of work which, by this time, was neither too fast, nor too slow.

After the main part of the event ended and most of the rooms where luxury brands were presented closed, it was necessary to keep the place clean and constantly look for empty glasses and dishes to put away. Dishwashers could not manage the load of dirty dishes so they started piling up where guests could not see them and created chaos in the back of the house. Someone complained there were not enough trays so I followed Natalie's advice and took mine with me everywhere I went, including the bathroom. "Improvisation" was necessary on all frontlines. At 11:30, as the event was coming to a close, most of us helped with washing and polishing glasses but there was not enough space to put the dishes or to even move. One could hear "*pozor, záda*" [watch your back] from every corner at the back of the house as workers were trying to clean up effectively. In front of the house, the remaining guests were a bit drunk and started commenting on "my beautiful apron," or asked me for drinks I had allegedly promised to bring. This is when I started feeling mistreated by guests and reestablished loyalty with other workers. So, when I brought tea to two Russian women after several minutes of trying to maneuver my way among all the boxes with glasses, getting the cups, filling them with water and finding a tray to carry them, and the women asked for honey, I told them we did not have any honey at the moment. I knew it would only make other waiters angry if I caused more hassle just to get some honey. The guests did not mind and thanked me.

Felix was annoyed with the chef Robert for constantly talking about cocktail glasses, which became a topic of joking for everyone else. Humor served the purpose of relief from stress but also of determination of boundaries of the community and the willingness to participate in a shared view of the world (Fine 1996: 118). At this moment, the boundaries between workers and the owner were marked through jokes about the owner's compulsive interest in a particular type of glasses. We kept polishing hundreds of glasses, putting them into boxes while eating goulash when suddenly the barman uttered a complaint about some

glasses being in a wrong box. This made Tibor, the waiter with the black eye, furious. He started screaming: "I didn't have training, I didn't have training." Roland became angry as well and complained that some guests refused to pay for wine because it was too warm. "I've been serving them all night, and it's 1:30." Other workers understandingly acknowledged his anger.

At 2 a.m., Chef Robert offered to drive some people home. Before I left, manager Peter asked me to go to his office where he offered to pay me for that night. I refused but he insisted. When I changed from my uniform, I noticed, my shoes were completely ruined. On my way home, I said good bye to Felix who had to stay in the restaurant to keep serving the last group of guests, who, by this time, had to pay for their drinks. Felix did not seem to mind, he kept serving them discreetly while also paying close attention to them. He appreciated one of the guests for his knowledge of wine: "Plus, he was one of a few who knew how to actually hold a glass of wine." The next day he would have more observations of these guests as they would get drunk and forget his presence.

4.2 FEAR AND PLEASURE OF DISCREET WORK

According to Sherman (2007: 25), the defining characteristics of luxury service are "personalization; anticipation, legitimation, and resolution of guests' needs; unlimited available physical labor; and a deferential, sincere demeanor on the part of workers." In the definition, however, Sherman ignores the most obvious characteristic of luxury – exclusivity and high price. I suggested (Hajdáková 2013a) to look at the importance of discretion (*diskrétnost*) and discreet work that characterize luxury settings and proposed the term *discreet economy,* following Simmel (1950: 322), who says that discretion is a feeling or intuition that enables one to determine the right kind and level of entitlement to another person's intellectual or material property. From the emic viewpoint, discretion is the main requirement of service work as well as the origin of the word tip, *dýško*.

Waiters are expected to be everywhere and see and hear everything but should also be invisible and show no signs of having seen or heard anything. As Dítě, the main character in Hrabal's novel *I served the King of England,* says:

> When I started to work at the Golden Prague Hotel, the boss took hold of my left ear, pulled me up, and said, You're a busboy here, so remember, you don't see anything and you don't hear anything. Repeat what I just said. So I said I

> wouldn't see anything and I wouldn't hear anything. Then the boss pulled me up by my right ear and said, But remember too that you've got to see everything and hear everything. Repeat it after me. I was taken aback, but I promised I would see everything and hear everything. That's how I began.
>
> (Hrabal [1971] 1990:1)

In my previous work (Hajdáková 2013a: 84) I looked at a textbook on psychology for waiters, which specified what it meant to be discreet: "Let's also be *discreet*. In ZVS[63] we sometimes see the world and people without masks. While the essence of tact lies in the HOW and WHAT we say, the essence of discretion is in that, according to the situation, we say NOTHING" (Král [1973] 1980: 106, emphasis in the original). Another textbook said that not watching and not showing any signs of awareness of guest's flaws while still seeing everything, was, for a waiter, a way of winning guest's favor and dominating them (Solar [1940] 1996:35). (Hajdáková 2013a: 84.) "This limited entitlement to waiters' own visibility on the floor is a symbol of their subordination to guests, but at the same time it allows for hidden strategies of authority and domination over them." (Hajdáková 2013a: 84)

This vague skill of being partially invisible, yet always available, was not acquired easily, as I myself have learnt. For inexperienced waiters and apprentices, learning to serve rich clientele did not come without fear and anxiety. Tatiana, a student who worked in the restaurant in the summer of 2012 when I started doing my fieldwork, once commented on how scared she was to serve some people even though she felt she had no reason to. Almost all other informants confirmed that they either still feared or were intimidated by customers or they used to be when they first started waiting tables.

Waiter apprentice Marek said that he was afraid to take orders from guests, bring their food, even to talk to them, especially when he anticipated that they might ask him questions. Another apprentice, Michaela, was mostly afraid of people asking questions, especially if they were foreigners. Horst, a thirty-six-year-old waiter and manager confessed he still felt nervous from time to time. Twenty-year-old waiter Roman used to be afraid of talking to guests but "you get used to it and realize that, actually, you enjoy it."

Talking to guests without fear was not only necessary to create a "friendly connection," which many waiters considered a prerequisite to an ideal relationship with guests, but also in order to increase guests' spending. Cook Jan, whose temper and expressive language made him unpopular among waiters, would often get angry at waiters for not interacting with guests enough, especially on slow days when workers would talk to each

[63] *Závody veřejného stravování* (facilities of public catering).

other instead of trying to sell as much food as possible. Jan's main criticism was about waiters not thinking about their work and how they could make money. Instead, he thought, "they are angry and scare customers off." Manager Peter thought that the new generation of waiters did not know how to communicate with guests:

> Not many people know how to do that today. It's not like it used to be when I was an apprentice. Today, people do this – I don't know why. They're untrained and do this for money, even though, today, the money isn't good anymore… They are unable to sell. One has to talk to customers, give them advice and listen to them. If they listen, they can help and if they help, they will be appreciated.

Felix, despite being one of the youngest, was also one of the most confident waiters in Verdi. He too, remembered that he was scared when he first started waiting tables, at the age of thirteen:

> My aunt has a restaurant in Moravia, in the forest. I was really scared to talk to guests, especially if you're thirteen and have completely different problems. So I started focusing on the communication. I think it really helped because since then, I have not been scared to talk to anyone.

4.3 FELIX: "YOU PLAY A GAME WITH THEM AND BOTH OF YOU ENJOY IT"

For Felix, work became pleasure. The first time I met this extraordinary hyperactive young waiter, he told me he adored working in service industry and was willing to do anything for guests, including buying them marijuana. Whenever a potential guest appeared in the restaurant, he ran towards them eager to do business or otherwise influence their day. Felix enjoyed our shared interest in luxury services and gastronomy as well as the attention he was getting from me. He would try to show me everything and shared his professional knowledge with me and even his personal life. He was always restless and did multiple things at the same time and often felt like involving me too: "Shall we do something?" He asked on my second day in Verdi. "Sure, what?" – "Work?" After a while he apologized for keeping me too busy while, at the same time, ordering me what to do next. His excitement would sometimes wear off and he became moody and grumpy telling me not to talk to him.

During my fieldwork, Felix became a sommelier and a head waiter. He had been in the restaurant since it opened in 2010 and even though he considered it his most important experience, he started feeling bored. At the end of my fieldwork in Verdi, Felix was offered

another job. For about two months, he worked almost non-stop at both restaurants, occasionally supporting himself with cocaine and alcohol. As soon as his notice period ended, he left Verdi.

Originally from Moravia, Felix felt there was nothing waiting for him there and at fifteen, decided to come to Prague with a little financial support from his father. He wanted to study to be a cook, like his older brother who became one of the most acclaimed chefs in Slovakia. Felix's desire was to be better than his brother. His family, however, advised him to study restaurant management because they thought his school performance was "too good for a cook." Felix got into a prestigious vocational school and trained as both a waiter and a cook in the best restaurants in Prague as well as in a Michelin-star restaurant in Germany. He enjoyed working a lot more than studying and decided to quit school one month before his *maturita* [graduation exam]. This happened at the time I was doing my fieldwork in Verdi and therefore I had a chance to talk to him about his decision, his plans, and ambitions extensively.

Felix was convinced that one could be successful even without education. He felt that the school was important in the beginning of his career because it was through compulsory training that he was able to meet Chef Robert, the co-owner of Verdi. Felix felt that school was no longer giving him anything and was holding him back from becoming better than his brother. "That was crucial. My brother was successful sooner but on the other hand, he was twenty-two when he became a chef. I am eighteen."

"Do you like this job?" I asked him. "I don't actually like anything but the job," Felix replied. He loved "the system of work," working with food, beverage, and communicating with guests. "Controlling guests, selling, that's such a great feeling. When you realize that you've just sold something to tourists for three thousand, which means, I made one thousand. And it was me who sold them everything – cognacs, cigars, everything." Felix was not popular among other workers in Verdi. Young female apprentices were intimidated by him and felt scared to interfere with him to the point that they became insecure whenever Felix's guests would want something from them. Felix, on the other hand, was bothered by communication with other waiters and criticized them for being money-oriented and not ambitious enough. He wanted to be "respected all over the world and be someone. Happiness and money will come by themselves."

Felix was interested in wine and became a sommelier in Verdi. However, wine was not his only affection. "I'm interested in food, methods of preparation, ingredients, rare food like truffles. Everything. Sun-dried tomatoes, anything that they only make two hundred kilos

of. That's awesome. There isn't too much of it so it's a pleasure to sell it." While at Verdi, he would also take occasional jobs in catering. "I really like it because I can show off and astound." Once, he took me to a storage room and told me he was concerned because he realized he was able to sell almost anything to people. Compared to other waiters I interviewed, Felix seemed like he was more aware of the complexities of his work, which I thought he displayed as an interview partner when he "played with my questions" and fit them to what he had already thought about, rather than adjusting his answers to what I seemed like I wanted to hear.

> **Me:** Who would be an ideal customer for you?
> **Felix:** Definitely not me. … I don't have an idea of who an ideal customer is. Every customer is ideal. If he's annoying, I try to adjust and show him that he is the boss and I am his waiter.
> **Me:** So you don't have a preferred type of customers?
> **Felix:** Not a preferred type of customers but I do have preferred customers. They're people I like to serve.
> **Me:** What is it about them that makes you like serving them?
> **Felix:** That they're happy that I am the one serving them. That they're people who come to the restaurant because of food and other things as well as because of me. When people come and say: "Nice to see you again." … For example, I have this lawyer who comes there and is really cool. He's very unattainable. I didn't find a way to him until his second visit. He's my favorite. … I'm happy that he lets me create his menu for him, a tasting menu even, that he accepts recommendations … and then he says: "It's just great." You play a game with them and both of you enjoy it …
> **Me:** I really like the metaphor of "game."
> **Felix:** … I've read a few things about psychology. I think gastronomy and psychology are an interesting combination. If you were a good psychologist, you could control customers perfectly. And you can do anything. Even the impossible. …
> **Me:** What do you win in the game?
> **Felix:** A lot of people think it's a large tip. I don't require that. For me, it's just one way how they can express their appreciation. I'm happy if they say it was great and I see that it was great, that they're happy. … Money is not the priority. The priority is that they're happy, leave something small [a tip] and come again.

Felix's approach to waiting was fascinating to me as I had never met anyone like him and I was shocked that an eighteen-year-old knew so much about what he wanted to do and was excellent in it, too. For most waiters, a bad customer was someone who was arrogant, impolite (especially if they did not greet), too demanding ("comments on every detail") and unappreciative ("leaves and doesn't even leave a small tip"). On the other hand, an ideal customer would be someone who, as seventeen-year-old apprentice Marek put it, "someone

who doesn't move around, is nice the whole time and leaves more than ten percent as tip." But for Felix, it was about playful interactions: a bad guest could be turned into a good guest provided that they realized they were the boss, appreciated Felix as their waiter, and understood and enjoyed the "game." Unlike many other waiters I have interviewed, Felix understood the importance of returning customers and tried to play his "game" with this long-term goal in mind, rather than being motivated only by tips.

4.4 "MONEY IS NOT THE PRIORITY."

