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A reconceptualization of gastronomy as relational and reflexive

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Abstract

This article focuses on the increasing fashionableness of gastronomic forms: their ‘symbolic enhancement’, and the ensuing incorporation of their forms into tourism, policy, destination management and marketing. The symbolic (although also material) enhancement of gastronomy may also lead to its objectification rather than acknowledging that gastronomy is an abstraction, and something that is negotiated constantly amongst the members of a society. Unfortunately, the inadvertent consequence of some studies focusing on the promotion and management of gastronomy, with respect to tourism and destination management, has been the formalization of such a normative approach with a tendency to link gastronomy with the wider debates on heritage. This article proposes a different way of looking at gastronomy: one in which gastronomy is relational, reflexive and negotiable – not fixed. This is a multi-disciplinary approach that draws on sociological and cultural studies of tourism, gastronomy, identity, reflexivity and consumption.

Keywords

culture
destination management
gastronomy
gastronomic tourism
heritage tourism
identity
reflexivity

Introduction

It is without a doubt that gastronomy, or more specifically food, which is a constituent of gastronomy (Moulin 1993), has become a ubiquitous theme of study in an array of disciplines today. Previously noted especially in the field of anthropology (Mennell et al. 1992 cited in Atkins and Bowler [2001] 2007; Caplan 1997; Counihan and Van Esterik 1997, 2013), food studies have come to span sociology, geography, agriculture, tourism, management, political economy, policy, history, psychology, and also film studies, broader media studies, communication, architecture and philosophy (Counihan and Van Esterik 2013). The expansion of food related academic research has mirrored the rise of 'food as fashion' (Richards 2002: 10) in media, business and entertainment (most notably the restaurant business and travel). Indeed, culinary programmes and cooking shows have been gems of media channels since Julia Child made her appearance on the American television in the mid-1900s (Pollan 2009); and during the last couple of decades, the variety of food programmes, the influence of the chefs and other intermediaries (i.e. food critics), the number of new publications and the very basic conceptualization of food itself have further intensified. There are now numerous magazines, books, podcasts and other forms of publications on food and cooking, as well as new age communication technologies and the Internet, which facilitate new mediums of exchanges, publishing opportunities and forms of food-related entertainment (i.e. blogs, review sites, smartphone applications). Many scholars have also noted the significance of culinary media and entertainment in popular culture (i.e. Richards 2002; Parasecoli 2008; Fischler 2011; Rousseau [2012] 2013). In particular, Parasecoli emphasizes the pervasiveness of food in 'contemporary Western pop culture' (2008: 4). He uses the phrase 'excessive food' (2008: 1) to refer to food's special status in our 'collective' imaginations linked to 'a major repository of visual elements' and 'imagined realities' (2008: 2–3).

Rousseau ([2012] 2013: 7–8) points out that 'if food studies recognizes food as essential, food media capitalize on food as an essential distraction'. The same could be said about the role of food as incorporated into tourism and entertainment. In fact, scholars have drawn a link between the excessiveness of food all around and its particular prevalence in media to its prominence in tourism, policy-making and the cultural industries (i.e. Richards 2002; Parasecoli 2008; Rousseau [2012] 2013). Food, or for the sake of the argument gastronomy, has been posed as a fascinating attraction that can elevate a region, establish its gastronomic and tourism potential, as well as position it conveniently amongst other competing destinations (Boniface 2003; Hall et al. 2003a). In other words, gastronomy has become one of the 'objects that contingently fix certain networks of play and pleasure' and 'places as fit for play' (Sheller and Urry 2004: 6).

This article is interested in the spillovers of these debates, the so-called enhancement of gastronomy, and its subsequent elevation into the broader context of tourism management, policy and marketing, advocating that the application of the interdisciplinary perspectives of cultural studies may refine how gastronomy is viewed and enhance its integration into policy-making and subsequent regional development. This would incorporate looking at gastronomy as relational and reflexive, rather than as fixed. It would also mean that one would have to overcome certain habitual dualisms in the field, such as production and consumption. This approach is not unrelated to Pratt's advocacy for thinking about cultural policy:

[...] [P]olicy makers may achieve more successful regeneration outcomes if they attend to the cultural industries as an object that links production and consumption, manufacturing and service. Such a notion is more useful in interpreting and understanding the significant role of cultural production in contemporary cities, and what relation it has to growth. (2008: 1)

A similar approach has been favoured by Everett in an article focusing on place-making and agency in food tourism as well. Everett's (2012) argument has similarities with MacCannell's (1976) prior articulation of work places and leisure, but her essential point is that in food tourism 'production places and consumption spaces coexist' (Everett 2012: 551). Although these positions constitute an essential point with regard to the general interdisciplinary perspective that this article adheres to, the main arguments in this article will not focus on production and consumption spaces, in particular. The main objective in this article is to illustrate the value in incorporating food's symbolic and cultural value in a realm that has often been concerned with its marketing value. This is not to mean that the literature has not recognized food's symbolic or cultural value; however, there has been relatively less attempt to conceptualize these within the situated contexts of different regional specificities and their application to management or policy has been at best operational. What is suggested here in this article entails developing an understanding of reflexivity in tourism, as well as consumption of gastronomy and what it means to people. As suggested by Everett (2012) and Pratt (2008), the role of gastronomy within different regions might be understood better in this way by overcoming certain dualisms in the field.

