Research Article

António José Marques da Silva*

Eating, drinking and travelling for fun. Backward to 'Tourism and Gastronomy' and forward to the Covidocene

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Abstract: *Tourism and Gastronomy* (T&G) was published in 2002. Even today, this book is an indispensable reference for researchers from different disciplinary perspectives who study how food and beverage are linked to leisure mobility. At that time, the contributors witnessed a major shift in consumer behaviour, which would soon turn the act of eating and drinking into a first-order driver of this sector of activity. The objective of the editors was to map the evolution of this new trend and predict the future of gastronomy and culinary heritage in tourism. This paper will revisit T&G to fully understand how, in only twenty years, what was before just a 'non-optional' part of the package became a prosperous niche, and later a primary component of recreational travels. The 'throwback' approach adopted here will enable us to reflect on how the COVID-19 crisis impacts holidaymakers' choices, which could help in the design of more efficient recovery plans.

Keywords: Culinary tourism; Food and beverage; Gastronomy; Cultural heritage; Resilience; COVID-19

1 Introduction

In 2002, two well-known scholars in the field of the tourism studies — Anne-Mette Hjalager and Greg Richards — invited a group of experts to reflect on how food and beverage (F&B) are connected with leisure mobility, predicting the evolution of this matchup as well. The result was a collective book entitled *Tourism and Gastronomy* (T&G). The synopsis claims that, despite the increasing attention paid to the subject, 'systematic research' was still missing. To fill the gap, the editors relied on a transnational panel made up of members of the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education, covering several disciplinary areas. A year earlier, they had participated together in the 1st International Gastronomy Congress, organised by the Regional Tourist Board of the Alto Minho, the northwestern region of Portugal (Hjalager & Richards 2002b, p. xii). The motive for assembling this motley group again was 'to develop a better understanding of the role, development and future of gastronomy and culinary heritage in tourism'. At this early stage, the possibility of using F&B to capture first-time visitors and influence the holidaymakers' behaviour during their sojourn abroad was merely seen as an objective aimed at in the long term by a few visionary stakeholders (Boyne et al. 2002, p. 111). To what extent this emerging segment of the market could effectively favour a destination was yet an open debate (Jones et al. 2002, pp. 116-17), local cuisine being intended up until this time as a component like any other symbolic representation of a location (MacCannell 1999, p. 131), usually underrated by scholars (Defert 1987, p. 7). What we call today 'foodscapes' were still far from being a reality (Lee 2012, p. 102; Richards 2015, p. 8). Since then, most of the stakeholders in this arena have changed their assessment. A few months before the COVID-19 crisis, UNWTO (2019, p. 9), openly recognized that food is now 'an essential inducement for differentiating tourism destinations and making them attractive'. The Skift Report estimates that at least 80% of travellers include F&B experiences in their overall activity programme (Mackenzie 2019, p. 72). This market segment reached $1,116.7 billion in 2019 and could rise to $1,796.5 billion by 2027 (Research and Markets 2020). It became increasingly more important in the perception of the destination's image in the years following the publication of T&G (Berg & Sevón 2014; Perkins 2017, p. 2).

With the benefit of hindsight, we are now aware that the authors of the volume witnessed the beginning of a

***Corresponding author: António José Marques da Silva,** University of Madeira, Campus of Penteada, Funchal, Portugal, email: antonio.jmsilva@staff.uma.pt
CITUR- Centre for Tourism Research, Development and Innovation

drastic repositioning of F&B as a first-order variable of the equation. This paper will revisit their contributions to fully understand how, in only twenty years, what was once just an unavoidable necessity became the base for new packages, and quickly a primary aspect of this recreational activity. In the chapter 'Discussion', the lessons learned will allow us to reflect on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the increasing interconnection between gastronomy and tourism. This re-evaluation effort is needed to design effective recovery plans for this industry, more affected than any other by the current pandemic.