Felix was earning about 1, 100 CZK per day plus he would receive tips at the end of each month. Tips could amount to 2, 000 CZK per day, depending on how busy the restaurant was. Despite Felix claiming that money was not important, he would often talk about money. He told me how much money he spent on a night out when he ended up smoking cigars, sniffing cocaine and going to a brothel (8,000 CZK); how much he paid for his HTC mobile phone (10, 000 CZK), his Fossil watch (5, 500 CZK), and Diesel jeans (3, 000 CZK) and how he was willing to spend money for high quality food and good service (1, 500 CZK + 20% tip at a café where he had wine and his favorite meal). On my first day, he took me to Verdi's wine cellar and told me there was about 50, 000 CZK worth of wine, meaning, the cellar was almost empty. On one of our interview days, he refused to let me pay saying "Let's be adults," and on a night that I ran into him at a bar and we had whisky, he insisted on paying after I asked how much it was. "If you have to ask, I'm paying." On our follow-up interview, he even showed me his pay slip for 45, 000 CZK.

In the restaurant, Felix, as well as other workers would often comment on how much something cost, how much guests spent or left as a tip, and even on the brand of their clothes. One of the younger, less experienced waiters once showed the others a copy of guest's bill for 2, 799 CZK. On another day, he told a story about a guest who asked him to take his coat and handle it with care, pointing to the Dolce & Gabbana label. Mere fascination with wealthy guests, however, was a sign of an unexperienced waiter. An experienced one, such as Felix, would say:

> A snob pretends he has money and acts if he had money even though he doesn't have any. People who really have money behave normally. Many years of experience.

Discreet economy, is an economy that is a hybrid of gift exchange and economic exchange. Under discreet economy, excessive embodied work needs to be concealed and the entitlement of workers to guests' material property and emotional, affective, financial and physical reciprocity, is restricted. It offers clients an asylum from the market but it also allows the invisible workers to discreetly control guests and pursue their own financial interests.

In Verdi, even physical money was handled discreetly and was always hidden in folders. "Real value" and "real wealth" was something that had to be displayed discreetly, if at all. Prices, calculation and self-interest needed to be concealed as if they could contaminate the real value of luxury. As a result, participants in such exchanges have limited rights as to deciding on the terms of exchange, especially regarding tipping. Corresponding to the discreet nature of the exchange is the tip, *dýško* (also *spropitné*, *diškrece*, *tuzér*, or *tringelt*), which is derived from the word *diškrece*, referring precisely to discretion. Manager Peter thought that a tip was "a gift from clients, a recognition of service," which also reflected on the quality of service. He thought that in the Czech Republic, the system of tipping was not working because waiters did not know how to "sell themselves, they can't get anything out of clients."

The arbitrary nature of tip and guest's authority to decide how much to tip makes it casts tip as a counter-gift for the gift of service. However, tip was also a form of compensation for service work and sometimes amounted to more than a day's wage.[64] Equally as in the case of Restaurant X (Hajdáková 2013: 88), to mediate between the two meanings of tips—economic and symbolic—waiters referred to a minimum (usually ten percent) tip. This minimum tip was at once an expression of politeness and reciprocity, which cast it in the realm of the gift, and at the same time it was a calculable financial compensation for service, which cast it in the realm of payment. Money therefore, was just as important as a form of compensation, as an expression of respect and recognition.

4.5 WHAT IS LUXURY?

For Felix, recognition was of utmost importance. "I am extreme in that if a guest asks me if we have cigarettes, I'll tell him we don't but I could go and get them for him. … If he says no, never mind, he's a normal person. If he agrees, I'll do it." Manager Horst thought that an ideal

[64] Even though at Verdi, waiters were not allowed to keep their tips, some did so, especially if they felt that a guest was rewarding them personally. On several occasions, I saw apprentices keep their tips and other waiters saw it too. Once Felix commented on Marek who secretly put a tip into his pocket but there was never a major conflict.

waiter was someone like Felix but with better interpersonal skills. Felix was, indeed, an outstanding waiter with a very strong drive and great ambition. He often seemed surprised at his own accomplishments and kept testing his abilities further and further. "Sometimes I'm even slightly arrogant and guests actually like it," he said. He enjoyed when guests complimented him on his work, especially when they expressed surprise at his young age. He liked hints of flirtation from female guests and would also admit he went an extra way to surprise them:

> For example, there was a table – those people had won a voucher or something – and there was a woman, not older than thirty, nice; she was there with her boyfriend, mom, dad and brother. So I really tried to do my best because if there's a nice girl, I really try hard to make everything perfect. And at the end she told me: "You know what's missing?" And I was thinking: "No, that can't be." And I asked her what. She said, "that little tag, which would say that your name was Pavel or something."

Felix was happy being a waiter. He said the job felt "as natural as breathing." He was excited about learning more, travelling to different places to learn about food products and wine. He thought the social importance of gastronomy in general and luxury gastronomy in particular was that it enabled people to meet, negotiate, and maybe sign contracts.

> For example, if a president comes to see Klaus at the castle, there's always a dinner, lunch, or a banquet. It is an important event that influences other events. I think gastronomy is an important part of economy not only because it makes money but also because it has some side effects, so to speak.

Felix did not think Verdi was really a luxury restaurant, which, he thought was a good thing. Luxury for him meant Michelin stars and therefore certain standards, which he thought would make the place less pleasant. Towards the end of my fieldwork, he quit his job at Verdi and began working at an oyster bar where he enjoyed his new work, too. "There, it's simple luxury. No white gloves and very natural."

In his motivation and drive, Felix was truly unique, especially compared to other waiters and apprentices who were his peers. Marek, a waiter apprentice who was only a year younger than Felix, did not even consider working in a restaurant more luxurious than Verdi. "I don't think I'm good enough. I mean, psychologically. To go and have this luxury behavior, that's very difficult for me. Like, if a politician comes with a million crowns in his pocket and he wants to spend it and I'm supposed to sell him something. I don't think I could

do it. I can't sell my work." Apprentices Karolina (17) and Dana (18) did not plan on working in gastronomy after finishing vocational school. They enjoyed communicating with guests but were disappointed with the long work hours. Karolina thought that working in a more luxurious restaurant would not be enjoyable since, as she thought, people "would be arrogant and ask for too much."

Most waiters, apprentices and cooks often stressed that because of their experience, they could be empathetic as well as demanding when they themselves were guests in a restaurant. Horst said he could not go to "normal" Czech restaurants since he knew how food was made there (he was referring to bad hygiene and low quality of ingredients) but if he went, he behaved as a sophisticated, yet friendly guests. "I always tip, I can complain but everything is good, it's good. I don't look for problems." Apprentice Marek said he was particularly nice to apprentices. Apprentice Dana explained how she felt when her fellow guests, including her colleague Karolina, complained:

> I really hate – and Karolina does that too – when people complain. For example, of I order something and they confuse my order, I don't say anything … If I am really unhappy, I will say I wanted something different but I don't yell at anyone. What I don't want other to do to me I don't want to do to them. But it bothers me. For example, my step dad who has a restaurant is completely crazy. If someone messes up his order, he turns red and causes a scene and I sometimes leave. First, I feel embarrassed and second, I know that people make mistakes.

Waiter Radek said he "didn't feel important enough to go to luxury restaurants like Verdi" and because he knew what service work meant, he was "not demanding at all, very polite, accommodating, smiling and never complained." Manager Peter wanted to be served with as much attention as what he gave to his customers although he admitted it was something he had to learn by overcoming embarrassment. Despite being a demanding customer, he always tipped well.

> We who work in gastronomy are defected because we know how to treat customers and we feel like we want it reciprocated. What they offer, they want back – the service and the quality. If they can give it they want to be given.

I argued before (Hajdáková 2013: 93 – 94), that for service workers, "encounters with customers were meaningful beyond their work in that they contributed to their knowledge and experience with hospitality and gastronomy. When they themselves assumed the role of customers, they were able to use that knowledge to appreciate and evaluate or even to demand

better service and to become better customers. In a sense, service workers were not only professionals but, when they became customers, they acted as "expert customers" who knew exactly what they wanted and what they were entitled to and understood how they were supposed to be made to feel and how their servers were feeling. Thus, they could establish proper client-worker relationships. Because in their work they learnt from customers and assumed "consuming civility" (Rose 2004: 87); and in their consumption they were producing "consuming civility" by behaving as proper consumers, they could help reproduce a specific morality. They did so within the market through "'responsibilized' and 'educated' anxieties and aspirations" (Rose 2004: 88). Service workers needed to manage their fears and embarrassments in order to reproduce the morality of *doing unto other service workers as they would have had their guests doing unto them*. In that sense, discreet economy and properly managed affect, serve as vehicles for the market and social and economic transformation.

In this chapter, I showed how affect was managed at work in interactions with customers in order to produce luxury experience. I also suggested the importance of managing one's fears and embarrassments not only for the purpose of *learning* to become better workers who are capable of selling their product to customers but also in order to *teach* other workers the principles of good service. In this way, one's own work experience became the basis for their moral and ethical position as consumers of hospitality which was affected by socialism. In the following chapters, I will elaborate on this idea and will further explore the role of affect in transformation of individuals and society.

5 Gastronomic experience: the case of Gusto

> An ideal customer is one who comes to enjoy it.
>
> Aneta, waitress at Gusto

> Deeply intense gustatory, emotional, cultural and spiritual experience can hardly be compared to anything other than a slow walk through a gallery such as Uffizi, Louvre, National or Rijksmuseum.
> The harmonic overtone that soothes the soul and uplifts the spirit will resonate long into your way home. Of course, you cannot want that for a penny, so try to forget about the money and pay blindly using your payment card. Your bank will somehow take care of everything.
>
> From a review of Gusto (2010)

5.1 NORMAL WITHOUT NORMS

When I first met Chef Oliver from Gusto and explained my research project, I told him I was interested in luxury restaurants and before I could continue he interrupted me and said Gusto was not a luxury restaurant: "Look, we don't even have tablecloths here." I felt a bit embarrassed realizing that luxury was not a desired attribute for the restaurant despite it being one of the most expensive, famous and acclaimed restaurants in the country. Wooden tables were not covered with tablecloths on purpose precisely in order to distinguish the restaurant from the notion of luxury that is associated with snobbism. A manager of Gusto explained:

> You see wooden tables. We want people to come and feel good, to feel maybe like at home. Because often you come to a restaurant where there are tablecloths, silver cutlery, and it just looks opulent and not everyone enjoys that. We don't mind if someone comes in wearing jeans. So yes, on one hand, it is luxury – we serve luxury wine, luxury ingredients, it is a luxury to come here. Also price-wise. But on the other hand, it doesn't look luxurious although once in a while, we have a guest who complains that we don't have tablecloths because they are used to them.

Gusto consistently ranked on the top positions of all reviews of Czech restaurants. The restaurant offered tasting menus consisting of dishes inspired by traditional Czech cuisine but prepared using state-of-the-art technology and methods, and made with the best local and seasonal ingredients available within a diameter of 200 kilometers from the restaurant. The concept of this highly acclaimed *haute cuisine* restaurant was to offer to its guests a

gastronomic experience, *gastronomický zážitek*. Food was not eaten to fill one's stomach but to surprise and uplift the spirit, just like a work of art. The cook Milan explained to me:

> Our restaurant works like the theatre. You either go to the theater or you come here to the restaurant. We are experiential restaurant, therefore, you should leave surprised and full of new experiences. It's not that you're hungry and go to eat. You don't come here to satisfy hunger, you come for theatrical performance. That's the meaning. You can consider it a social event.

The most important characteristic of the experience offered to guests was a positive feeling. This was not achieved by food alone. Design, decoration, workers' uniforms, menus – everything was carefully curated to become a sign within a complex network of meanings as if the creators of the concept of the restaurant were structuralists attempting to develop a symbolic system based on binary oppositions. Bare tables were a statement against the traditional notion of luxury restaurant with its long white tablecloths evoking cleanliness, neatness but also snobbism, stiffness and intimidation. Without a bright white tablecloth, one did not have to worry about making a mistake in table manners which could leave a stain on the tablecloth as well as on one's reputation. Despite the fact that dining at Gusto was not entirely without the risk of shame and embarrassment, guests were invited to enjoy the food and themselves. However, tablecloths were not entirely absent – they were hanging on the sides of tables covering guests' lower bodies. Hidden tablecloths expressed ambivalent understanding of luxury, wealth, and power relations in gastronomy that is typical for current *foodies*. For them food is pleasure and enjoyment and while they themselves are against snobbism and celebrate their "omnivorousness," their consumption still takes place in the context of apparent social inequalities (Johnston a Baumann 2009; compare with Bourdieu 1984).