To this end, this mostly exploratory article aims to present a reconceptualization of gastronomy with the hope that it may also influence research and policy involved with the application of gastronomy. Most of the arguments in the article are heavily based on the literature review, with pointers at perceived gaps, where further research can enhance knowledge, in general. An interest is developed, in particular, in the field of tourism, as the article would aim to help explore "undigested" areas of tourism geographies, offering an illuminating cultural phenomenon saturated with discursive potential to produce new knowledge about tourism experiences, identity, societal relationships and place-making possibilities' (Everett 2012: 536). With this in mind, the article is divided into six parts including this introduction and a conclusion. The next section is a literature review of the general field of gastronomic tourism, focusing on the marketization of gastronomy at the expense of culture and consumption. This is followed by an overview of consumption studies to trace changes in the field that also highlight the increasing role of reflexivity for society, self-identity and necessarily gastronomy. A reconceptualization of gastronomy is then presented drawing on these insights via two comparable case studies, before concluding the article.

Gastronomic tourism

Gastronomic tourism is a niche area of research that has been expanding rapidly, especially within the wider field of tourism, marketing, regional development and education (Hjalager and Richards 2002; Hall et al. 2003b; Hall C. M. 2006). Drawing

on perspectives from management and marketing studies and utilizing market and demographic data, studies from within these disciplines, in particular, have focused on provision of snapshots of regional contexts and strategic consulting for improvement. The contribution from these mostly managerial scholarly work has been substantial, especially in terms of assessing the potential of emergent gastronomic regions (Carlsen and Dowling 1998; Hall C. M. and Sharples 2003; Le Grys and Van Fleet 2003; Thompson and Prideaux 2009), understanding economic and commercial opportunities (Henderson 2009), deciphering organizational issues in regional networks (Meyer-Czech 2003; Van Westering and Niel 2003), developing sustainable tourism typologies (Hjalager 2002) and development opportunities (Gammack 2006), enhancing collaboration between different stakeholders and managing conflicts of interest in regions (Carlsen and Dowling 1998; Cheng et al. 2012). Studies have also utilized insights from consumer behaviour research (Mitchell and Hall C. M. 2003; Getz and Brown 2006), focusing on purchasing behaviour regarding food (or wine) products (Dodd 2000) and motivational factors (Fields 2002). In this manner, scholars have been able to draw connections between food products and destinations, highlighting the potential that local gastronomy may have for destinations and marketing (Hall C. M. 2003; Hall C. M. et al. 2003a; Sharples 2003a, 2003b; Hall C. M. and Mitchell 2005; Hall C. M. 2006; Henderson 2009).

Research has also been inevitably influenced by wider tourism research on sustainability and impact, local people, local production, agriculture, environment, regional development and branding (Scarpato 2002; Hall D.R. et al. 2003). Often the appeal of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have also been invoked in these contexts, particularly for promotion and branding of destinations (Antonioli Corigliano and Baggio 2003; Baggio 2003), but also for tractability of food and food systems (Antonioli Corigliano and Baggio 2011), for food security and hygiene (on good practices and ethics; and available online information, Kane and Iivari 2013), and for business development (Murphy et al. 2005; Murphy 2006). Recently, there has been a shift towards the ‘experience economy’ (a term coined by Pine and Gilmore 1999) as in examples provided by Cambourne et al. (2000: 302–03) with the concept of ‘wine theme parks’.

Gastronomic tourism is indeed very experiential, given its appeal to our senses, in particular, its significance for the broader notions of taste. Notwithstanding, attention to experience, together with emphases on education and learning within the context of the experience economy, tends to normalize the conceptualization of gastronomy and of its tourism. It turns gastronomy into a mere object of promotional value, as opposed to reflecting on its relational value in the actual experience of its consumption. For instance, Henderson’s (2009: 321) mostly descriptive approach to food tourism, despite references to regional challenges arising out of issues based on authenticity and ‘local distinctiveness’, remains mostly a enthusiastic depiction of food tourism as ‘a possible competitive advantage’, something to be ‘exploited’. Similarly, Haven-Tang and Jones’ (2012) emphasis on local food and drink products as valuable contributions to rural tourism development, rural economy and destination management also conceptualizes gastronomy as a fixed commodity without a dynamic nature. These approaches further reinforce static notions of gastronomy as something to be measured in profits, neglecting its interpretive nature, as well as symbolic and cultural value for consumption.