2 Methodology

In the next pages, the assessments and predictions of the T&G authors will be confronted with other studies from the last twenty years up to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. This publication was chosen as the basis for reflection, mainly for two reasons. Despite the early critics (Cohen & Avieli 2004, p. 775), this state-of-the-art collection quickly became an important reference in this research field (950 citations up to 20/11/2020, according to Google Scholar). On the other hand, as the editors claim, it is also the first systematic account of gastronomic tourism, a market niche which had emerged gradually during the 1990s (Mulcahy 2019, p. 27). According to a recent bibliographical review (De Jong et al. 2018, p. 137, Table 2), the scientific studies related to this subject printed in Anglo-Saxon countries were rare before 2001. The publication of T&G, one year later, marked the beginning of a new stage of research in this area, fed by 23 articles in the next 4 years (only 7 in 1996-2000). The number increased continuously in the 2010s (see also: Ashleigh et al. 2018, p. 250). No fewer than 132 papers focused on this topic between 2011 and 2015, from a growing range of disciplinary perspectives. The pandemic did not curb the appetite of the academy for this subject. A search in Google Scholar (accessed on 22/11/2020) using the keywords 'food tourism' and 'COVID' returned an astonishing score of 7,710 results. An updated state-of-the-art is opportune, considering the need to redefine strategies adapted to the 'new normal' generated by the global pandemic, which has struck this industry heavily since the spring of 2020.

The purpose of telescoping nonsynchronic accounts is to contrast between later spinoffs that could be expected from the start and those which were not. This paper aims to size up whether the societal shifts triggered by the COVID-19 crisis have affected how F&B interlink with leisure mobility, depicted by anticipated scenarios. In practice, using throwback ordering of the data diachronically will allow us to fine tune the joint analysis of previous case studies.

The role of organisational innovation will also be examined here, which is a main driver as already pointed out earlier by some scholars (Wang 2000, p. 72). In this case, focusing on changes in the international framework that governs the heritage management is fully pertinent, as we will see next. Connections with other processes relevant to the purpose targeted will be highlighted too, and particularly the rise of new actors and changes in consumer lifestyle and values. This being the case, this paper takes social and cultural aspects more into consideration, filling a gap in the current research on food tourism (Xavier Medina 2017, p. 111; Xavier Medina & Tresserras 2018, pp. 9-10). Consequently, the choice of publications mobilised crosses several disciplinary fields from tourism studies, sociology, anthropology, geography, and history. The research background of the author, based on his previous works related to the heritagisation/touristification of culinary legacies (Silva 2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2018; 2020; 2021) significantly influenced the selection. Additional searches were undertaken using internet engines (Academia, Google Scholar and ResearchGate), favouring relevant outlooks to balance the accounts of the T&G's contributors.

The expected result of this reassessment is the underpinning of recommendations to indicate how F&B can sustain the sector efficiently, instead of assuming that the benefits are automatically granted, as many stakeholders and scholars often do (Cohen & Avieli 2004, p. 775; De Jong et al. 2018, p. 143). Keeping further trends in mind is urgently needed to avoid designing recovery plans based on simplistic evaluations. Indeed, due to an inevitable lack of hindsight, there is a substantial risk of excessively contrasting what happened before and after the pandemic, producing states-of-the-art which minimise resilient patterns in leisure mobility.

3 Findings

In the last twenty years, we have witnessed a radical repositioning of F&B in the field of recreational mobility. From the beginning of time, travellers have depended on endogenous resources for food during their journey. However, except for a few early antecedents (Laurioux 2021), it is anachronistic to speak of gastronomy in the pre-modern era, and even more so to refer to gastronomic tourism as certain scholars do (Mulcahy 2019, p. 24).

In fact, the expectations of sojourners had ups and downs over the centuries. In the *Hedypatheia*, the Greek poet Arquestrate leads us to believe that the rich men of antiquity were already interested in tasting products from the places they visited (Soares 2016, p. 28). At the time of the Grand Tour, on the other hand, trying local cuisine was generally seen as an unpleasant sacrifice by the aristocrats who were willing to explore ancient ruins located in the hinterland of Italy (Garms 1996, p. 93; Black 2011, pp. 53-55; Silva 2016a, pp. 28-29). The invention of the locomotive and steamboat in the nineteenth century would create the material conditions necessary for the gradual opening of tourism to the middle class (Seta 1996, p. 18). Responding to the growing flow of travellers, restaurants would spread almost everywhere, following the concept born in Paris a few years before the French Revolution (Brillat-Savarin 1848, pp. 286-295). Indeed, this city was already known as the world capital of the fine dining in the early 1800s (Pitte 1996, p. 773).