The lighting and mirrors on the walls were all focused on tables and, therefore, on food and not on guests. Waiters and waitresses in black uniforms moved around the restaurant like shadows, quite invisible, but in the moment of serving meals to guests, they would emerge out of darkness and accompany the service with a talk explaining what was being served. Sommeliers, who would select specific wines to be paired with specific dishes, would also present wine and answered as many questions as a guest might have. A guest was not treated as an experienced gourmet, but as someone who desired to be surprised, thus transformed by the experience. Lack of experience with fine dining was not a problem; on the contrary, the

experience involved a moment of learning and transfer of knowledge about the food, its origins, and methods of preparation. As Chef Oliver explained to me, a person who came to the restaurant once in one or two years, was still considered a regular guest. In that sense, they considered themselves a normal restaurant for people who appreciated culinary arts.

Guest´s expectations were not supposed to be met but overcome, which also involved a shift in the etiquette of dining. Taking pictures of meals, playing with food, eating with fingers, tasting food from the plates of one's fellow diners, talking about food, smelling and touching it, unconventional ways of serving food (e.g. on stones, cobble-stones, bark, or in a straw) – all that led to transgression of norms and enhanced the intensity of the experience. I once watched a middle-aged woman eating a tomato salad prepared in form of gel and served in an eight-centimeters-long straw. As she was sucking the salad out of the straw, she was doing it in a flirtatious way and with display of amusement and pleasure. The play with expectations and non-traditional form of eating resembling infantile or erotic sucking led to loosening of bodily control and to pleasure. "The play upon form" here is similar to the structure of joke as described by Douglas (1975) who also draws attention to the physical experience of joke, which involves, among others, a loss of control, for example through an outburst of laughter. On one occasion, at the beginning of a shift, Chef Oliver prepared two little chocolate pralines and placed them in a flower pot filled with moss that he had picked earlier in the forest and then watched as the first guests in the restaurant that day reacted. "I hope they will smile. I would smile. And if they don't, they're boring." The guests smiled and he was happy.[65]

One might argue that conscious breaking of table manners represents a shift in the "civilizing process" (Elias [1939] 2000), but what happens is rather a change in the idea of who is and who is not a "civilized," or disciplined subject. The key to differentiating between the two is the level of affectability of the subject, i.e. her capacity to digest, experience and enjoy – to, what I call, *digesperience*. The amused and moved female guest would fit the image of an ideal guest as defined by waitress Aneta: "An ideal customer is one who comes to enjoy it." She explained:

> The concept of the restaurant is, it's really focused on people who are really interested… people who come to enjoy it; who do enjoy it. Of course, you always have those who are all stiff and sit and wait for a

[65] A restaurant reviewer noticed that the menu started with something sweet – allegedly, "so you wouldn't forget."

> mistake to occur so that they could criticize us but that can't disturb you.

Active interest and enjoyment characterized an ideal quest whereas a bad guest was someone who was stiff, who "sat and waited for a mistake," that is, someone who was passive, did not cooperate and could not be positively surprised. Milan thought that the worst guest was someone "who comes to the restaurant like ours because it's luxury and they only want to show that they have money and are not really interested in the food." Chef Oliver wondered why "someone who doesn't eat 20 kinds of food" would come to this type of restaurant, implying that paying so much and not even being interested in the experience offered did not make sense unless the person was interested more in the status of the restaurant than in its product.

Experience and *digesperiencing* are not products available for purchase and passive consumption. Customers of luxury restaurants actively participate in the production of value. On the other hand, workers do not only produce *digesperience*, they are encouraged to *enjoy* their work.

5.2 WORDS OF MOUTH

A guest who came and enjoyed the food would not necessarily be considered ideal. Interest and prior knowledge were appreciated more than mere politeness. Chef Oliver explained to me that an ideal client would be "someone who is excited even before they come, who looks forward to the experience." They should be fans of food that possessed some knowledge about food as well as about the restaurant and knew about the restaurant through a word of mouth rather than based on the information that was available for the public.

Both expert and lay criticism were appreciated as well. Chef Oliver was interested in innovation and would experiment with different "ingredients" of customer experience on daily basis. Once, he came up to me with a few design suggestions for menus, asking me how I felt about a black and white checkered pattern – whether it attracted the eye or made my eyes cross; or what I thought about different menus for men and women, especially about the fact that menus for women did not have prices printed on them.

Expert knowledge of food and gastronomy was not necessarily valued, especially when it was in form of a review describing aspects such as décor, design, and the level of service in Gusto. "You don't need to know anything about the proper way of how you should be served

– whether from left or right. The important thing is how you feel. Expertise is in being able to describe how you felt and what your experience was."

Fine (1996: 201-202) explains the importance of aesthetic talk, which is aimed at capturing sensory experience of an object or an event. Such aesthetic talk "strengthens the recognition of communal properties" and establishes a context within which tacit knowledge can be shared. Aesthetic talk makes possible a "community of taste." Taste and *digesperience* are individual, ephemeral and private and to enter the public domain, they are subjected to formalization through "first, the imposition of form to regulate the individual appetite, and second, the intellectualization and aesthetization that counter the materiality and ephemerality of food and make a private experience part of a public order." (Parkurst Ferguson 2004: 17) Thus cooking and eating become cuisine, gastronomy, and culinary arts. Through texts and talk, food is socialized and transformed into something public and collective. (Parkurst Ferguson 2004: 17) As Parkuhrst Ferguson (2004: 17) argues, cuisine is a performative art and as such is dependent on words – "culinary discourse transforms the material into the intellectual, the imaginative, the symbolic and the aesthetic."

Chef Oliver thought that most food critics in the country had no idea what they were talking about and therefore did not do their job well. Since experience was so crucial, even amateurs and lay experts could provide valuable feedback. For example, a customer whose email was attached to the board in the kitchen complained that even though the food was great, "it wasn't enough." The customer was unhappy with the service because when he made his reservation over the phone he was notified that the only available table was close to the door leading to restrooms. "Why ruin the experience in the very beginning?" In the end, he was not bothered by the place at all and therefore thought it was an unnecessary disruption to his experience. The customer described himself as well-travelled and explained that with his complaint he wanted to improve the quality of Gusto's services. "It's not only about the food but also about the atmosphere and the experience."

Another example of useful feedback would be customers saying that portions were rather big; music was too loud, and so on. Based on that kind of feedback, the restaurant decided to make changes. A few years ago, the restaurant served both lunch and dinner but customers would often say that lunch was not as good as dinner even though the food was exactly the same. This lead to the decision to only open for dinner. Interestingly, Chef Oliver was not only skeptical of expert knowledge of food critics but also of sociological knowledge. The restaurant hired a company to do a qualitative customer experience research, including blind shopping. The results, he thought, were "too obvious;" they would state what was done

well and what could be improved. Being dedicated to experience and innovation, Chef Oliver did not value criticism based on criteria of how things should be. A good review was not necessarily a positive review, but it was a review that "feels like it was right; it describes the experience."

5.3 RESTAURANT AS AFFECTIVE SPACE

Ideally, during dining, a bond or a relationship between servers and customers was established and within it small errors in service or demanding requests from customers were accepted. Such relationship gave space for negotiation, it obscured inequalities and made the experience more enjoyable. The connection between the producers and consumers was enhanced by open kitchen allowing guests to watch the meticulous preparation of food, hard work, as well as enjoyment of work. Guests who preferred this kind of spectacle to quiet private conversation could dine at the "chef's table" and watch the activity in the visible part of the kitchen. This way, guests could also partially feel the heat and steam of the kitchen and listen to the cooks having conversations raging from short orders such as "two truffles for thirteen, Czech," to complaints about one's trousers getting too low and underneath their heels, to homophobic jokes. Highly affective environment and intense *digesperiencing* added value to food as well as to work and consumption.

Restaurant kitchen was a highly affective space, as I experienced during my participant observation. During two summer months I would observe the restaurant from two places – either next to a garbage bin in the middle of the kitchen, where I could watch what was happening in the whole kitchen area, including the parts of the kitchen that were hidden from guests' view; or next to the refrigerator in the open kitchen where I could also watch guests and servers. I was expected to stand in one of these places to avoid getting in the way of cooks or cooking stuff such as hot equipment. Heat, steam, lack of movement, and the necessity to stay alert, made my fieldwork physically demanding but I was being amused almost constantly by cooks and the cooking process. It was important that I, just like the others, enjoyed myself, expressed interest in learning, joked and tasted food. There was always a lot of activity in the kitchen, giving me the impression that I was among playing children and their toys rather than among working men (compare with Fine 1996: 120). Cooks were curious about how things tasted, whether they turned out well, what food the buyer was going to bring that day; they experimented with different techniques of food

preparation, learned from each other, helped each other, sang and danced, joked, played pranks.

Fine (1996: 177-178) argues that organizations facilitate and restrain occupational aesthetics, a term he uses to talk about the expressive, or sensory, side of production. The term "captures the cognitive ('satisfaction') and affective ('sensory') components of aesthetic judgements and includes the intentional quality of human action. Aesthetics emphasizes that these choices are distinct from purely instrumental and efficient choices." (Fine 1996: 178) Cook and pastry chef Pavel liked that the food in Gusto was "beautiful and colorful. I like it because it's not about coating a schnitzel and throwing it on a pan. The work is complicated and difficult. It's beautiful." One of the first impressions I had when I tasted food in Gusto was: "it's fascinating to taste it and at the same time to see how much WORK is behind it." Indeed, the aesthetical aspect of food was just as important as everything else and the Chef paid a lot of attention to the way dishes were served.

This aesthetic wealth of the restaurant environment increased its affective nature. Cooks also paid attention to their looks and self-presentation. Most of them wore trendy haircuts and spent a lot of time discussing their plans to get tattoos. Whereas servers were not allowed to have painted nails or otherwise individualize their appearance, cooks were encouraged to express themselves as long as it contributed to their motivation and the quality of their work. A lot of them decided to get tattoos for their lower arms even though in a different restaurant they might be required to keep them covered with sleeves and therefore risk felling too hot. But Chef Oliver was different and as a result, expressive colorful tattoos contrasted with white uniforms and added to the aesthetics of restaurant production.

Restaurant kitchens are masculine environments. Even though at Gusto, they were welcoming to women, they respected them if they showed signs of masculinity, such as being covered in tattoos. Milan liked a former cook at Gusto who "was like a guy; she marked days in a calendar when no one could talk to her. It was a menstruation calendar." Joking, swearing, and being rude to each other, were also constantly present. Cooks in Gusto would often talk about "crazy chefs" who did their job perfectly but showed extreme behavior in other areas, for example lifestyle, bodily modifications, body building, clothing, and so on. Perfectionism to the point of "craziness" was an important value shared by cooks in Gusto. Other values included "having a system," "knowing what you're doing," and being interested and motivated to work.

The fact that the restaurant kitchen was an enclosed space and time intensified the experience and interactions within it. Cooks at Gusto would often liken the kitchen staff to a

family and felt loyal and thankful to Chef Oliver as if he were their father. This metaphor effectively connected workers to management (Fine 1996: 113) because it created intimacy and removed alienation. Besides being a community of taste and aesthetics, they became a community of affection.

Intense affective interactions took place not only among human agents but also among non-human ones, and most visibly, between human and non-human agents. There would be pieces of food flying in attempts of being thrown into the garbage bin from a distance; every now and then, someone would cut or burn themselves; cooks would laugh at each other for "trying to combat" dough or meat, they would excitingly shout their preferences as to what meal would be made that day for workers. People, food stuff, tools, odors, and tastes, were in constant interaction and negotiation. At one moment, stingy smell of horseradish being grated made everyone leave the kitchen; at another moment, the smell of traditional semolina porridge made some cooks reminisce over childhood food; and, at the end of a hot summer day's shift, cooks would gather around pieces of cold water melon. These were just as much a form of play as strategies of coping with the pressures of work space and time.

The work in the kitchen was not always amusing. Most of all, it was physically demanding. Play was therefore not only an expression of affective labor that added value to gastronomic experience of guests, it was also a way of coping with the strenuous nature of their work. The cook Štěpán explained how work influenced his digestion and how the symptoms of his digestion consequently kept the spirits lifted and enabled cooks to cope with the long hours spent with other people in an enclosed space.

> **Štěpán:** Cooks are pigs [laughs]. But that's probably not unique. We're here thirteen hours a day and we only talk about movies, sex, sex, and sex. Nothing else. About women. And we fart. We all fart all the time. That keeps us in a good mood. You're here for thirteen hours with people so you need to find a topic and sex is our vice. The ones who have girlfriends are fine but the ones who don't don't feel comfortable.
> **Me:** So you all suffer from flatulence? [laughs]
> **Štěpán:** I'm an extreme case, I get gas even from air. You constantly taste something and it all mixes in the stomach somehow. Some get affected less but it really affects me extremely.