In fact, consumption of gastronomy has been left out of most prevailing accounts of food tourism (Bell and Valentine 1997; Cohen and Avieli 2004). When it has been mentioned, this has often been done so as an expenditure item on tourists' budget (i.e. Economic Research Associates 1996 cited in Hall C. M. and Sharples 2003: 3), substantiating the growing importance of food and alimentation for tourism. However, these accounts fail to capture the essence of gastronomy for the region or its people, and consumption in these cases remains as a benchmark to assess profitability and success.

The same is also true about the relevance of heritage for gastronomic tourism – an aspect that most studies underline. Studies often indicate that there is an essential link between gastronomy and heritage (Hwang et al. 2005), albeit expanding on this link or linking the origins of gastronomic tourism to relevant anchors shared with that of the development of heritage tourism. As mentioned by Povey (2011), the same is also true about the link drawn between food heritage and traditions. The evolving nature of traditions, their *inventedness* (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and creative processes behind their reconstructions, the 'entrepreneurial networks' (Mykletun and Gyimothy 2010: 435–36), are often neglected in most accounts, possibly due to 'the centrality of the tourist gaze' (Povey 2011: 236).

The tendency to overemphasize the link between gastronomy and heritage is understandable. Heritage industry has been gaining increasing momentum especially in the latter part of the twentieth century – together with leisure and tourism sectors (Herbert 1995). The growing fame of the heritage industry and heritage tourism has been linked to a set of intersecting ideas including: the concept of the nation and how it has been understood in recent years (Gruffudd 1995); the definition of 'national heritage' (Gruffudd 1995); rise of nationalism and the concept of 'imagined communities' (Anderson [1983] 2006); the tourist gaze (Urry 1990); hyper-reality, technology, commercialization and the impact of media (Lumley 1988). While all of these processes and concerns related to heritage tourism may be directly or indirectly linked with gastronomic tourism, the current literature has not focused on these dynamics extensively. In particular, the influences from the rise of new nationalism, the elevation of cultural productions, the so-called cultural turn, and the social and cultural aspects of food consumption in tourism have been widely left out of most of the literature (see also Bell and Valentine 1997).

Ultimately, a gap is perceived in the literature with regard to the sociocultural implications of gastronomy for society, place and identity. Research has mostly emphasized the managerial and marketing aspects of the field with a focus on local systems, sustainability and regional development. More and more articles are written on different regions, following formerly used methods of analyses to assess the gastronomic potential of destinations and to offer solutions to alleviate their current outlook or to show them the right set of critical success factors. This tends to formulate an understanding that food is heritage with a potential appeal as a tourism product and, as such, all destinations with rich culinary heritages may become gastronomic centres (all they need are the right set of tools). Policy-makers often favour this approach as well, as it enables them to carry over success stories and to replicate them in different regions. Lamentably, this situation imposes similar sets of sociocultural paradigms on destinations in context, and it becomes harder to develop revealing accounts of the roots of gastronomic tourism, its evolution and trajectory in

different destinations. Cronin (2004: 64) emphasizes a similar trajectory for advertising practitioners' approach to their industry, arguing that they operationalize 'advertising, its role, its status, and its target markets', whilst circulating a viable rhetoric about it. A similar process of operationalization of gastronomic tourism may be observed in policy-makers' and tourism managers' approach to gastronomy.

Ultimately the particular emphasis on regions and regional development, gentrification and destination management has often come at the expense of the actual tourist experience and food consumption (see also Everett 2012). This has led to a prioritization of food overall without a fuller understanding of its consumption experience and meaning for the individual. Consequently, in this article a reconceptualization of gastronomy is proposed, which, applied to the practical businesses, tourism and management, can be more fully integrated to the natural environment and the context of the region in question. The conceptualization of this stems out of the wider cultural consumption studies, but is also influenced by theories on reflexivity and 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

Reflexivity, consumption and identity

This section is an overview of the theory of reflexivity found in the works of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens. The discussion is initiated on the shifting themes in social sciences, in particular with regard to the field of consumption, since consumption and culture have been posited as the main lacking components of foci in previous gastronomic tourism research. This is, however, not to say that this article will advocate a cultural turn to be employed in gastronomic tourism research. This has been previously done in the general tourism research and critiqued in literature (i.e. Gotham 2002). Gotham (2002: 1735) identified that 'the primacy of 'consumption' over 'production'; the eclipse of exchange-value by sign-value; the idea of autoreferential culture; and the ascendancy of textual deconstruction' have generated a theoretical basis, based 'on the concepts of commodification and spectacle', for 'understanding the marketing of cities, the globalisation of local celebrations and the political economy of tourism'.

The aim here is rather different. It is to reconceptualize gastronomy by invoking the theory of reflexive modernity, so as to emphasize the dynamic nature and situatedness of cultural practices. This will be quite different from advocating the invocation of the cultural turn and framing gastronomy as a tourism commodity. This article has already positioned itself against the operationalization of gastronomy in this manner and the contribution sought here is to offer new ways of conceptualizing gastronomy so as to avoid this type of commodification. By understanding both gastronomy and culture as evolving and reflexive, the cultural turn might also be understood better in its applications to practical tourism.