The opening of the first Palace Hotel in the late nineteenth century would inaugurate the durable symbiosis between haute cuisine and the hospitality industry (Pitte 1996, p. 775). It may truly be the precedent of what the T&G contributors call 'gastronomic tourism'. However, it was the contemporaneous rise of the national tour as a patriotic act to incorporate the regional diversity of the motherland that would disseminate the appreciation of the local foodways as an attraction among a broader, even if still limited, audience (Csergo 1996, p. 835; Silva 2016a, p. 46). Incidentally, in regard to most of the holidaymakers before the end of the 1990s, F&B continued to be perceived as merely a 'nonoptional' part of recreational travels (Boyne et al. 2002, p. 91). The increasing enthusiasm for fine dining and culinary heritage in the next decades cannot be explained simply by what John Urry (2002a, p. 141) calls a technological determinism. Indeed, the progress of communications and transportation that contributed to the growing availability of foreign products in supermarkets during the second half of the twentieth century and the increased flow of travellers (Mulcahy 2019, p. 27) is certainly relevant, but they are not the major drivers of this change in behaviour. In fact, the struggle between neophilia and neophobia (Cohen & Avieli 2004, p. 759; Mitchell & Hall 2003, p. 76), was first won in the mind of the eaters, as we will see below.

3.1 The Collateral Impact of the Mediterranean Diet

In T&G, Kevin Fields (2002, p. 38) predicted that the increasing concern of Westerner consumers with health and safety would benefit destinations that publicise the nutritional virtues of their food traditions. He mentioned the competition between the Mediterranean diet (MD) promoted by Greece and Italy and its Atlantic alternative from the north-western area of Portugal (see also Beer et al. 2002, p. 218). It is relevant to analyse here how the rise of the MD contributed to the emergence of gastronomic tourism.

As everyone knows, it was a researcher from the University of Minnesota named Ancel Keys who revealed to the world the existence of this food tradition within the framework of the Seven Countries epidemiological study (Keys et al., 1980). This long-term enquiry confirmed the exceptionally low rate of mortality from coronary accidents along the European coast of the Mediterranean in the early post-war period (Dernini et al. 2012, p. 78). However, what had led him to make this 'discovery' is almost forgotten today. During his lifetime the scientist would repeatedly declare that his experiences as a tourist in Italy had been decisive. The book *Eat Well and Stay Well*, published in 1959 with his wife Margaret, is largely inspired by their escapades in the south of Europe. No reference is made yet to MD in this text, but most of the recipes are already borrowed from the Italian, French and Spanish repertoire. The couple claimed that the Americans' diet had deteriorated over the last decades because of economic growth and technological progress. They mentioned that the food on sale in their country now contained too many chemical additives and synthetic substances produced industrially, such as hydrogenated fat (Keys & Keys 1959, pp. 54, 56, 111). This being the case, they dedicate much of their nutritional guide to the preparation of specialties from less developed areas of the planet, which they consider more natural and salutary. Readers are also encouraged to discover local gastronomy when travelling abroad (Keys & Keys 1959, pp. 129-130).

It was precisely during this same period that the tourism sector was confronted for the first time with the humanist values that a young institution – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, better known today as UNESCO – had assumed as a mission to promote. The rapprochement with the International Union of Official Tourism Organizations in 1951 was definitively formalised by the participation at the World Tourism Conference in Rome in 1963. The creation of the World Heritage List (WHL) in 1972 would be the culmination of the convergence between these two areas of governmentality (Cousin 2008).