The chef was usually not bothered by cooks' ways of entertainment. Throughout the day, the intensity and variety of expression and interaction would change in response to the rhythm of work, the number of reservations, the time, and other factors. Play was sometimes replaced with stress, which could potentially escalate into conflict, injuries, or ruined food. In

such situations, the chef would remind the cooks: “Don’t stress out, the main thing is that it be perfect.” Perfection was the priority and since stress and chaos lead to mistakes, it was important to keep the rhythm and the tempo of work. Just as too much stress could be detrimental to the production process, boredom was equally undesired because it also interfered with the established pace of work. In accordance with Fine (1996: 71), I also observed that restaurant workers preferred when work was neither too slow nor too fast and whenever they could keep a steady pace and “flow” they experienced the time passing without realizing and they performed well, too. Pavel complained about how time passed in the pastry kitchen:

> When people come at 6, they get to desserts around 8 and until 8, I have nothing to do. I am bored and don’t like it. I need to be busy, otherwise, I do stupid things and that’s not good. Oliver says I am the best when I don’t stop.

5.4 GASTRONOMIC TRANSPARENCY AS A SPECTACLE AND MORALITY

The dynamic, affective, aesthetic and playful environment also served as a spectacle for guests. Parkhurst Ferguson (2004: 160) notices that there has been a major shift of focus from the diner to the chef resulting in competition for the authority to define gastronomic experience. “More than the finished product, the actual processes of production are what create the spectacle.” (Parkhurst Ferguson 2004: 161) Some guests indeed enjoyed observing the coordination of workers, technologies and materials, occasionally commenting on how interesting it was. A middle-aged couple started a conversation with me and asked me what I was writing. They were astonished by the harmony of work and compared it to a “symphony.” They also commented on how cooks were sweating and admitted they themselves were a bit too hot from the kitchen’s vapors but remained seated at chef’s table and engaged in observation rather than private conversation. Sharing the heat, “listening” to the “symphony” of work, affected them and added to their experience.

The shift of attention from the consumer to the producer is also related to the trend of open kitchens (Parkhurst Ferguson 2004: 161). Interestingly, not only the cooks were visible but so was I. Curiosity, willingness to learn, genuine interest and passion, were valued by the chef and the staff, which is why, I think, I was never regarded as a disturbance to the experience and never needed to hide. The chef was never bothered by me taking notes in the open kitchen. This visibility, “transparency” and willingness to share the “world of the

restaurant" with guests as well as with me, was not only an expression of "conspicuous production" that preferred seeing and listening to actual tasting (Parkhurst Ferguson 2004: 160); but rather of the confidence about the values produced in the restaurant. Cook Milan talked about being shocked when he first saw the open kitchen at Gusto when he was on an excursion there as a student of a vocational school:

> We stared at it as idiots. Open kitchen where guests see you and you see them. You just don't know that. We all used to cook somewhere in a t-shirt and a dirty apron, hidden somewhere in a cellar, where there wasn't even a window. And now there was this.

Later he explained their dedication to transparency:

> Cooks are white miners. Waiters as well. They're not managers but people who work manually. It's the same as if you're in a factory… and that's not very trendy today. And another problem is, we had communism here and gastronomy was where people stole the most. People stole from customers and that went on for a really long time and even now, there are restaurants where the key is to "rob" the customer. That sucks. But not here. … On the contrary, we show everything, we show how we do things because we are proud of what we do and we are honest. So why not show it?

Cook Štěpán also appreciated the transparency of production:

> It's nice that we see the guests and they see us. It also makes cooking cleaner; those boys can't do anything dirty, nothing can fall. I think it's great. Ideally, every restaurant should have an open kitchen.

These opinions show that in Czech context, the focus on production maps onto a discourse of postsocialist transformation and therefore, the value of transparency lies not only in its potential to entertain and, perhaps, intimidate, but also in the morality of new forms of production. Gusto was not only a restaurant, it was an example of how gastronomy could be "purified from socialism" (Eyal 2003) – socialist cooking, working conditions, customer relations, and, importantly, from socialist affect.

In order for workers to get an understanding of what they were creating, Chef Oliver required that all employees saw the restaurant as guests. Pavel said it was not until he saw the performance as a guest, with his mother who thought "all the attention she was not used to was crazy," that he understood what type of restaurant they were and how professional everything was and he was impressed. I was invited to dine at the restaurant as a guest as

well, precisely in order to experience it as a guest. Unlike in other restaurants where I worked, in Gusto, workers were entitled to consume their own products in order to improve them. Tasting was "absolutely crucial" and all employees were encouraged to taste the food that was being served so sommeliers could pair it with appropriate wine, servers could describe it, and cooks could make improvements. Tasting also helped create a community of taste. The latter was important for me because it allowed me to participate even though I was not working for the restaurant.

5.5 ORGANIZING CREATIVITY AND WORK

Chef Oliver was also to dedicated innovation and creativity. He encouraged cooks to experiment and even be aware when mistakes could lead to new discoveries. "Sometimes, we come up with new stuff because we're lazy or make a mistake." Most cooks were very young and fresh out of vocational schools, which meant, that they were flexible to learn new skills according to the Chef's vision. Chef Oliver, however, also encouraged all workers to go on internships to acclaimed restaurants around the world as he thought it would benefit not only them personally but also the restaurant as a whole. He himself liked to travel and try new things and then experiment and try to create similar dishes with local ingredients. To encourage cooks to go abroad, the restaurant even organized free English courses for cooks so they would improve their language skills.

Another contribution of Gusto to Czech gastronomy was in its working conditions and work culture. Chef Oliver was particularly encouraging of workers' ambitions. Despite some cooks not showing high ambitions, they were, in fact, one of the most ambitious young cooks in the country. Milan had the greatest expectations and even though he did not speak English very well, he did internships in Brazil, Belgium, the Netherlands, and later left to go to New Zealand. He said he became a cook so he could work at a cruise ship but became genuinely interested in the profession while at vocational school, unlike most of his fellow students. In his year, there were about 120 cooks but only 3 of them were pursuing it as a serious career.

> That's a normal number. These 3 are the ones who have a good job and cook at a decent restaurant. Many people end up cooking, frying schnitzels, doing the postsocialist cuisine, which isn't about cooking. It's heating things up, adding chemicals from Knorr and shit.

Štěpán (32) said he would have chosen a different career because of the lack of opportunities for career growth in the country, the image that cooks had, and demanding nature of work. "To be honest, I don't know what I'll do in 10 years." Reflecting on the level of vocational education he got in the 1990's he said:

> I have never been bright and wasn't good at school so I was deciding between being a mechanic, a cook or a carpenter. Today, I would choose to be a carpenter. Honestly, the school was really bad. I don't know how it's now but if I had seen a restaurant like this back then, I wouldn't know what to do. We now laugh at those senseless things we cooked but it was a different time.
> **Do you like your work?**
> Here, it's perfect. I don't complain. … We make beautiful food, great ingredients, the cooking is how it's supposed to be. Here, I can be proud to be a cook. There are horrible restaurants where I would be ashamed to work or eat. I'd rather do something else, a different work.

Cook Oskar shared Štěpán's concerns about the impossibility of career growth in the country.

> If you want to keep a certain standard, certain quality of work, you don't have many opportunities. For example, I have no idea where to go after Gusto. You have to go abroad. I can but many guys who have families can't.

Before I worked in Gusto, I had never seen such a welcoming and stimulating kitchen environment. Cooks and service workers could easily transfer to any other restaurant that belonged to the franchise, which co-owned Gusto and wanted to gain new skills. They also had discounts in the restaurants and would be invited to dine in them with another guest on their birthday.

5.6 "IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN THERE, YOU'RE NOT CZECH."

In the beginning of one of the reviews of Gusto, the author describes "perfection," which is "elaborated to the details that are subtle on first sight."

> You do not become fully aware of everything until your partner returns from the restroom and is freshly perfumed with nothing else but Clinique by Estée Lauder and is glowing while she is telling you about all the kind and considerate surprises waiting there for ladies: from cotton pads, through nail files, to hand lotion, hair spray and floss.

Experience and surprise waited everywhere – from eating to excretion. The goal was to feed the guest but also to incite curiosity, interest and *hunger* for more stimuli. At the end of the review, we read:

> Throughout the whole evening, you are accompanied by lightness, and even after a dessert you don't feel satiated, overwhelmed, or even slightly sick. The harmonic overtone that soothes the soul and uplifts the spirit will resonate long into your way home. Of course, you cannot want that for a penny, so try to forget about the money and pay blindly using your payment card. Your bank will somehow take care of everything.
>
> From a review of Gusto (Bušta et. al. 2010, 20)

The author implied that the value of experience of eating in Gusto was difficult to calculate and therefore its price should be forgotten and overlooked. This denial of price is, again, a mark of *discreet economy* (Hajdáková 2013a). Another review from 2014 gives advice on how "to spare oneself a heart attack when paying:" "If you really cannot afford to spend over 5,000 crowns per person, this is not a restaurant for you." The monetary value of the experience could cause an unwanted surprise to a guest who was not prepared and unable to afford it. The price, or the warning that one's table was close to restrooms, illustrate that in such highly affective space of experiential gastronomy, there is always the threat of disappointment and disruption.

Even though production was on display, this did not mean that work was not discreet. The kitchen had a part that was invisible to guests where workers would hide to relax, eat or to just have a relief. The restaurant floor was dark so that guests would focus on food and were not disturbed by all the servers, waiters, sommeliers, and sometimes also cooks who would serve *amuse-bouche* in person. The restaurant's design was very minimalist, too, and because of dimmed windows, guests were not conspicuously visible to people who passed by the restaurant.

Most importantly, the restaurant prided itself in being more of a cultural and educational institution rather than mere business. It was not just another business activity of someone who was not even a professional in gastronomy, but an important "promoter of Czech cuisine done in progressive ways," as Chef Oliver described it. "A lot of Czechs cook Italian cuisine but no Italian will cook Czech cuisine," Chef OIiver said to explain the role of Gusto in reinventing traditional cuisine for the country's citizens as well as for its visitors.

That is why one influential review could bear the title “If you haven’t been there, you’re not Czech,” paraphrasing the famous chant of hockey fans “If you don’t jump, you’re not Czech.”

6 The value of *digesperience*

> You don't just expect to like the food, you also expect the surprise,…
>
> Marie, guest at Gusto

> I want to eat something that doesn't exist. For me, my biggest goal in the kitchen is to like a dish at a creative *and* emotional level. As you can imagine, surprising me is very difficult so when someone does surprise me with his or her food, that's when I'm moved. A dish that would help me sort of change the way that I understand cooking—that's what I would love.
>
> Ferran Adrià[66]

6.1 INTERSUBJECTIVE SPACETIME

Munn (1986: 3–13) observes transformative processes through which community creates symbolic value within what she calls "intersubjective spacetime." Through their actions, agents create spacetime and are also created by it in the sense that the created spacetime gives a form to how the agents perceive the world and consecutively, they create themselves as aspects of this spacetime. Acts of hospitality create space-time relations that might be based on memory, food processing and longevity of food, and on influencing the minds of other agents. (Munn 1986: 49–73) The dialectical relation between food giving (creation of positive value) and food consumption (creation of negative value), is a dialectics between the expansion and contraction of intersubjective spacetime. How can we analyze transformations that create value in a luxury restaurant?

When treating the restaurant as a laboratory, it is easy to make the mistake of looking at it as if it were marked by a specific space and time. However, through the process of *digesperiencing*, the spacetime expands or contracts similarly to the way it does in the case of hospitality described by Munn. As Dolphijn (2004; compare with Sutton 2001) illustrates on the notorious madeleine scene in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, taste has the capacity to evoke memories of different spaces and times. The taste and smell of the madeleine does not represent a fragment of time and space, it is "the point from which all times are created," the point from which the past, the future and the present are formed (Dolphijn 2004: 13). The madeleine affects Proust, but also Proust affects the madeleine, because it only becomes food and a madeleine in the moment when it affects Proust as food and a madeleine. The taste and

[66] Adrià in Bullow (n. d.).

the smell of the madeleine create the content of Proust's experience that is "unfolding" and "infinitely complicating itself" (Dolphijn 2004: 13). This encounter becomes an event, "a bundle of singularities that is actualized by the tasting and the smelling of the madeleine" (Dolphijn 2004: 13). The madeleine becomes an expression of a story, but it is not only a symbol, or a means, it is a multiplicity, composed of ever unfolding singularities. The madeleine, Proust himself, time, and space, are interconnected and affect each other (Dolphijn 2004: 13–16).[67] The connection and interaction between singularities of an event happens within various regimes defined by specific activity and desire through which an affective connection is created. An event is always connected to other events and is open to the workings of an infinite number of regimes and processes of change.[68]

Similarly to Appadurai's account of the "regimes of value" and "commodity trajectories," Graeber (1996: 20) argues that "to understand the value attributed to any particular object means that one must understand the meaning of the various acts of creation, consecration, use, appropriation, and so on, that make up its history. For Graeber, therefore, it is not only the physicality of an object but also its temporality that contribute to its value. He explains:

> … when one recognizes an object as valuable, one becomes a kind of bridge across time. That is to say, one recognizes not only the existence of a history of past desires and intentions that have given shape to the present form of the object, but that history extends itself into the future through one's own desires and intentions, newly mobilized in that very act of recognition. In fetishizing an object, then, one is mistaking the power of a history internalized in one's own desires for a power intrinsic to the object itself." (Graeber 1996: 20)

Digesperience is connected to memory, food trajectories across spaces and times (consider local and seasonal food) and various human and non-human interactions. History of objects may appear as its visible and invisible properties but, as Graeber reminds, the history is internalized in one's own desires and is not an objective property of the commodity. Similarly, in case of affective commodities, trajectories across spacetime are visible as well as invisible, and known as well as forgotten. Through consumption and experience they affect

[67] To affect matter, the matter must be "willing to subject itself to the logic of a regime," (Dolphijn 2004: 23) it must have the capacity for being affected and it must be coded. Dolphin illustrates this using the example of *anorexia nervosa*, which is related to the ideal of beauty and is therefore coded and coding in the sexual regime. An anorexic woman is "defined" by her desire for non-food, and non-food is "defined" as such because she finds it inedible (e.g. because it contains too much fat). (Dolphijn 2004: 23).

