



# STAGING THE TOUR-LOCATION FOR GROUPS: EVENT-SPACE AND PERCEPTION

## Free course excerpt

When **staging** a tour-location, we use several techniques, deriving from different research- and practice-areas. When **staging** a tour-location- regardless of the research and theoretical backgrounds used, always remember that you are part of the group, room and space aswell. If it doesn't feel right to you, you might very well be right. The trick then, is to find out what exactly is "wrong" and what to do about it.

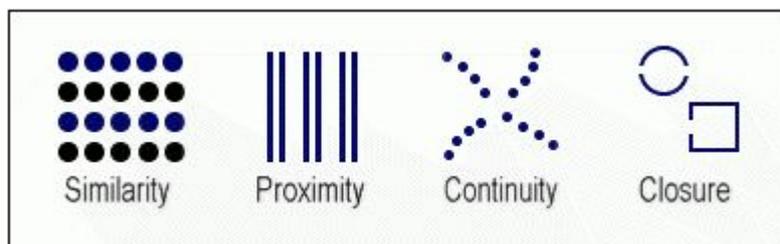
## The group versus the interior

You can pre-stage the location, to work in your advantage. Before you arrive with the group, make sure you have set everything up and discussed this with the pub owner.

Instead of asking the owners permission on several small actions, ask them if it's alright to "set the location". It prevents having to explain every detail.

The theoretical part of this is abstract and not everyones cup of tea, so take your time.

Using some basics of **Grouping** in Gestalt, I will show some examples of use in practice.



## Join the locals

How do the participants know who are locals and who aren't? Most of them will want to meet locals and be part of them, for the duration of the tour and foreseeable period of time afterwards.

There are many semiotic features that define who is part of which group, how they communicate with each other and other groups. Meaning, inclusion, exclusion- basically all communication that we perceive and can process, is transferred by "language" both parties can understand and can communicate about on meta level, using the modalities they know but also the modalities they know, the other "party" will understand and and communicate about.

There is much, much, much more going on than that! There are forms of communication going, that not yet have means of both sending and receiving from one set to an other. There simply is no language to describe the unknown. This produces an alternative form of sending and receiving that is formed by proximity and the amount of events wherein different groups meet each other within a certain space. This is called emergent effects, as opposed to stereotypical effects.

Using “**similarity**” and “closure” as metaphors, when arriving at the pub the “opening-scene” of the tour-location, can be made to invite the participants to join a setting that has an opening, just for them. An oval table with a few locals sitting on just one side of it, looks inviting to join (using “closure” as visual metaphor) and the tour-participants can easily feel welcomed by either the locals themselves or the familiarity of the tourguide with the locality itself. Use your position to link the physical local to the tour participants.



*Open shape, but closed-off and uninviting, because of use of different materialities (wood, vs cushions), shape and **grouping***

In the bar-picture below, the “localness” is emphasised by the broken circle of locals on bar-stools. The broken space can be very inviting to join them but can also be potentially threatening. In this case, the empty space is used as **service**-space (vitrine), which would be less inviting.



A table is a much more inviting environment for the tour participants to join the locals. Hospitality is conveyed and experienced through the right modalities: texture, materiality of space, light, heat, brightness, scent, atmosphere, a turntaking of reciprocal behaviours, food and drink!

Sitting on one side of the table (staged by you as tour director), the other side seems welcoming and intices to join. Whatever you do, do not place a “reserved” sign on the table.

## Mediating objects

In other content (posts, blogs, lectures and articles) I have written about **mediation**, mediating qualities of **objects** and **spaces**. Make sure the

participants recognise typically local **objects** or habits and behaviour typical for local or national life, without trying to be too specific. It is better to let the participants weave threads together and arrive to conclusions themselves. It enriches the **experience** and gives them a sense of insight.

In the stillframe below, we see a drinking vessel, typical for Valencian culture. The tour participants are asked to engage in drinking from the vessel (there's a trick to it; I've tried it), but later on in the evening. In this case the tour is very clearly about tapas and the guided consumption of it. People are less engaged with local culture in a participatory manner, but very much consume the **experience**.



The cityguide in this example is [Suzy Anon y Garcia](#)– a [tourguide from Valencia](#) I know personally and can recommend her to everyone! She's a foodie if ever I met one and knows everything there is to know about food and Valencian food in particular!

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