Traditionally, most accounts of consumption, including sociological accounts, have generally been based on materialist perspectives. Warde (1997) has asserted that classical interpretations of consumption have often been built on material inequalities, in particular with regard to resources obtained through production. The literature on means of production, allocation of productive resources, labour and commodities has often mostly carried wider messages about the state, power, and constitution and control of society. Spin-offs from emergent debates of theoretical and conceptual

origins of modernity, and (much more widely) postmodernity, have instigated shifts in these debates, bringing consumption and culture to the forefront in novel ways (Mort 2013).

Despite their evolving significance, consumption and consumers were initially looked at ‘a-historically’ in market research without substantial consideration to their wider appeal for identity and culture (Gabriel and Lang 2006: 11). This was widely as a result of their evident functionality for markets (Gabriel and Lang 2006) and the predominant ‘materialist’ interpretations of society and social life (Warde 1997: 1). It could be further surmised that this a-historic conceptualization of culture and consumption was possibly responsible for the ways in which gastronomy was also conceptualized in and applied to tourism. Indeed, as with consumption in gastronomic tourism, consumption data in earlier market research were compiled most often as expenditure data ‘detached from other cultural practices’ (Gabriel and Lang 2006: 11).

The situation for cultural consumption has been changing as a result of the ‘shifting fashions’ in social sciences from production to consumption (Warde 1997: 1), to lifestyle, culture and signs, etc. – that is ‘towards a society increasingly mediated by the visual’ (Cronin 2004: 79). As already been explained in the above, this has also influenced a theme of research in tourism studies, particularly with regard to the mobilization of cities as consumable and competing entities in global markets – a trend that may have started with ‘boosterism’ (Evans 2001; Pratt 2008: 2) and place marketing / ‘playful’ places (Sheller and Urry 2004). Evans (2001) have noted that most of these initiatives have focused on making use of cultural foundations for urban regeneration, affecting at the same time the role that the city presumes over time (Evans 2001).

Consequently, there has been ‘a veritable explosion of interest in the concept of identity’ as well, establishing identity and culture values as dynamic and reflexive projects of the self as opposed to their ‘prior essentialist perspectives’ (Shankar et al. 2009: 76), or ‘social identity’ (O’Brien 1998: 18). Social or collective identity has been thus thought to be replaced by ‘individualization as a social form’ (Beck 1994: 13), forming an ‘*individualised* society’ (Bauman 2008: 20, original emphasis). These ideas have been further linked with theories on reflexivity and modernity (i.e. Giddens 1991; Beck 1994). Theories of reflexivity conceptualize self-identity as a project, the process of which incorporates the many big and small decisions individuals make every day (i.e. on what to wear, what to eat, who to eat with, what book to read, which club to join, etc.) (Giddens 1991). These decisions are eventually routinized into personal lives, constituting individual lifestyles and personalities (Giddens 1991). Beck (1994: 14) refers to this process as individualization, which he describes as a ‘compulsion for the manufacture, self-design and self-staging’ of one’s self-identity, biography, as well as ‘commitments and networks’, which can change ‘as preferences and life phases change’. Visualized as such, self-identity becomes a dynamic construction of constant making and remaking: a flowing narrative (Giddens 1991). Beck applies the same logic of reflexivity to society, enquiring:

Why do varieties of sociological functionalism always paint an image of the differentiated society in the sense of a final differentiation, while further differentiations of industrial society operating right now are possibly opening up paths to new types of modernity? (1994: 24)

Globalization further intensifies reflexivity in society as well as for individuals, as its processes give rise to novel understandings of the local and locality (Giddens and Pierson 1998) that are indeed very important to the conceptualizations of the city, gastronomy and tourism. However, globalization itself is subject to many contestations, especially since 'ideas behind the concept are varied, and its history and consequences are seen from different viewpoints' (Mak et al. 2012: 173). A common perception of globalization has been the emergence of a 'borderless world' (Miyoshi 1993), 'the intensification of worldwide social relations' (Giddens 1990: 64). This gives rise to the idea of 'inherently globalizing' modernity subject to change and reconstruction (Giddens 1990: 63).