[68] In an event, a multiplicity of matters creates a flow in which matters manipulate each other and thus cause change and redefinition of the event. (Dolphijn 2004: 23–24)

one's body and mind and depending on their value-transforming potencies expand or contract intersubjective spacetime.

Production and consumption of luxury gastronomic experience are time intensive. Not only does food take a long time to select, prepare and present, but even relationships of loyalty between guests and the restaurant stretch over large periods of time. Therefore Chef Oliver might call a customer who came to Gusto once a year a regular guest. As I had explained before (Hajdáková 2013a), discreet economy is an economy that obscures its economic nature through the morality of gift exchange. As Bourdieu (1997 in Callon 1988: 14) following Mauss ([1925] 1969) argues, the interval between the gift and counter-gift makes it possible to "mask the contradiction between the intended truth of the gift as a generous, free and one-way gesture, and the truth that makes it a moment in a relationship of exchange which transcends the singular acts of exchange." The time interval between the gift and the counter-gift is crucial for the gift to appear as disinterested. In Gusto, this was created not only within production, service, and consumption. This time-interval was intrinsic to meals and drinks themselves, as if it were condensed within these commodities as their history. In an affective connection, this condensed time could emerge and expand or contract intersubjective space-time and generate value.

6.2 SURPRISE

Taste and other aspects of gastronomic experience are neither individual nor exclusively physiological and *digesperiencing* does not take place solely within the regime of taste. The condition of *digesperience* is a bodily subject that is enabled to digest and have an experience within various regimes, such as the regime of taste, health, nutrition, knowledge and expertise, aesthetics, relations of power, scarcity, price and so on.[69] Marie, a guest at Gusto who considered herself a foodie, said about her experience:

> It's really interesting … considering one has experienced this game, in Gusto, for example, it's all just fun because they come, they show you the cookbook and they're all like buddies "how are you doing" and all this informal talk. And then, of course, in Gusto – unlike in other restaurants – every dish is prepared in a very sophisticated way. For example, they make their broth for hours and you

[69] Branding of food allows for the creation of image and perception of particular products in order to create desired experiences in consumers (Iggers 2007: 99). In fact, as Iggers suggests, the image has become more real and feels more real than the object (Iggers 2007: 98) and therefore plays an important role in experiencing taste. Similarly, Becker (1953) pointed out the power of talking in the case of marijuana users.

> appreciate it, of course. And also the presentation of the food is a game that you are suddenly a part of. So, you're excited about the details, the combinations. When you ask, "you've got some foam made of Czech cheese, hey, since you're talking about it, what kind of cheese is it?" "well, *Blaťácké zlato*." It affects you, your soul.

For Martin, also a foodie, the important part of gastronomic experience was "interplay of various aspects:"

> It's interplay of various aspects; it can never be just one thing. It starts with how they welcome you, like I said, service constitutes 70% of the experience for me. And of course, the food itself. But it's the service. I've had experience with restaurants where the food wasn't the best but the headwaiter could talk about it so persistently and engagingly that it just tasted good. So service, unfortunately.

In order for gastronomic experience to be perceived as experience, there has to be an "interruption" of the flow of habitual experience (Dawney 2013: 628); the subject has to be "put into motion" (Latour 2004: 210) and learn to be "articulate" – that is, affected by differences (Latour 2004: 210).[70] My informants often talked about their anticipation of *positive surprise*. As I mentioned earlier, their experience was intensified through a play with expectations, for example by means of molecular cuisine, creative process, affective labor of servers and cooks, complex methods of preparation, aesthetic aspect of food, knowledge, gifts, or all the "kind and considerate surprises waiting for ladies in the restrooms," as a food critic wrote in his review of Gusto. In this sense, surprise participates in the logic of the gift as it plays into the ambivalence between expectations and disinterestedness and is inalienable. When it came to surprises, Gusto was a very generous restaurant and if we understand luxury as a form of excess (Lipovetsky 2003),[71], Gusto was also a truly luxury restaurant.

In her book *Service Included*, Phoebe Damrosch describes the philosophy of Chef Keller, the chef in the famous New York restaurant *The French Laundry*, and his "law of diminishing returns,"

> in which he reduces the size of his many courses to make room for a variety of flavors and textures. At the French Laundry, he constructs his menu in order to give only enough to "satisfy your appetite and pique your curiosity," enough to have you beg for "just one more bite." The other side of this law is the abundance of extravagance. "I want people to know what foie gras is all about," he writes. "I

[70] Compare with Becker (1953).
[71] The logic of the gift is inherent to this notion of excess and luxury (see Mauss [1925] 1969; Appadurai 1986; Hajdáková 2013a).

> go overboard with truffles and caviar too, so that people who have perhaps only eaten truffles in stingy quantities can taste them and say 'Oh, now I understand.'"

Excess should not be considered in opposition to necessity or in terms of "added value" or "getting more than expected." It should also be understood in terms of entities and differences that affect the subject enabling it to articulate controversies (Latour 2004); and, to use Munn's theorization, as expansion of intersubjective spacetime. in the form of consuming commodities, in which space and time are accumulated (consider wine, for example). The law of diminishing returns that Chef Thomas Keller follows is based on the realization that an excess of stimuli may lead to habitualization and decrease in the value of product and experience, and, on the other hand, "abundant extravagance" allows for a never-ending interplay of matter and meaning.

6.3 SCHRÖDINGER'S FOIE GRAS

> "When a monkey peels a banana, is he cooking? … What if *I* peel a banana for breakfast?"
> Ferran Adrià at Harvard University[72]

Appadurai (1986: 38) argues that luxury should be regarded as a special "register" of consumption, which has some or all of the following attributes:

> (1) restriction, either by price or by law, to elites; (2) complexity of acquisition,… (3) semiotic virtuosity, that is, to signal fairly complex social messages (…); (4) specialized knowledge as a prerequisite for their "appropriate" consumption; … and (5) a high degree of linkage of their consumption to body, person, and personality. (Appadurai 1986: 38)

All these are characteristics of luxury gastronomic experience. Here, I would like to focus on the "semiotic virtuosity" of such experience and look at food as a "material-semiotic object" (Haraway in Clough 2000: 5) that has a *text*ure.[73] Consider the *text*ure of foie gras as described by the cook Milan.

[72] Eater Staff (2013).

[73] I draw on Barthes' (1986) notion of Text. Text, for Barthes, is not a finite substance; it is relational, experiential, infinite, and irreducibly plural. It is woven of meanings, substances, heterogeneous entities, codes, combinations, and other texts. Etymologically, says Barthes, text is a fabric, which is why talking about *text*ure of food is relevant. Importantly, the Text is not consumed and it is not separated from the moment of production. It plays and generates pleasure in circular, rather than causal, movement. (Barthes 1986: 59–63)

> So, we were making a wafer from foie gras. It's not like you just dry foie gras, you have to add some chemicals but, ok, you make a wafer. We're using this recipe and making the wafer because foie gras isn't Czech, so we make it with smoked beef tongue. If you're a cook, you're supposed to understand things in a certain way. So, a normal cook understands that smoked beef tongue goes with horseradish, mustard, bread, apple, horseradish-apple dip, *vejmrda* is what it's called in old Czech – horseradish with apple. It's the pairing of food – horseradish, apple, break, mustard, pickle. We make all this. But we make it differently. We make a tongue wafer so you don't have a classic tongue, you have a wafer and you look at it and don't know what to expect. You eat it and suddenly, you have a beef tongue in your mouth. And we know that that goes with horseradish so what we make, for example, is: we mix horseradish fresh with milk, we add agar and turn it into a puree. We have the tongue the horseradish and we need an apple, but we don't want to use classic apple, so we use, for example, dried apple. This is how it works. It's all the same stuff, nothing complicated, we just make it differently.

Milan explained the "logic" behind the creative process of making new original dishes, in this case, foie gras. The fact that it was not even a "real" foie gras is not the only surprising part – surprise might come from the traditional-nontraditional combination, the form of wafer, but it might also be the manner of preparation, presentation, aesthetics, or the story of particular ingredients, and so on.

Digesperiencing consists of multiplicity of events and offers an excess of moments with the capacity to generate value. Value itself is affective as it is conditioned by interplay of the affecting and the affected. What is not experienced as valuable does not have a value. For example, the value of foie gras is uncertain if it is consumed by someone who has never tasted a "real" foie gras, or refuses to eat entrails, or simply does not enjoy the taste and does not appreciate the ingredients, the combination of ingredients, the method of preparation, the originality of the dish and so on. Inherent to value is this "quantum moment," when value and non-value (or an illusion of value) are in "superposition;" that is, when a singularity within the process of *digesperiencing* exists in all its potentialities and the result is neither predictable nor measurable.

Latour (1986) uses the term "immutable mobile" to describe things that can move and travel without being changed in the process, such as maps, graphs, books, or money. A gastronomic experience can hardly be regarded as immutable or mobile, even though a recipe or the mapping of creative process, such as the drawings by Ferran Adrià (2014), can. Yet, gastronomic experience is translatable into monetary value although there is a constant risk

that the desired affect and value will not be generated or one might be affected negatively and thus, negative value might be generated.

"Consider the Lobster," David Foster Wallace appeals in the title of his essay:[74]

> But they [lobsters] are themselves good eating. Or so we think now. Up until sometime in the 1800s, though, lobster was literally low-class food, eaten only by the poor and institutionalized. Even in the harsh penal environment of early America, some colonies had laws against feeding lobsters to inmates more than once a week because it was thought to be cruel and unusual, like making people eat rats…
> Now, of course, lobster is posh, a delicacy, only a step or two down from caviar.

Wallace's essay is a thoughtful reflection on the eating and preparation of lobsters. However, even though he does not want to "come off as shrill or preachy," he concludes the essay with a series of questions that, above all, question the value of lobster in the context of gourmet consumption:

> Given the (possible) moral status and (very possible) physical suffering of the animals involved, what ethical convictions do gourmets evolve that allow them not just to eat but to savor and enjoy flesh-based viands (since of course refined enjoyment, rather than just ingestion, is the whole point of gastronomy)? And for those gourmets who'll have no truck with convictions or rationales and who regard stuff like the previous paragraph as just so much pointless navel-gazing, what makes it feel okay, inside, to dismiss the whole issue out of hand? That is, is their refusal to think about any of this the product of actual thought, or is it just that they don't want to think about it? Do they ever think about their reluctance to think about it? After all, isn't being extra aware and attentive and thoughtful about one's food and its overall context part of what distinguishes a real gourmet? Or is all the gourmet's extra attention and sensibility just supposed to be aesthetic, gustatory?

One can imagine that after reading Wallace's essay, lobster will not strike the same desire as it would have done before. The value and the illusion of value are in superposition and, in their potentiality, they both exist at the same time.[75] To look further at this "quantum

[74] The title is probably a reference to M. F. K. Fisher's book Consider the Oyster.

[75] Going back to Latour's concept of *factish* that expresses the relationship between what is "real" and what is "constructed" ("the more constructed, the more real") describes a similar moment. That which is constructed does not necessarily have to be contingent or unreal. Similarly, Barthes (1986: 146) argues against the opposition between the concrete and its representation: "The pure and simple 'representation' of the 'real,' the naked relation of 'what is' (or has been) thus appears as a resistance to meaning; this resistance confirms the great mythic opposition of the *true-to-life* (the lifelike) and the *intelligible*; it suffices to recall that, in the ideology of our time, obsessive reference to the 'concrete' (in what is rhetorically demanded of the human sciences, of literature, of behavior) is always brandished like a weapon against meaning, as if, by some statutory exclusion, what is alive cannot not signify – and vice versa."

moment" in the production of value, Derrida's treatment of the impossibility of the gift (and of *différance*) may be an inspiration. Clough (2000) suggests that *différance* be considered in its ontological implications. Following Derrida, she argues that

> "the gift," forces ontology to "break off . . . with all originary authenticity." To be a pure gift, neither obligation nor debt can be induced; the gift cannot be returned or produce exchange. This impossible idea of the gift, of the given, therefore, ruins any presumption of origin or authenticity in Being. It is preontological, or what Derrida refers to as "hauntological." (Clough 2000: 5–6)

Ontology of value of gastronomic experience is just as "haunted." *Digesperiencing* consists of plenty of singularities, events, and connections between them (especially when talking about luxury gastronomy, "the law of diminishing returns" and "abundant extravagance") that have the capacity to generate affect, meaning and value, and allow for a back-and-forth movement through reflexivity and self-referential nature of commodities.