The popularity of *Eat Well and Stay Well*, published at a time when UNESCO was embracing the cause of what would later be called 'cultural tourism', was an important step for elevating the culinary to the status of a full-fledged element of recreational travels in a few decades. The interest of Americans in foreign F&B goes back a little further, however, already being considered as an attraction for those who visited France in the 1930s, despite what some authors believe (Levenstein 2004, p. 38). In the preface of the Keys' volume, Paul White refers to his compatriots who roamed the '*province*' in the inter-war period, a gastronomic guide in hand, looking for the countryside flavours. The doctor recalls his 1932 excursion to Belley, the birthplace of Brillat-Savarin, and across the Dordogne, along a route lined with Michelin-starred restaurants (Keys & Keys 1959, pp. 7-8). The popularity of the Keys' book may be due in part to this pre-existent interest in exogenous cuisine among the elite milieu of their own homeland, to which the authors explicitly allude in the introduction (Keys & Keys 1959, pp. 19). However, the idea of associating a healthy diet with a specific geographical space would only come later. Indeed, it took until 1975, after the publication of *Eat Well and Stay Well: The Mediterranean Way* (Keys & Keys 2006), before the culinary traditions of the underdeveloped regions of Italy, South France, Spain and Greece were permanently transformed into the 'Mediterranean diet', a nutritional model of universal value mirroring the puritan rejection of food modernity (Levenstein 2012, p. 137).

This precedent would be the foundation stone of the instantaneous popularity of the MD pyramid, created by epidemiologists in the early 1990s, based on the Seven Countries Study (Willett et al. 1995). The Italian adventure of the first 'celebrity scientist' and his wife would inspire an increasing number of fortunate compatriots to seize the opportunity of sojourning abroad to taste humble dishes belonging to the peasant repertoire, with the purpose of reforming their own diet. During this decade, Tuscany competed with Provence as their favourite destination (Fields 2002, p. 40). The experience researched was evolving too. A growing legion of successful middle-aged men and women now considered holidays in the countryside of northwestern Italy as a rite of passage, letting them improve not only their food habits but also their lifestyle. The adventure abroad would 'provide a new sense of identity and allow a re-examination and recreation of self', considering the fact that 'changing a diet is a metaphor for a renewal of body, mind and spirit' (Chrzan 2008). In short, gastronomic tourism was turning into an existential quest. In the USA, members of the upper class now looked at the poorest inhabitants of this rural region through the Arcadian representations of the Mediterranean people popularised by the Keys' most famous books. What Janet Chrzan (2008) calls the 'Tuscany myth' was largely broadcast by literature, films, culinary magazines and destination branding in the following years. The attraction for the rustic flavors of food produced by local farmers responded to the growing rejection of heavily processed products. The puritan aversion for 'unidentified food objects', which had struck America periodically since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Silva 2015, pp. 85-120), then spread to the rest of the Western world (Fischler 1995, p. 216; Poulain 2002, p. 22). The romantic vision of the countryside as being stuck in time, authentic and close to nature, would have a long-term impact on the behaviour of tourists. Indeed, what Americans really loved in the Tuscan cuisine was not exactly the fact of it being Mediterranean, but that it was made with fresh products, seasonal and grown locally (Chrzan 2008). Today, in a word, we would say 'sustainable'. Incidentally, all the characteristics described in T&G's contributions a few years later, which make the cuisine appealing, are already there. The nostalgia of the 'stress-free rural life' in opposition to the urban buzz of the postmodern world would prevail in the next decades among the inhabitants of the Western megapolis (Bessières 1998, p. 24; Urry 2002b, pp. 87-88). Soon, the precedent of Tuscany would convince other hinterland zones to follow the recipe of success inaugurated by this Italian province (Kilburn 2018), converting themselves into "touristic terroirs" (Hall & Mitchell 2002a; Hall et al. 2003, p. 34).