Ultimately, reflexive modernity is in many ways contrary to classic notions of modernity, which would have conceived of social change 'as occurring within a stable system of coordinates' (Beck et al. 2003: 2). This 'dominant 'container' model of society' would have also identified 'society with the nation state', presuming 'a large number of interlocking social institutions' (Beck et al. 2003: 1), some of which Giddens (1994) may have referred to as traditions. Indeed, it has been widely accepted that nations and nation states constitute of 'a common mass culture and common historical myths and memories' (Smith 1991: 14). According to Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) and Anderson ([1983] 2006) common myths and memories incorporate the power of language, royal ceremonies, rituals and national symbols, (i.e. clothes, flags, etc.) and these imageries have the power for igniting nationalist sentiments, establishing the image of culturally coherent nations. According to Warde (2009: 164), who cites from Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) as well, 'attempts to construct spatially demarcated historical traditions', as well as inventing new ones or reinterpreting old ones, can be evaluated 'in response to rapid social change, where existing traditions are no longer perceived appropriate'. It is in this respect that gastronomy too has been increasingly marked as a tradition (i.e. heritage) and used as a signifier of not just social, individual and cultural, but also of place identity. As has been shown in previous sections as well, conceptualizing gastronomy as tradition and heritage has been one of the most common foundations on which destination strategies have been built; and this has also been instructively alluring to policy-making. These ideas have also been increasingly invoked in the literature surrounding the mobilization of places, regions and even nations, place competition, and tourism, particularly with regard to events and festivals (Gotham 2002; Getz 2008).

What has been omitted from these generic accounts is, however, the reflexive nature of traditions, which scholars like Beck and Giddens associate with the reflexivity of modernity. They perceive of a higher stage of modernity, one that is linked to globalization, risks and changes in societies, one in which modernity dissolves in itself and is hence reconstructed regularly. Traditions then become 'a medium of identity' through constant appropriation and re-appropriation, 'recapitulation and reinterpretation' (Giddens 1994: 80). There are divergences between Giddens and Beck as well, in terms of how they conceive of reflexivity. Beck (1994) contests that

reflexive modernization can occur without a subject's reflection or awareness, but would induce the individual to reflect and become reflexive (almost by reflex). In either case, the idea of a perpetuated sense of change is embedded in both accounts; and Giddens, in particular, also notes about the importance of the contexts in which institutions and structures become situated in time. In a similar vein, Pratt refers to the significance of the context while articulating about cultural practices, emphasizing that they develop their meanings from the particulars of the contexts that they are immersed in:

Moreover, reacting to the 'placelessness' of much debate about place marketing, I want to stress that culture is produced in particular places and times: and, that context is important in, or perhaps more accurately constitutive of, social, cultural and economic fields. (Pratt 2008: 3)

What is proposed here is to see gastronomy in this same manner, reflexive and changing in its situated context, and not fixed or transferable from one successful place to another as a success strategy. This indicates evaluating individual regions in their own situatedness and appreciating their specific macro and micro climates. The next two sections will aim to do this comparably, looking at two cases in which regional or national gastronomies are changing reflexively in reaction to wider changes in society. The first of these cases involves the transformation of British cuisine and is illuminating in terms of understanding the evolutionary and dynamic nature of gastronomy and traditions, as they have been discussed in here. This case study is constructed based on the available literature. The second case is a non-European example and focuses on Turkey. It is primarily derived from participant observation and serendipitous research opportunities found during fieldwork in Turkey in 2012–2014. The case is also informed by sources available on Turkey's culinary history.

A reconceptualization of gastronomy in the case of British cuisine

Journalists Paul Ames (2012) and Tom de Castella (2012) pointed out that British cuisine has transformed itself extraordinarily during the last decade (or two) going through a culinary revolution and reinvention. In Ames' (2012) words the cuisine that was the 'world's butt of jokes went from bland to sexy' making it into the San Pellegrino world's best restaurant list, with three restaurants in the top fifteen. Perhaps, the case of Britain should not be considered in isolation. Indeed, it is not unheard of for nations to compete gastronomically, invoking their chefs to create innovative dishes or to reinvent their national cuisines. For instance, Scarpato refers to '*New Asia-Singapore Cuisine*' (2002: 133, original emphasis) or simply the 'New Asia Cuisine (NAC)' as 'an example of how new cuisines develop' (2002: 134). Accordingly, NAC formed out of an attempt to combine Asian flavours with western cooking and presentation techniques. After the initiative became official, it has been regularly used to 'reinforce the image of Singapore as a food and wine destination' (Scarpato 2002: 134). Similar initiatives elsewhere around the world also happen, and they are sometimes collectively referred to as the 'New Global Cuisine' (Scarpato and Daniele 2003: 303): 'Call it multicultural, cross-cultural, intercontinental, fusion or world cuisine – it's what's happening in food today. Creative cooks are combining styles, techniques, ingredients and flavours from every corner of the globe, often in a

single dish' (Anon. 1996: 86 cited in Scarpato and Daniele 2003: 303). In the rest of this section, Warde's (2009) influential study of the British Cuisine and culinary identity will be visited to exemplify a reflective assessment of the elevation of gastronomy in Britain.

