

Spatial Preferences in Everyday Activities

Holger Schultheis

University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany

Abstract

Many everyday activities pose only weak constraints on the order, in which certain actions have to be performed. When setting the table, for example, any order of putting the required items on the table will be fine as long as all necessary items are on the table eventually. Despite the commonality of weakly constrained sequences in everyday activities, little is known about how humans deal with such sequences. In this contribution, we argue that humans do not order weakly constrained actions arbitrarily, but exhibit systematic patterns of orderings, which we term ordering preferences. Moreover, we argue that the task environment's spatial layout and its mental representation are key factors in determining such preferences. An initial empirical study on table setting corroborates this reasoning by revealing ordering preferences that seem to be based on a regionalization of space and the distances between the regions.