3.2 The 'Cultural Turn'

The increasing popularity of Tuscany as a destination praised by customers of high standing during the 1990s transformed this region of Italy into a fashionable model for the creation of F&B routes in marginal areas, as already noted in T&G by Magda Corigliano (2002, p. 180). In the chapter dedicated to the Scottish 'Isle of Arran Taste Trail', Boyne et al. (2002, p. 92) elected the synergy between hospitality/catering and agro-food sectors engaged in local and regional development as the main driving force of gastronomic tourism, embracing what they called a 'bi-directional' approach. Enquiries undertaken in France and the United Kingdom, mentioned by Jones et al. (2002, pp. 115-16) in the next pages, also highlighted this partnership, aimed at connecting producers and consumers within the framework of 'experience economy' (Richards 2012, p.

16). Like other researchers of this time (Poulain 1997, pp. 18-19; Hall & Sharples, 2003 p. 2; Hall et al. 2003, p. 26), some of T&G's contributors viewed the cuisine mostly as an opportunity for less attractive zones, generally located in the countryside (Beer et al. 2002, p. 219). For them, the key was the intensification of the interlinking between different kinds of actors interested in this new business area, as noted by Anne-Mette Hjalager (2002) and Magda Corigliano (2002) in the same volume. The belief that endogenous F&B could be the basis for sustainable agro-hubs is still shared today by many stakeholders (Pilar Leal 2018), despite the relative success of this formula elsewhere (Csurgó et al. 2019). However, the increasing demand of gastronomic experiences can only partially be explained by joint initiatives of producers and suppliers operating in the hinterland, as most of these authors postulated in 2002.

To be fair, a few members of the T&G team already pointed to other variables which would effectively define the evolution of this segment of the market in the following years. Even Jones et al. (2002, p. 116) was aware that the interconnection between the tourism of taste and heritage was growing, as was Rosario Scarpato (2002b, p. 136). According to this author, the cultural dimension of F&B was attractive for a new profile of consumers more interested in sensorial experiences instead of the passive contemplation of monuments and museums, which motivated the first *faiseurs de tour* to visit Italy (Silva 2016a, pp. 25-50). A few years earlier, Jetske van Westering (1999, pp. 76-77) had noted that the increasing interest of travellers in the local customs more and more interlinked with endogenous F&B was triggered by two recent trends in Western societies: the valuation of culinary legacies as a central element of the popular lifestyle and a change in the guests' attitude. Holidaymakers now gave more importance to other senses, beyond vision, which entailed trying the endogenous F&B (see also Richards 2012, p. 19; Berg & Sevón 2014, p. 9).

The early adhesion of the heritage stakeholders to the cause of environmental preservation would facilitate the approximation between the tourism and agro-food sectors in the next twenty years. The idea disseminated in 1996 by the World Commission for Culture and Development (WCCD 1995, pp. 206-10), that sustainability deals with much more than ecological issues was conquering a growing audience, especially in the arena of leisure mobility (Mowforth et al. 2016, pp. 104-11). It would also rapidly become the new UNESCO mantra (Silva 2016b, pp. 27-28). The increasing rallying around this concept in a wider spectrum of governmentality's fields contributed to turning it into a highly consensual element of the politically correct discourse, so often uncritically invoked, even by scholars (De Jong 2018, pp. 143-44). The tendency to not question the association of 'authenticity', 'local food' and 'tradition' with environmental concerns, already debunked by Scarpato (2002b, p. 140) in T&G, would spread during the next decades to justify development projects based on gastronomic tourism (Matta 2016, p. 346; Tena Meza et al. 2018, p. 62), triggered by the Tuscany precedent. The shared faith in a 'greener future' would reinforce multisectoral alliances, to promote specific F&B legacies. These new kinds of networks would become more and more transnational, in certain cases assuming outright the configuration of epistemic communities, as those which quite successfully drafted the MD proposal to the ICHH list from 2005 to 2010 (Silva 2016b). This 'Mediterranean heritage' tailored by scientists was presented to UNESCO the same way the 'Tuscany myth' was sold earlier to American travellers, the common ingredients being: diet as integral part of a singular lifestyle based on local resources, conviviality, seasonality, and last but not least, the validation of healthy virtues by the endorsement of academics.