6.4 THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

> "This Is Not a Dinner"
> – Title of an event hosted by Ferran Adrià and Richard Geoffroy[76]

I want to move away from the limited ontology that views objects, events, and acts in terms of truth or illusion.[77] Instead, I draw upon Clough (2000: 7) who – following Deleuze and Guattari in their departure from conceptualizations based on the transcendental principle of unity – suggests shifting from "the regime of truth to that of desiring." In the regime of desiring, success is measured in terms of affectivity and the success or failure of luxury hospitality therefore depends on how singularities move and assemble rather than on being identical or true to hospitality. In that sense, luxury hospitality is a "machinic assemblage," – "a composing apparatus, a composition of desire." (Clough 2000: 7) It is in this space of "assembling" of singularities that value and non-value are in superposition.

Desire also plays an important role in Simmel's (1978) theory of value, according to which, value is never inherent to an object but emerges from the intersubjective space of desire and satisfaction. For Simmel, valuable objects are those "that resist our desire to possess them." (Simmel 1978: 67). In order to possess an object of desire, one has to sacrifice

[76] Lobrano (2015).
[77] Even though in my previous research I described the "making of the illusion of hospitality." (Hajdáková 2013a).

something that is an object of someone else's desire. Simmel says: "The difficulty of acquisition, the sacrifice offered in exchange, is the unique constitutive element of value, of which scarcity is only the external manifestation, its objectification in the form of quantity." (Simmel 1978: 100) As Appadurai argues, "exchange is not a by-product of the mutual valuations of objects, but its source." (Appadurai 1986: 4) I would like to show how, besides desires and sacrifices, the quantum moment is also generative of value. I will focus on four types of configurations within the quantum moment: (1) relation between visibility and invisibility; (2) information asymmetry and distribution of knowledge and ignorance; (3) intersubjectivity and interactivity between consumer and producer; and (4) distribution of embarrassment and satisfaction. I would like to entertain the idea of the possibility of "commodity skepticism" as opposed to "commodity fetishism," through which Marx [1887] explains the "mystical character" of a commodity – the illusion that its value is an objective property of the commodity. In the words of Marx, "there it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things." For Marx, commodity fetishism is an everyday religion.

A specific feature of experiential gastronomy as well as of other areas of consumption is the level of reflexivity regarding the experience.[78] Based on how guests reflect on their encounter, every event in the process of *digesperiencing*, might be perceived as disappointment, unhappiness, frustration, shock, and so on. Reflecting cannot be separated from *digesperiencing*; thinking and reflecting are both affective, reminds Thrift (2004: 60). Through "commodity skepticism," the value of commodities appears as illusory and relative, especially if the commodity does not affect one's perception, knowledge, action, and judgement, and does not stimulate desire which could be satisfied and lead to pleasure.

6.4.1 THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE

The tale of *The Emperor's New Clothes* illustrates the workings of value in a sphere of luxury consumption. It shows that the value of emperor's new clothes cannot be explained solely in terms of exchange. Emperor's clothes are not to be exchanged, they are meant to be displayed and to show which people are unfit for their posts or stupid because they cannot see the invisible clothes.

[78] Zukin (1991: 214–215) argues that cuisine is related to the phenomenon of gentrification and both originated in the 1970s, when new relations between production, investment, and consumption began to result in a new organization of consumption. This new form of consumption relies on critical infrastructure that is an infrastructure of agents that are critical of urban developments and produce critique. Concomitantly, a new group of consumers emerges and distinguishes itself from other groups through their "reflexive consumption."

Graeber (1996) shows how value and power are expressed through visibility and invisibility. Physicality of valued objects is an important aspect in the production of value as it allows both for an idea of abstract, invisible, power hiding behind the material object, as well as concrete, visible power resulting from physical and aesthetic properties of the object. The former represents direct action and the capacity for unspecified action, whereas the latter points to the object's past, how it has been valued by others in the past, it therefore represents reflection. For example, king's visible ornaments display his power and who he is, rather than what he can do (Graeber 1996: 9). Graeber (1996: 6) points to Foucault's analysis of the shift in power that took place in Europe in the eighteenth century. Whereas in feudal system, power was on display through material culture and the "material body of the king," disciplinary regimes exert power through invisible means, such as bureaucracy and surveillance. Graeber further illustrates the shift pointing out gender aspects of adornment. During Renaissance, men's fashion has shifted from ornaments and colors to simplistic clothes, reserving decorative elements and ornamental clothing only for women. In their invisibility then, men represent action and power while women's visibility expresses their attention to herself, she must watch herself. (Graeber 1996: 7) The story of Gyges, also mentioned by Graeber (1996: 11), shows the moral problem of invisibility, which allows for unjust behavior. Gyges was a shepherd who found a magic ring that allowed him to be invisible as he wished. He used it to seduce the queen of Lydia and eventually became a king himself.

In a restaurant, luxury is produced through discretion that makes certain subjects, objects, and acts visible and some invisible. Violation of discreet economy through making some of its aspects visible, led to disruption of authentic hospitality and, consequently, to frustration, even feelings of being mistreated. On the other hand, if other things were made invisible, such as the process of production, the morality and trustworthiness of the restaurant became questionable.[79] In *Down and Out in Paris and London,* George Orwell famously warned against the hidden part of restaurants where food was made in dirty conditions. Fine (1996: 32–33) explains the structural necessity of "dirt" in organizations and work environment; and Goffman (1959) explains the importance of "backstage." Shifts in visibility and invisibility are related to cultural meanings given to production and consumption. Parkhurst-Ferguson (2004: 154-165) describes the development of "conspicuous production" in contrast to "conspicuous consumption" of the upper classes described by Veblen ([1899] 2005). As both Graeber and Goffman notice, visibility and invisibility are two sides of the

[79] See Hajdáková (2013a).

same coin. They are charged with moralities, meanings and have a temporal aspect. Gusto's cook Štěpán, for example, shared an opinion of many workers in gastronomy:

> I am skeptical about Czech people. Half of them only come once and only to brag that they have been here. There are people who love it but they have to be rich. They are people who come here once a month but you know they live in a different world. They're nice. Then, there are those who are not nice and they only show off. But people, who are really rich, they are great. They come to the kitchen, talk to us like normal people. We're not just line cooks for them.

Someone who behaves like a rich person is probably not as rich as someone who behaves like a "normal person." Similarly, visible luxury was not as valuable as discreet luxury. In the quantum moment, discretion and conspicuousness – two modes of luxury – can mobilize the production of both positive and negative value.

6.4.2 INFORMATION ASYMMETRY

Appadurai (1986: 41) argues that commodities represent complex distributions of knowledge resulting in information asymmetries[80] at various points within their trajectories, possibly yielding profit. (Appadurai 1986: 43) The distance between producers and consumers allows for unequal distribution of knowledge and therefore opens up a space for expertise and experts who are expected to determine the criteria of authenticity. Especially in the case of luxury commodities, the criteria of authenticity need to be elaborated and complicated in order for those commodities to remain in elite economic spheres. "The very complicated competition and collaboration between 'experts' from the art world, dealers, producers, scholars, and consumers is part of the political economy of taste in the contemporary West." (Appadurai 1986: 45) Following Baudrillard, Appadurai argues that this results in commodities becoming signs in a system of signs of status (Appadurai 1986: 45) and are no longer mere commodities or products. It is the purpose of politics, and especially of what Appadurai calls the "tournaments of value," to negotiate and define what is desirable and worth sacrifice.

> What is political about this process is not just the fact that it signifies and constitutes relations of privilege and social control. What is political about it is the constant tension between the existing framework (of price, bargaining, and so forth) and the tendency of commodities to breach these frameworks, This tension itself has its source in the fact that not all parties share the same *interests* in any

[80] Compare with Akerlof (1970).

> specific regime of value, nor are the interests of any two parties in a given exchange identical. (Appadurai 1986: 57)

As Appadurai proves, knowledge, as well as ignorance and taste, are therefore political. Since commodities are such complex material-semiotic and spatiotemporal entities, the processes of their exchange and circulation (which are the source of value, and not vice-versa – as Appadurai, following Simmel confirms) offer an inexhaustible interplay of quantum moments and value shifts. These occur because "commodities constantly spill beyond the boundaries of specific cultures (and thus of specific regimes of value)..." (Appadurai 1986: 57). As complex commodities, luxury goods and experiences represent complex and complicated distribution of knowledge and ignorance. In Gusto, gastronomic experience was valuable if it expanded one's experience, spacetime, and knowledge in form of learning or being moved by a surprise. Milan explained:

> There are people who would stop eating in order to listen to you and what you have to say about the food. I like that because it means they appreciate my work. There are also people who are not interested but you don't pay attention to them, sometimes you don't even present it for them because they are not interested. You don't care because you don't even know they've been there. You don't have them in your memory. If they're interested, you're like "yeah, last week those people from Singapore really enjoyed it." Those people remain in your head for some time. They you forget about them too.

Expressing interest in information about food is not only a sign of respect for one's work, skills and knowledge; it is also a way of being remembered. Knowledgeable waiters and cooks were precisely what distinguished Gusto and Verdi from many other restaurants but because restaurant work is interactive (Sherman 2007), guests were expected to be interested in knowing about what they were getting. Without a desire to know, guests could not fully appreciate the value of food. Knowledge was an important part of *digesperience* also in the sense that surprise cannot happen unless one is aware of what they knew before and what they were learning. Even Ferran Adrià wishes to eat something that would change the way he understands cooking.[81]In the eyes of someone very knowledgeable, a lot of products and experiences lose value because they do not have the capacity to "move" that person.

[81] Adrià in Bullow (n. d.).

6.4.3 CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION OF VALUE

Subjected to taste, luxury commodities and services are linked to body, personality and the self, and therefore, appear as subjective and corporeal. On the other hand, they are social in the sense that they can express one's uniqueness, acquisition of taste, moral qualities, and elite status. Highmore (2010: 121) shows that in the eighteenth century, as a subject of philosophy, aesthetics was predominantly concerned with the senses, sensory perception, and material experience. "Being generally untrustworthy and unedifying, this creaturely life has to be transformed, and in the end (but also in the beginning) this is what aesthetics becomes – a form of moral improvement – where the improvement is aimed at sensation, sentiment, and perception." (Highmore 2010: 122) Thus, taste and feelings of disgust have become not only tools for assessment of art but also of moral betterment, and, as Bourdieu (1984) shows, of social distinction. Taste and disgust, are not associated solely with high cuisine but are present across social space. The fact that taste manifests itself through the body intensifies the perception, judgment, and knowledge of class distinctions. Bourdieu says: "[Taste] functions as a sort of social orientation, a 'sense of one's place,' guiding the occupants of a given...social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position." (Bourdieu 1984: 466) Class and class distinctions become embodied and thus experienced as "natural." (Bourdieu 1984).

Taste, says Highmore, "is an orchestration of the sensible, a way of ordering and demeaning, of giving value and taking it away." (Highmore 2010: 126) Because of the quantum moment in the production of value, the feelings of desire, pleasure, and disgust, which embody a person's position within the society, are no longer trusted as indicators of one's morality. Consider again the example of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Even though the child who shouts that the emperor is naked is acting authentically compared to other characters in the story that fall into the trap of bad faith and become ignorant, the child's tastelessness in itself is not a moral judgment and is not necessarily destructive to the value of the invisible clothes. By pointing at the non-existent clothes, the child causes embarrassment and humiliation. Nevertheless, at the end of the tale Andersen writes: "The Emperor shivered, for he suspected they were right. But he thought, 'This procession has got to go on.' So he walked more proudly than ever, as his noblemen held high the train that wasn't there at all." At that moment, he stopped consuming the value since there was nothing to be consumed, but started producing it.

Another example to consider might be the case of Banksy, a British street artist of unknown identity, who set up a stall in Central Park in New York City where he sold his

artwork for $ 60 per piece. *The Guardian* article from June 2014 says that "A man who had bought two canvases from the stall, proved, by mid-afternoon, to be only the second customer for the prints."[82] The story and a video that captured the situation at the stall, represents an inverse situation to that of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, in which value is not recognized because it is not "woven" with the explicit aim to discover who was "unfit for his office, or who was unusually stupid," but, of course, served just that purpose.