Warde's article considers the evolution of British cuisine and negotiation of culinary identity by looking thoroughly at the changing forms of a specific form of commodity, namely, the restaurant meals, and reviews them with respect to their general sense of Britishness. In other words, using the documentation of British food in the British food guide, the *Good Food Guide (GFG)*, Warde (2009: 152) presents 'how a spatial and national identity came to be attributed to certain foods in the process of recommending them for consumption'. Perusing every issue of the Guide, Warde focuses on 'manifestos for change, preliminaries to the use of the guide, type of information included, criteria of judgment employed, classifications of restaurant type and quality, as well as typical menus' (2009: 155). In drawing up his conclusion of the nationalization of British cuisine, he draws from the theories of invented traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and the reinvigoration of national identity (Ashley et al. 2004 cited in Warde 2009), arguing that 'in the middle of the twentieth century, where one might have expected some characterization of a national cuisine, style or tradition, the GFG was merely silent', and superior food and taste was still dominated by the French tradition (Warde 2009: 154). This anomaly is only understood considering the situated context of Britain of the day, which Warde takes into consideration by considering the presence and the role of traditions in the industrial Britain together with the influence of French culture. Warde further notes that, it was only after 1960s, that the Guide became more concerned with making connections with national identity and he identifies this to be linked with attempts at 'stylization of consumption' and 'market segmentation' at the outset of the rising new nationalism and globalism (2009: 154), making more references to the climate influencing gastronomic evolution.

Ultimately Warde reveals three competing representations of British cuisine: modern British cooking, eclecticism and familiarization rooted on 'historical continuity' (2009: 164). Furthermore he notes that in each of these definitions or representations 'more than a hint of' inventing traditions or reversion to nostalgia could be found in their depictions (2009: 165). Warde thus presents British Cuisine with its connections to the nation, region, culture, the land and the people. It is also seen as evolving in relation to globalization. By delineating the changing nature of the cuisine overtime with respect to changes and externalities, Warde manages to present gastronomy relationally. He never claims to make a reflexive assessment of gastronomy or cuisine in his article; however, his approach and invocation of traditions allows making an alternative reading of reflexive gastronomy in this case.

A reflexive look at gastronomy in Turkey

This section focuses on a comparable non-European case study, which is that of Turkey. Turkey is used given its abridged position between the East and the West – both geographically and culturally – which leads to several interesting intermittent cultural and political processes regarding its identity, modernization and gastronomy. Traditionally Turkish cuisine constituted an eclectic medley of influences coming from the Balkans, the Middle East, the Mediterranean and Europe, given its vast

geographical coverage and commercial activities during the Ottoman Period. Traces of Ottoman culinary heritage can be perceived in contemporary Turkish cuisine, and thus needs to be examined in any study of its food culture. To this end, the seventeenth-century Ottoman traveller Evliya Chelebi's book, more precisely his diary, can be revealing in terms of the culinary wealth and diversity found in the Ottoman Empire. Yerasimos (2011) indexes a total of 2246 foodstuffs from Chelebi's ten-volume diary book, emphasizing the eclectic nature of the cuisine and influences from its geography.

Geography is one reason for a rich culinary heritage in Turkey and in other Middle Eastern and the Mediterranean basin countries (Tapper and Zubaida 1994). The trade routes, ports and politics are also immensely significant. For instance, given 'the political axis between Madrid and Constantinople' during the height of the Ottoman Empire, goods brought in from the American continents could find 'their immediate way into the Ottoman Empire' (Fragner 1994: 51–52). The Ottomans also controlled the spice trade during most of this time (Marcus 2009) and, as such, different spices and ingredients available via this route also helped shape the cuisine. The culinary significance of Constantinople was hence inevitably great, such that, despite the disintegration of the political empire, the city survived as a culinary empire (Fragner 1994: 52).

Nevertheless, the diverse and sumptuous food themes of the Ottoman ruling elite did not penetrate below this 'prosperous urban bourgeoisie' (Zubaida 1994: 34); and during the period of westernization and modernization, most of the members of this class converted to European food traditions (Zubaida 1994). The processes of modernization and reforms induced a variety of cultural dilemmas in Turkish society, which were not limited to the realm of food only (see i.e. Ahmad 1993). Within the field of gastronomy, the most evident fractures were observed in the minimization of Ottoman culinary influences in Turkish cooking, because of the 'the republic's active rejection of Ottoman culture', in general (Isin cited in Marcus 2009). A culinary revival is observed, however, that Gulru Necipoglu attests to the growing neo-Ottomanism in society and a resultant nostalgia of its cosmopolitan past (in Marcus 2009).

According to Jason Goodwin, author of mystery novels set in 19th-century Istanbul that are popular with Turkish readers, the popularity of Ottoman cuisine is 'very encouraging.' (His fictional detective, Yashim, is an expert cook who excels at dishes like imam bayildi, 'the imam fainted,' slow-cooked eggplant stuffed with tomato, onion and garlic.)