Many contributors of T&G were aware of the silent revolution underway. In the preface, Anne-Mette Hjalager and Greg Richards (2002b, p. xii) already mention the Portuguese government's strategic use of gastronomic tourism to safeguard the essence of the national cuisine. F&B traditions would be soon converted into a subcategory of intangible cultural heritage — the so-called culinary ICH — disputed simultaneously as a tool of destination branding and as the backbone of origin labels protected by geographical indications (Xavier Medina 2017, p. 110, Silva 2018), some authors having anticipated this new trend (Ravenscroft & Westering 2002, p. 163; Beer et al. 2002, p. 218). This paradigm shift is already documented in T&G. In the synopsis, the coordinators (Hjalager & Richards 2002a, p. iv) refer to the 'consumption' of F&B legacies, even before naming 'gastronomy' for the first time. In the introduction, Greg Richards (2002, pp. 3-4) mentions the recent evolution of this notion often used in the volume to designate not only haute cuisine but also the popular foodways and the fact of its being associated to a wider universe of practices, which is precisely how UNESCO defines culinary ICH today (Romagnoli 2019, pp. 163-64).

The promotion of F&B destinations and local products would become the main motivations of a growing number of proposals (Broude 2015, p. 492; Matta 2016, p. 346; Silva 2020) to integrate the inventory funded in 2003, originally instituted to safeguard folklore (UNESCO 2003): the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (ICHH list). Despite a clear paradigm change, the inspiration was the WHL. In theory, it should help local communities protect their collective identity from the impact of globalisation, including mass tourism effects. However, lists, once created, take on their own life and often drift from the objectives for which they were designed, being used for purposes other than those idealised by their founders. In practice, the elevation to the WHL represents a decisive step in increasing the 'touristification' of sites that UNESCO recognises as being of exceptional value (Berliner et al. 2013, p. 143). It is considered today as a sort of international award helping to promote destinations, including those with stakes on F&B (Tena Meza et al. 2018). It continues to be in very high demand today despite the economic benefits sometimes clearly falling short of expectations (Cuccia et al. 2016). After 2003, the ICHH list would be primarily seen as the intangible equivalent of the WHL, as Chiara Bortolotto (2011, p. 30) argues. Consequently, it became another opportunity to capture visitors, especially for territories that did not meet the criteria of the 1972 Convention or have the conditions needed for growing by mass tourism (Silva 2016b, pp. 48-51). In a context of increasing interactions between economy and heritage (Cominelli & Greffe 2019), the negative perception of the culture's commodification is still strong in this arena today, regularly generating friction between those who consider the interference of capitalism as a necessary evil and those who do not agree with this concession to the neoliberal agenda (Olivier 2013). From this point of view, UNESCO's actions go against the flow in the last twenty years. This institution leads the way, validating other proposals to the ICHH list, besides the MD, motivated in the first place by commercial interests (Silva 2018). This is on condition, of course, of submitting applications properly written in accordance with the constitutional values flagged by the 2003 Convention (Matta 2016, pp. 349-50).

After 2004, this UN organisation reoriented its position, launching the Creative Cities Network programme to openly reinforce the commitment between heritage stakeholders, food producers and the tourism industry (Pearson & Pearson 2015). The goal of this initiative is to promote urban development, once again in a sustainable manner, based on culture and arts (UNESCO 2016). In the first place, this new endeavour responds to the desire of a growing number of metropolitan actors to also benefit from the increasing demand for unsophisticated cooking (Poulain 2002, p. 22), competing against rural hubs as gastronomic destinations. Modernist chefs, like Ferran Adriá, now claimed that innovation should be strongly anchored in tradition, instead of assimilating creativity to the overtaking of the old ways (Helstosky 2017, p. 54). This shift of paradigm will help fight the negative vision of the megapolis as a 'culinary Babel', which mirrors the Arcadian image of poor peasants embodied by the 'Tuscan myth'.