The Guardian article concludes with:

> Gareth Williams, head of contemporary art at Bonham's, said the Central Park stall was a coup. "The fact that his paintings were original and were being offered at a tiny fraction of their true retail value, raises real questions about the perception of worth and the nature of art as commodity within the marketplace – something that the artist must be acutely aware of."

Would anyone praise the taste of one of the few people who bought Banksy's artwork? They might have been passerby with authentic desire to own Banksy's work or people who wanted something regardless of whether the work itself was authentic. Even though authenticity in the appreciation of art seems to be at the heart of the question of the morality of value production, it is only one of multiple regimes of value which Banksy's artwork is interwoven with.[83]

Personal taste is regarded as subjective but/therefore it is embedded in moralities. Authentic preference and constructed preference are the two modes of desire, through which positive or negative value is granted to a commodity or an experience. Moreover, because value production through exchange is interactive, the value of commodity is not established until the moment of exchange. In other words, what is valuable enough for one to sacrifice something else in order to acquire it, is, simultaneously, not valuable enough for the other party, who accepts compensation and gives it up. It is only through this superposition of value and non-value that exchange is possible.

6.4.4 SATISFACTION AND EMBARRASSMENT

> I was shocked; I was scared that I wouldn't like anything. That I couldn't eat what someone would consider a delicacy!

[82] Kennedy (2014).

[83] It is not only Banksy's artwork that is valuable. It might even seem that whatever he touches turns into value. For example, the bricks he used to create a sculpture of the Sphinx, were later sold for as much as $100 a piece. (Silver 2013)

"Human conduct and thought are inherently vulnerable to embarrassment," says Cavell (2010: 322 in Lambek[84]). If value is produced interactively through the exchange of desires and sacrifices (as Simmel would say) there is always the danger of embarrassment and shame. In case of complex commodities, such as luxury and gastronomic experiences, the stakes are even higher and therefore one's desires must be cultivated through taste and also have the capacity to cultivate "good taste." Highmore (2010: 126) claims that:

> [T]he strong relationship between food and taste is not simply based on the metaphoric association of 'taste' with discernment. Rather, food is the sine qua non of taste's affective function. Not only does food provide so many opportunities for the production of shame and humiliation in the face of social ignorance and squeamishness (not being sufficiently knowledgeable about food) as well as biological uncouthness (not having a sensitive palate), it intensifies such production because food is orchestrated around the body (its surfaces, its interiors, its ingestions).

A customer in a luxury environment is supposed to be "always right," meaning that their desires are always regarded as legitimate. But even though all customers are right, they are not equal. The chef in Gusto said several times that, while they were very happy when a customer was satisfied, it was the moments when customers were not fully satisfied that he could learn from them. A customer does not only consume value; she contributes to the production of values with her cultivated desires. An ideal customer might be someone whose desires to be affected withstand the danger of embarrassment. Management of affect is the key vehicle of the civilizing process (Elias [1939] 2000), and also plays a crucial role in the production of value, the construction of taste, and the creation of distinction (Bourdieu 1984).

[84] Lambek (2013: 144–148) follows Arendt (1998) for whom value of an act is linked to its irreversibility and is also dependent on the affective and transformative consequences of that act.

7 Gastronauts of Eastern Europe

There are many ways of overcoming guest's expectations and surprise her but success is never guaranteed. In the following cases, I will show how customers' *digesperiences* emerged in different ways based on their habituses, to use Bourdieu's term, and how they later served as calculative tools that enabled the guests to orient themselves within the market and society.

7.1 ALENA: AFFECT AS HABITUS

In Gusto, Alena had a significant experience that was so strongly imprinted in her memory that she had to share it with me right in the beginning of our interview. She considered it "the greatest blow" when a hostess brought a special chair for her handbag.

> First, I had already been to some restaurants where it was rather official, but the greatest blow, that I felt, was that I had this bag and the hostess brought like a chair, on which she placed my bag, so that the bag wouldn't be on the floor, which is something I don't mind at all that my bag was on the floor since the floor was clean. But the fact that she put the bag on that chair, that just springs to my mind, whenever I remember it.
> …
> I think it's snobbish for my bag to have its own place. I have to return to it because it has sprung to my mind.

Alena visited Gusto several times as a company of her, now, ex-boyfriend. She was in her late twenties, worked as a social worker, and was originally from a small Czech town. She mentioned that she did not grow up in an environment where it would be common to go to luxury restaurants. She perceived the type of gastronomy offered in Gusto as "strange", where she did not "feel herself", and was intimidated by the presence and attention from waiters, their talking about the food, the invasion of intimacy from waiters, the dress code, the high prices, and ingredients she was not used to eat. Alena also mentioned an experience she had when she and the boyfriend visited an expensive restaurant in Paris where she broke into tears while she was looking at the menu and saw unfamiliar costly dishes.

> I cannot say I was overwhelmed. I was scared that I would select something or that I would point my finger at the menu and they would bring, I don't know, foie gras, or something that I don't eat. … I knew it would cost some money and that for that money I could have something, and now I don't understand it [the menu] and don't know, if I'll be able to enjoy it.

Alena pointed out that her emotional outbreak might have been caused by the fact that she was finishing up her bachelor's thesis at the time and she also stressed that she did not have good memories of her ex-boyfriend. Yet, she mentioned a similar, less intense, experience she had in Gusto where they served her food that she did not normally eat because she was disgusted by it.

> It was shocking for me that I ate chicken entrails, hearts, something like that. Of course, it was prepared in such a way that it didn't look like what it actually was. And it didn't taste like that either, but inside you feel you're eating something you don't normally eat. That scared me at first when I looked at the menu. "I won't be able to choose." But of course, when they brought it, it looked good, it tasted good, it was something completely different, but at first, I was shocked that I was scared that I wouldn't like anything. That I can't eat what someone considers a delicacy.

When I asked her if she liked the food in the end, she said: "of course". She "was able to cope with it emotionally" because it was small and all ready to eat. She also said she would definitely like to eat in Gusto again if given the opportunity.

While Alena's body was not used to desiring, eating and digesting certain foods, and did not enjoy the attention of waiters, she described her experience as learning. She said she was less shocked on her next visit but was still not used to all the luxuries. Even though she learned through being shocked, she still was able to digest the unfamiliar and enjoy herself. "Maybe I'm manipulated into liking it," she laughed, referring to the fact that she knew the restaurant was acclaimed and awarded.

Alena also pointed out that she was not picky and did not ask for what was not offered on the menu. As a customer, she felt obliged to agree to select from what was offered. However, at the end of the interview, she was surprised when she remembered that she actually had the cooks make changes to her dessert, which is something that she herself regarded as being too demanding and acting as too entitled. "So I was demanding, now I'm realizing it. … I didn't ask for it though, it was offered to me. I wouldn't ask for it because it wouldn't even occur to me that they could make something other than what was given."

7.2 MARTIN AND MARIE: AFFECT AS CALCULATIVE TOOL[85]

> What changes me, really is, that I will say to myself: "yes, I enjoyed myself, I don't regret the money I left there, and I will return."

According to Callon and Muniesa (2005: 1229), "markets are collective devices that allow compromises to be reached, not only on the nature of goods to produce and distribute but also on the value to be given to them." Even though the situations in which calculations take place, as well as agents' interests and the properties of goods exchanged, are very ambiguous and uncertain, markets allow for calculations and determination of values. (Callon and Muniesa 2005: 1229) Calculation, for Callon and Muniesa, "starts by establishing distinctions between things or states of the world, and by imagining and estimating courses of action associated with things or with those states as well as their consequences." (Callon and Muniesa 2005: 1231) Calculation is neither purely quantitative, nor qualitative, and therefore cannot be reduced to a mathematical calculation or an intuitive judgement. (Callon and Muniesa 2005: 1232) Following Strathern, Callon and Muniesa (2005: 1233–1235) further remind that the process of transaction includes objectification, in which the properties of a good are appropriated, as well as singularization, through which the good is incorporated into the buyer's (who becomes an owner) world in the form of attachment. Value, say Callon and Muniesa, is nothing but the force of the buyer's attachment to the good." From that follows that in order for a product to act as a commodity, it must be made attachable to potential buyers, which implies having properties that produce distinctions. Callon also admits that calculative agencies do not use the same calculative tools and there are plenty of asymmetries between agents involved in a transaction. The more complicated and complex the network of relations and entities is, the larger the number of potential asymmetries. (Callon 1998: 45)

I want to argue that affect serves as a calculating tool. Just like "knowledge and action" – because it is both knowledge and action – it is not individual and it mobilizes "entities, humans and non-humans, who participate in the enterprise of knowledge or in the action." (Callon and Muniesa 2005: 1237)

Martin, a 33-year-old academic from Prague, considered himself a foodie, even a "gastro-fascist." He had spent some of his childhood years living in France where, as he said, he learnt to eat well. He could not remember anything in particular about his visit to Gusto, thus

[85] I borrow the term from Callon (1998).

he thought the experience was not ideal. However, he read new reviews about the restaurant from trusted sources, he knew the restaurant was awarded a Michelin star. He had heard they were now serving a dill sauce – one of his favorite traditional Czech meals – so he was waiting for a proper occasion to go there. Right from the start of our conversation, he made sure to position himself within the field of gastronomy as a puritan and a lover of French cuisine and a critic of Czech gastronomy. He explained:

> The problem is, I think, that, for example in France, the restaurant is owned by a family for generations. They cannot afford to do anything wrong because people would simply stop going there. For example: if a farmer rents a piece of land, he will never take such care of the land. And that's what happens [in the Czech Republic]. Erosion of the soil, degradation of soil, total mess. And it's the same with restaurants, because people simply rent a space and they do something there, but it is the influence of several generations, that [guarantees that] they simply cannot afford [to do anything wrong] because their grandfather would rise from the dead. This does not work here, so they don't care…. Here, restaurant owners are former ski repair guys and so on. These people have no place in the business.

Martin's slightly nostalgic sentiment drove his gastronomic desires. He desired to be recognized as a potentially regular guest, with specific needs, desires, and informed expectations. In a restaurant, he wanted to feel good, be positively surprised, enjoy himself and have the experience inscribed in his memory in a positive way. If he was dining alone, he would "risk" and go to a place with a daily menu, as opposed to when he was inviting someone else, in which case he would go to a place with a stable menu and expect standard quality and certainty. He relied on his memory of past experience to decide whether to trust a restaurant and return there.

Marie, a 30-year-old sociologist and food blogger, relied on her memory as well. She said Gusto was one of the few restaurants where they haven't made her angry yet. She said their "performance" was well played, the food was excellent, the ambience was informal and she was satisfied. She mostly cared about overall experience, harmony between the quality of food and service, presentation and taste.

> Definitely taste, definitely presentation, definitely structure. It's about innovation, creativity, especially in the case of luxury gastronomy, where you have to pay a lot. You don't just expect to like the food, you also expect the surprise, something that you wouldn't think of. At least that you won't leave feeling like "I would have cooked that better." That's the basic expectation I have with luxury gastronomy.

Martin took his gustatory desires seriously. Affect and desires served as embodied capacity to calculate. When I asked him to further specify what gastronomic experience meant for him, he said:

> I feel like returning. A lot of restaurants here don't understand that. They think that they will always have new customers and if they make them angry, it doesn't matter. But the only stable economy in this business can be made if you have returning customers. What changes me, really is, that I will say to myself: "yes, I enjoyed myself, I don't regret the money I left there, and I will return.

Desires and affects were included in Martin's calculation, in fact, they were the essence of the calculation: I want to return, I do not want to get angry, I want to enjoy it, I do not want to have regrets – affect serves as a form of economic reason. Martin, as it were, desired to trust a restaurant owner to affect his body in a way that would be inscribed in his memory as a positive experience, on which he would be able to base his future consumption choices. Embodied and memorized experience serves as a compass to the world of gastronomy.

Marie expected certain level of aesthetics, which, she thought, was "a part of the performance – an aesthetic rendering of an empty plate." On the other hand, too much elegance, as she described another restaurant, felt intimidating.

> It gives you anxiety, you're afraid to sit down because everything is so sophisticated it gives an impression of sterility. You feel awkward. It makes some people feel good, but not me.

Aesthetics and décor immediately affected Marie in a way that she felt that the kind of experience was not for her and that her place within gastronomy was elsewhere.

7.3 ETHICAL CITIZENS

Alena's body and mind were affected by luxury and gastronomic experience in quite different ways from Martin's since their habituses, to use Bourdieu's concept, were so different. Whereas Martin, who spent some years living in France, and was working as a university professor at the moment, was used to fine dining, including the attention from waiters, unknown dishes, etc. Alena, who was from a small town where she herself used to work as a waitress and was now a social worker, was not used to this kind of gastronomic experience

and reflected on its uselessness and the fact that it was based on privilege. Affected agents use their affects to position themselves in the field of gastronomy, economy and politics, according to different regimes in which their experience is processed. For Alena, the experience took place in the regime of hunger, necessity, and learning; whereas for Martin, it happened in the regime of taste, pleasure, and expectations.