The cuisine's return, Mr. Goodwin says, allows Turks to 'look at themselves in a more robust way'. (Marcus 2009)

The trajectory of Turkish cuisine and the observations made by Necipoglu and Goodwin can be read together with the afore-mentioned intermittent cultural and political processes regarding Turkish identity, Turkey's modernization and gastronomy. Questions regarding what is essentially Turkish cuisine thus emerges in scholars' articulations, although they are rarely thoroughly addressed in literature aside from a few exceptions (i.e. Yenal 2007), and are often brought up by scholarly

journalists in their columns (i.e. Kirim 2009; Milor 2011, 2012). Some of the less informed questions often relate to or are attempted to be resolved out of ethnic associations: i.e. ‘Does *baklava* have a national identity?’ (Yenal cited in Sagir 2007). Yenal critiques such nationalist invocations made on the origins of a dish, arguing that associations that may seem jokingly frivolous may instigate fatal consequences and stark divisions in society (Sagir 2007). In this respect, Sagir (2007) asks important questions about the actual gastronomic practices next to such assumptions and theories, and Yenal (in Sagir 2007) further argues that most culinary developments are, in fact, ‘retroactively’ fashioned and constructed. In this sense, he seems to connect with Hobsbawm and Ranger’s theory of inventedness of traditions, suggesting that Turkish cuisine is in a sense mythical (Sagir 2007; Yenal 2007).

Milor (2012) takes up a less political side of this discussion as he enquires about the authenticity of certain representations and interpretations of traditional Turkish dishes. Invoking notions of aforementioned New Global Cuisine, he focuses on how chefs (some of whom are not Turkish) reinterpret traditional Turkish dishes in new ways. He focuses on a particular dish, which Goodwin’s fictional character Yashim (from the above) apparently also excels at: ‘the imam bayildi, “the imam fainted,” slow-cooked eggplant stuffed with tomato, onion and garlic’ (Marcus 2009). Milor presents four interpretations of this traditional Ottoman – Turkish dish as reinterpreted on the television cooking show ‘Masterchef’, in British supermarket chain Waitrose, etc. He deploys sarcasm in his argument, lamenting that the appreciation for these dishes are not always historically informed, because of the eradication of the guild systems, which in the past used to facilitate the training of culinary chefs. He attests that as a result of this the society has lost its appreciation of its own cuisine and remarks that as a result of a ‘culinary amnesia’, Indian style *imambayildi* with anchovy can be flagged as Turkish cuisine (2012).

Milor’s criticism should not be seen as a critique of New Global Cuisine. On the contrary, he has written several other articles that are laudatory of executions of this new style of cooking in Turkey and beyond (i.e. 2014). His urge is to claim culinary traditions and cuisines and then to simultaneously innovate them with a full grasp of their authenticity (2011). His criticism is against cheap imitations and carry-overs of successful models without a full understanding of processes or the background cultures (2012, 2014); in other words, what this article has also been attempting to move away from: marketization of gastronomy without reflection.

Unfortunately, a recent fieldwork in Turkey and other serendipitous research opportunities have shown that in many places around Turkey, utilization of gastronomy has so far mostly been a profit maximization scheme, or it has been normative. Consider, for instance, the surge of local gastronomy festivals that are now being initiated in coastal villages of Turkey. As Turkey has woken up to its gastronomic potential, entrepreneurs (sometimes in liaison with their local municipalities) have started to initiate gastronomy festivals. However, most of these festivals carry the same format: Vendors line up their stalls of food, herbs, cheese, soap, etc. - in other words, whatever they think they can sell as regional. Some of them feature music, concerts and competitions. One of the better-known festivals includes Alacati Herbs Festival (<http://www.alacatitfestivali.com>), but there are others with smaller scales. In most cases, the aim of festivals is to prolong the tourist season; in other cases, festivals are conceived to be popular and are meant to help the local population (Akinci 2013; Ozsoy 2013). However, in their application, questions

still remain about how well connected these festivals are (as with other tourism initiatives) with debates about the nation state and local culture, and who they really represent or target (see also Gurkan 2008).

The same can be said about the restaurant business as well. Eating out became an attraction in Istanbul in late twentieth century (Karaosmanoglu 2009).

As the number of working women, single dwellers and small families increased, eating out became an important pleasure of city life. As well, because of the increased connections between places and people, and the emergence of new global consumption patterns, a curiosity has arisen as to how the rest of the world eats. This has opened up the international restaurant scene of Istanbul. (Karaosmanoglu 2009: 343)

However, Milor (2014) makes interesting observations regarding the international restaurant sector in Istanbul, observing the tendency to change traditional *kahves* (Turkish for coffeehouse) to *cafés* and *lokantas* (Turkish for restaurants), to restaurants for the mere sake of ephemeral sophistication, and the use of uninformed recipes that embellish traditional dishes with foreign names. He perceives the resulting picture to be a deception and fabrication/standardization of taste. Karaosmanoglu notes a similar situation with the more traditional restaurants that presumably serve Ottoman cuisine:

While restaurant spaces represent the past by trying to make it *present*, by trying to bring it back to the present, they ironically make it *absent*. In Ottoman restaurant spaces, the Ottoman past has become a spectacle for customers. The past has disappeared and dissolved into a mere representation. (2009: 355, original emphases)