In his T&G contribution, Rosario Scarpato already presents three successful case studies mining this vein: Melbourne, Singapore and Bologna. The third city, located in northern Italy, had been elected by this author for hosting the ceremony of the Slow Food Award in 2000, with the purpose of exploring culinary legacies as tourism products (Scarpato 2002b, p. 135). The promoter of this event — Slow Food (SF) — is an international organisation, funded in 1986 to fight globalisation, fostering sustainable diets based on local traditions (Richards 2002, p. 7; Scarpato 2002a, p. 66; Scarpato 2002b, p. 135; Hall & Mitchell 2002b, p. 84). In the introduction of T&G, Greg Richards highlights the SF's growth as a signal of the increasing interest for F&B heritage (Richards 2002, p. 16). In this volume, Kevin Fields (2002, p. 46) mentions the close relation between this ONG and the movement of 'Slow Cities'. He argues that the quieter way of life embraced by the urban communities which adopt this model could also benefit their guests. Even if the T&G contributors do not invoke the 'slow tourism' concept explicitly, the idea — which some (MacGrath & Sharpley 2018) believe had been expressed by Jost Krippendorf (1987, p. 10) first — is already there. Like the notion of slow travel popularised a few years earlier (Clancy 2018a; MacGrath & Sharpley 2018), slow tourism was promised a bright future. It was in Germany and Switzerland that the first practical applications of the 'snail philosophy' in the field of leisure mobility were recorded under this appellation in the same period by Rafael Matos-Wasem (2004) in a chapter of a book published two years later. This new trend would enjoy continual growth until today (Clancy 2018b), the interlacing between tourism, food heritage, nostalgia and sustainability inaugurated by the precursors of the 'slow paradigm' being a constant since then (Corvo & Matacena 2018).

The rise of F&B destinations during this period is also due to the decline of the French hegemony as an international standard of fine dining and the ongoing change in consumption patterns (Csergo 2016). Paris was now nothing more than a gastronomic capital among others. Barcelona rapidly joined this group of emerging foodscapes, taking advantage of the growing notoriety of the Catalan cuisine, its election as the epicentre of the global effort to promote the MD, and later, its inscription in the ICHH list (Silva 2018, p. 580; Silva 2021, pp. 192, 194).

Next, we will see how the increasing popularity of chefs as public figures contributed to amplifying the interest of holidaymakers in experiences related to F&B.

3.3 We Are All Foodies

In the T&G chapter entitled ‘Sustainable gastronomy as a tourist product’, Rosario Scarpato (2002b) called attention to the importance of the growing number of festivals involving stakeholders engaged in safeguarding traditional foodways. As Anne-Mette Hjalager (2002, p. 30) noted, the increasing popularity of these kinds of social events had been due in part to the participation of what today we call celebrity chefs. The 1990s was the decade when Michelin award winners like Ferran Adrià and Marco-Pierre White became true ‘rock and roll stars’ (Csergo 2016). These professionals got out of their kitchens for the first time. Henceforth, they would communicate directly with their fans, without the mediation of established gastronomes or the new generation of epicureans, whom Scarpato already calls foodies in T&G (Scarpato 2002a, p. 66). Chefs from other continents, like Gastón Acurio, trained in the French school, in their turn began using innovative cooking and plating methods to reinvent the rustic cuisine of the hinterland (Matta 2016, pp. 342-343, 347), highly appreciated by high-class consumers after the Tuscan Rush.