Involvement in economic and public relations within gastronomy leaves one affected according to the affective dispositions of their habituses. But one also uses affects to make sense of consumption, social change, life and their own social status. Alena learned to eat and taste, but she also established boundaries to her consumption practices in the future by recognizing what was uncomfortable, intimidating, and unnecessary. She was also able to relate to those who could not afford to consume luxuries and distance herself from snobs. Martin acted as an informed, demanding guest, who expected his desires to be satisfied not only because they were his individual desires but because they were legitimate desires of all customers. For Martin, affect was not so much away to relate directly to other people, it was rather a way of relating to the market. Both Martin and Alena used their affects to position themselves in the gastronomic field as well as in the society in general as ethical citizens.

Both Martin and Marie were not always happy with the workings of the market within Czech gastronomy and took it upon themselves to contribute to changing that. When asked to explain her motivations to write restaurant reviews, Marie said:

> It's my contribution against the stupification of society. So that the society begins to pay attention to all this. … It's also an effort to share: "Wow! I've discovered something. That was really good. You all have to go there because I've found it!"

Similarly to what some experts (see chapter 3) have said, Marie advocated for increased customer consciousness. She thought that "Czechs complained very little and were not interested in quality." Because of her interest in food and because of what she considered guests' obligations, she considered herself a good guest.

> I'm a guest who can really appreciate it, but, on the other hand, I won't tolerate negligence. Because I travel, I'm not easily fooled. I am capable of returning wine if I don't like it and I am capable of pointing out errors. Not that I would yell at someone or make a scene…
> …
> It's about having eaten my way into it by repetition. One simply has more experience and can compare. I'm also the type of person who is equally happy in

> a dive bar as in an expensive restaurant, but I am sensitive to price categories of those places so I expected something different from each.
> …
> Because I became interested in food – I don't know how long I've been interested in it – you go and I like something, begin to compare it. Then you start going into these restaurants and begin to pay attention to what you like, what you don't like. With friends, we started going around Prague on these gastronomical tours, so I know a lot.

Marie described her customer skills as something she acquired and not something she was born with. She said she was equally happy in a dive bar as she was in an expensive restaurant, thus, obscuring the class dimension of eating and pointing out that she trained herself into learning about her preferences and desires and considered her tastes "capabilities" through which she could improve the market. She became a better consumer and helped improved consumer environment for others through consumption. Her consumption, however, was informed by affective calculation, by being "sensitive to price categories" and "paying attention to what she liked."

It would be wrong to see neoliberal consumers as dupes whose desires are imposed on them from the outside. Martin stressed that he was willing to risk and go to a place without clear expectations and be open to surprise of not necessarily gustatory nature. Sometimes, he would consider service, or a conversation with a waiter as memorable, or even the contrast between holes in table cloth and sophisticated style of service that he had witnessed in Bulgaria several years ago and thought it was "true luxury." Rose (1999: 231) says that through consumption "every choice we make is an emblem of our identity, a mark of our individuality, each is a message to ourselves and others as to the sort of person we are, each casts a glow back, illuminating the self of he or she who consumes." Comsumption both constructs embodied subjectivities and is constructed by them. People are and learn to be calculative through tastes, affects, experiences, by paying attention to their desires and reflecting on them (see Zukin 1991) but they also expect their desires to get recognition.

Economy, therefore, is not only embedded in society but also embodied (compare with Callon 1998) through affect. Equally, politics is embodied in affect and desires. Muehlebach (2011) argues that affect and experience are what define "the moral neoliberal," whose belonging takes a form of "ethical citizenship" through which "citizens imagine themselves as bound together by moral and affective rather than social and political ties, and primarily through duties rather than rights." (Muehlebach 2011: 43). Cultivation of affect through learning, knowledge, assertive behavior, self-examination, and management of desires and

anxieties becomes a vehicle for transformation of society. Marie, for example, thought that Czech people suffered from cognitive dissonance in the sense that they ignored information, social responsibility and refused to make responsible decisions and reflect on their choices – of food as well as political representatives: "A lot of people won't admit that they make decisions based on price and do not feel the need to investigate and realize that sausages are made from soy, not meat." She thought it was a responsibility of customers to evaluate goods and services. Alena, on the other hand, thought it was a "tragedy" that "the gastronomy of the nineties" still persisted because people mostly cared about being full and did not expected anything more. Martin thought that to create luxury, customers had to have cultured behavior, rather than money: "But we don't know how to do that here, we didn't have the conditions that could create luxury… Here, you have all the *Janouškové*[86] and similar types, because they can afford it and they create artificial luxury." He complained that under the current conditions when even reviews, reputation or price do not inform about actual quality, "one just has to experience everything on their own." That is why he and his fellow "gastro-fascists" and gastronauts took it upon themselves to explore and go to different restaurants and point out flaws in service and food preparation. As a writer of the *Nouvel almanach des gourmands* said: "there can be no question, it is a difficult business, a science of whose principles most people are utterly ignorant … to eat dinner in a restaurant is a real battle."[87]

[86] Roman Janoušek is a constroversial businessman and lobbyist who has been investigated for bribery and later senstenced to three years in prison after a hit-and-run accident. Before he became an entrepreneur in the ninetees, he worked as a waiter and, at this time, met some of his future associates. (ČTK, Lidovky.cz) For the position of waiters in society during socialism and afterwards, see Hajdáková 2013a:78.)

[87] Spang (2000: 218).

8 Conclusion

In 1992 Václav Klaus wrote in *Proč jsem optimista?* [Why am I Optimistic?]:

> What we have lived in for the past forty years has been nothing but a gigantic experiment, in which society ceased to be governed by the general laws that hold true for all people… We abandoned out most precious civic values, the product of a thousand-year evolution, embodied in institutions, rules of behavior, the market framework. … We shall need to change many of our habits, and to sign what specialists call "a new social contract" that will be very different from what we knew in the past.[88]

Eyal (2003: 88) argues that in the postsocialist Czech Republic, the two most influential, yet seemingly antagonistic groups – monetarists and dissidents – formed a coalition based on their "discursive affinity." Monetarists, like Klaus, stressed the role of the market as an educator for greater responsibility, because it enabled governing "by cues (prices) set naturally (by the market), which reflect truthfully their value (in money)" and making meaningful, rational, and responsible choices. (Eyal 2003: 88) Dissidents stressed the importance of moral education that allows for moral, authentic life without the need to separate one's private and public lives. (Eyal 2003: 88– 89)

Eyal argues that it was possible for monetarists and dissidents to form a coalition because they both agreed on the importance of "living within the truth." In the name of this "antipolitics," both groups advocated for the establishment of civic society as a basis for capitalism because it would guarantee moral character of the new system as opposed to the immorality of socialism. To achieve the ideal of civic society social and individual life needed to be "purified from socialism." Socialism, which had "polluted" minds through ideologically biased education and bodies through overeating, drinking, and smoking, created unhealthy bodies and unhealthy bodies were responsible for unhealthy society. Most importantly, Eyal et al. (1998) argue, people needed to learn how to be responsible for their own lives and how to stop relying on the state like parasites. (Eyal et al. 1998: 104-105)

"Gastronoauts," experts on gastronomy, professionals, producers and consumers of luxury gastronomy, continue with this "antipolitical" mission to purify the society and individuals from socialism. As I have shown, in this study, they do so through education, moral entrepreneurship, discreet economy, *digesperiencing*, and moral and ethical

[88] In Eyal (2003: 88).

consumption. My goal was to show that *digesperiencing* functions as a "technology of the self" through which subject construes "aspects of its life as the outcome of choices made among a number of options." (Rose 1992: 367) Experts educate consumers on how to eat in order to achieve individual health, well-being, and to improve their private lives because under liberal government "[E]ach attribute of the person is to be realized through decision, and justified in terms of motives, needs, and aspirations of the self." (Rose 1992: 367). However, the need to cultivate consumers' desires, tastes, and appetites is "constructed as having vital consequences for national wealth, health, and tranquility." (Rose 1992: 367) One needs to become an expert on their own desires and appetites so that, with the help of professionals, they can be affected by *digesperience.* I also showed how certain affective states become commodified into "gastronomic experiences" and I argued that the production of value of such affective commodities in luxury settings contains a "quantum moment," in which value and non-value are in superposition. Affectivity and management of affect, especially of embarrassment and shame, are crucial as "civilizing agents." Through cultivation of taste and habitus, one joins a community of taste and creates an affective form of belonging. I argued that affect becomes a vehicle of transformation as well as a calculative tool, through which agents position themselves as moral and ethical consumers and citizens. Politics and economy are therefore not only embedded but also embodied.

Muehlebach (2011: 24) argues that morality exists in productive tension with neoliberal market rationalities. Belonging and citizenship is based on affect and feelings, rather than on social and civil rights. As a result, the public sphere becomes moralized and humanitarianized (Muehlebach 2011: 133) and human beings are predominantly seen as "ethical creatures," rather than rational or psychological beings (Rose 2000: 1398 according to Muehlebach 2011: 44). Ethical citizenship, which can be a form of work, emerges in distinction to other forms of work, labor, and value (Muehlebach 2011: 204). In this study, I showed the importance of discreet economy for the production of luxury, whereby excessive work, materialistic motivations, self-interest, and money were discreetly obscured through display of affection, gift-giving, voluntarism, and disinterestedness. Service workers and cooks participated in the production of gastronomic experience through affective work. Producers hid their frustrations and anger and conspicuously displayed enjoyment of work and thus increased the moral value of *digesperience*, which not only satisfied customers' gustatory desires but also strengthened their ethical belonging as consumers and citizens.

Eyal argues that the idea of civil society was so appealing because it supported autonomy and freedom and ignored inequalities:

> What was so intellectually powerful about the discourse of civil society was that it implied civility, liberty, individual autonomy and responsibility without mentioning the bourgeoisie, inequality, private property, exploitation, or domination. Civil society is a discourse about a classless society – it is a discourse which never confronts the questions of inequality." (Eyal et al. 1998: 178)

Muehlebach (2011: 46) notices that the moral neoliberal is not connected to other citizens on the basis of shared space, equal status and rights but through affects and feelings of compassion, which hinge on the existence of inequalities. Especially in the case of luxury, inequalities between producers and consumers are anxiously obscured. Display of enjoyment and conspicuous masculinity discreetly hid the demanding nature of service work: the long hours, physical pain, damage to romantic relationships, and psychological exhaustion. On the other hand, bodies affected by luxury *digesperiences* became articulated to more differences and thus were generative of distinctions. Cultivated body desires more positive surprises. On one hand, it may help improve the market of gastronomic services and gastronomy itself, on the other hand, it devalues other appetites and through embarrassment and shame creates distinctions.

Through consumption of luxury and concomitant expansion of intersubjective spacetime, space and time are colonized by certain tastes and desires, which are embodiments of politics, the market, and morality. The capacity of capitalism to generate value from all aspects of life and the potency of luxury commodities to accumulate space and time, enable elites to appropriate values across time and space. For example, it has been shown that gastronomy facilitates the process of gentrification. This form of imperialism generates new types of inequalities that extend beyond immediate interactions and cannot be sufficiently analyzed in terms of alienation, exploitation, and unequal access to means of production. Inequalities in terms of entitlement to be affected could be explored further in future research.

To suggest more avenues of further research of gastronomy, hospitality and service work in postsocialist context, I propose the following areas.

1/ A broader study of career trajectories and biographies of waiters who served in luxury restaurants in Prague during socialism. From what I have researched so far, they often came from families of restaurant workers and joined the industry with the prospects of monetary gain that was unavailable in other industries. Shortly before the Revolution, they were "the first entrepreneurs" because they came into contact with tourists and foreign currency or political elites. Restaurant work in Czechoslovakia under late socialism would be

a fascinating study and an interesting window into postsocialist transformation of the professional field of hospitality.

2/ A study of gastronomic expertise and knowledge, including the study of vocational education of waiters and cooks, as well as of the trend of attending cooking classes. The research would offer further understanding of gastronomic knowledge, innovation, and creativity, and could also examine the roles of experts, professionals and lay experts on the field of gastronomy.

3/ The history of tipping practices in the Czech Republic and the region of Eastern Europe and how changes in those practices correspond to political and social transformations and shifts in the perception of the role of service work and consumption of service work.

In this work, I wanted to contribute to the critical study of luxury, service work, consumption practices, and postsocialism, and to theorizations of affect. By focusing on the topic of gastronomic experience, luxury, affective work and consumption, and by placing it in the context of postsocialist transformation, I wish to have proved that despite certain level of obscurity, the research does offer valuable insights into some of the pressing issues of academic as well as public importance.

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