Ultimately, thinking about Turkish gastronomy means that one has to take into consideration the history and the present reflexively and think around the wider issues of the nation, modernization and identity. Debates about modernization are particularly important since their concurrent influences affect discussions on culture and gastronomy. Consider for instance, a television series called *Yemekteyiz* (2008). This is a culinary television show, in which competitors take turn hosting each other in their homes. Hosts often prepare dinner parties and cook elaborate meals for other competitors and try to win points through their culinary skills. The programme has initiated two camps of viewers in Turkey: (1) Those who identify with the competitors and their backgrounds; (2) Those who find them vulgar and uneducated, who only watch the show to be able to joke and laugh about it (Tekerek 2009). How the programme is perceived differently by different viewers is a sociological enquiry made on class, but it is also a cultural enquiry about identity that stems out of the wider debates on Europeanization/westernization of the country. For instance, in discussing the show, Yenal refers back to 1920/1930s, during when table manners of the West became branded as a sign of sophistication and progress, and draws attention to how these nuances and signs emerge during the show, leading viewers and participants to reconsider 'who we are' and where we are coming from (Tekerek 2009).

The objectification of gastronomy and approaches that only deem to ‘cash in’ on its popularity (Milor 2014) are likely to result in unsustainable gastronomic initiatives. Indeed, some of the aforementioned small-scale local taste festivals do not last more than a few years. In a similar vein, restaurants that are not unique or embrace local values open and close very quickly. On the contrary, places that integrate local gastronomic values reflexively and respond to the dynamic nature of local cultures remain popular across different colours of people. This was also confirmed during the fieldwork in Istanbul. In in-depth interviews with different socio-economic profiles, a local brand, Sütis̃ (<http://www.sutis.com.tr/>), which is a simple café serving food throughout the day (breakfast, sandwiches, cooked meals), was mentioned by interviewees with different backgrounds, different political and culture values. This article will not attempt to analyse the success of Sütis̃; however, it is worth mentioning that it serves what could be colloquially termed as down-to-earth, decent food made with organic and fresh Turkish staples.

Finally, as gastronomy is ever evolving and dynamic, the culinary scene in Turkey continues to change as we speak. As a result of globalization, which is often coupled with a concurrent glocalization, and with a sizeable number of chefs returning from their trainings abroad (or from restaurants owned by the likes of Gordon Ramsay) (i.e. Didem Senol, Mehmet Gurs, Kaan Sakarya), there is a growing emphasis placed on Modern Turkish Cuisine. In a stark contrast to the afore-mentioned widespread café culture in Istanbul, Modern Turkish Cuisine incorporates an evolving focus on local ingredients, quality ingredients and traditional recipes. This particular new cuisine is, however, only recently taking off, and it coexists with the more traditional and cliché representations of gastronomy; and its place, its importance and its direction may only be understood by considering its evolution in the cultural medley of Turkish culture and gastronomy. This is why a reflexive conceptualization of gastronomy is thus important to insightfully assess ongoing transformations in the city and to direct future investments and projects on fertile and sustainable grounds.

Conclusion

It is without doubt that this exploratory article’s breadth and scope is mostly conceptual and thought-provoking, but not necessarily conclusive. The article has attempted to bring together a diverse number of highly significant issues affecting the gastronomic, social, cultural and economic spheres of life in light of the intensification of global transformations and modernity. The aim in this regard has been to reorient the conceptualization of gastronomy as reflexive and negotiable as opposed to most managerial and marketing-oriented studies, which have for so long worked the other way, fixing gastronomy as an achievable objective in policy-making. This has led to a standardization of gastronomy and a flimsy notion of its authenticity; it has also prioritized it materialistically and symbolically as a tool for policy. What is argued here is that gastronomy, just like any other cultural production and activity, is context-bounded, defined by the set of particular cultural parameters and specific settings of its situated context. It is, however, also influenced by globalization and the influence of global changes at the regional level. Consequently, the ways in which gastronomy has been conceptualized in one place does not have to be the case in another and hence its operationalization as a policy item or as capital would benefit from attending to its inherent changeability, negotiability and

reflexivity. To this end, the two cases aimed to present the evolution of national cuisines and their reinterpretation in different cultural contexts, and showed that there are different taste parameters and culture values in effect. The situatedness of these case studies also showed the importance of context as well, whilst also making use of Hobsbawm and Ranger's invented traditions.

Finally, the article has aimed to highlight how most studies on gastronomic tourism been one-sided and normative, affirming successful policy initiatives. This was also brought up by Mavrič and Urry with regard to research in tourism, and it is worth recalling their statement in conclusion:

Research in tourism (particularly on the business and economics side) has tended to often be 'policy led and industry sponsored,' resulting in one-sided analyses that serve the industry (Franklin and Crang, 2001:5). [These approaches] not only ignore 'questions of taste, fashion and identity' (Rojek and Urry, 1997: 2), but also fail to recognize the wider social implications of tourism [...]. (2009: 646)

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