The shifting point was probably the Global Financial Crisis (Wolf 2019, p. xxx), which inaugurated the golden age of low-cost travel. In the following years, the profile of global ‘culinary brokers’ and their public changed. Since then, there has been no need to be highly trained to gain notoriety. In turn, the *connoisseurs* capable of judging the technical competences of a kitchen brigade were now the minority of a broader audience. In fact, the celebrity chef was no longer presented as merely being the keeper of a ‘*savoir-faire*’. He evolved into a sort of guru for aspirants to a life makeover, becoming at the same time an ambassador of destinations able to seduce greedy trippers (Richards 2012, p. 30; Perkins 2017, pp. 4, 6; Hindley et al. 2019, p. 293). If some of them, such as Jamie Oliver, invited the fans to start a gastro-revolution in their own country, others, like Anthony Bourdain or Andrew Zimmern, encouraged them to turn into globe trotters looking for exotic flavours. Both widely disseminated the idea that food is what really defines a location, being an open door to any culture. They broadcast their good words through what the T&G contributors Michael Hall and Richard Mitchell (2002b, p. 79) called a total media package: cookbooks, magazines, radio programmes, TV shows, including those produced by channels exclusively dedicated to cuisine (Hall & Sharples 2003, p. 2; Kivela & Crotts 2006, p. 357). More recently, internet portals, blogs, and later, Facebook and Instagram among other social networks (Ruiz de Lera 2012, p. 121; Wolf 2019, p. xxxi), would take over.

Thanks to chefs like Bourdain and Zimmern, a large audience embraced the idea that tourists should respect cultural diversity and be sensitive to the need to safeguard the identity of the guest communities, according to the directives adopted by UNESCO after the 2003 convention. Speaking as equals to their followers, this new generation of ‘culinary brokers’ inspired vocations between amateurs, turning themselves into ‘proto-celebrities’ (Hindley et al. 2019, p. 293). They gained their own public, sharing their gastronomic quests, both at home and abroad, using the same media as their predecessors. The popularity of TV competitions, like MasterChef, tailored for the UK audience in the 1990s and presently adapted in more than 40 other countries, contributed to reducing the distance between professionals and *aficionados* since then (Wolf 2019, p. xxxi). Thanks to all these new actors, the foodie culture was already a universal phenomenon when the COVID-19 virus suddenly spread all around the planet.

3.4 The ‘New Normal’

During the first wave of the COVID pandemic, the confinement experience had a huge impact on our habits. Many of us had never had so much time free, but, unfortunately, not to do anything we wanted. Planting ourselves on the sofa, the flat screen and the laptop became our best friends and often our only connection to the outside world. Erik Wolf (2019, p. xxxi) recently observed that during a crisis ‘people withdraw to what is familiar. As consumers focused more on food and drink, the media caught on.’ This being the case, many of us finally learned to cook, looking to TV programmes, videos, or tutorials, more available online than ever. The selling of recipe books also increased greatly in the last year. We even started to look for manuals explaining how to bake our own bread. Forbidden to fly abroad, we travelled by experimenting with exotic dishes recommended by Instagram influencers and trying anything else the Internet has to offer — culinary courses, tours, festivals, etc. — all at the distance of a click (Garibaldi & Pozzi 2020, pp. 48-49). Then, as well, the sentiment of claustrophobia exacerbated by months of forced isolation had increased the need to reconnect with nature and the desire to come back to the countryside after being authorised again to move freely. After this traumatic parenthesis is finally closed, our lives will never be the same.

4 Discussion

It is too soon to measure the actual dimension of the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic, economically speaking. However, it is still evident that tourism, catering and cultural industries are among the most affected sectors. The winning synergy, which made it possible to overcome the 2008 crisis, accentuated the fall in the next one. Despite the high level of uncertainty, stakeholders and researchers already began to set up scenarios to guide recovery plans adapted to the 'new normal'. Nobody denies that leisure mobility has a future in the Covidocene. However, some changes in regard to the behaviour and preferences of travellers are predictable (Richards 2020, p. 30; Marques Santos 2020, p. 30). The authorised discourse seems fated to evolve, too. The flows of holidaymakers were often depicted before as a major threat, causing what Massimo Leone (2015, p. 386) calls 'semiotic pollution', that is, the symbolic impoverishment of the autochthonous legacies. The lack of revenues during this year due to the shutdown of the travel sector (UN 2020, pp. 14-15) revealed on the contrary that guests are now the principal funders of the preservation of this kind of resources. This is a wake-up call which provides an opportunity for a fresh start for culture and leisure mobility stakeholders, cemented by a mutual effort to understand each other's point of view.

On the other hand, sustainability remains a primary issue in this Brave New World (Richards 2020, p. 31; Marques Santos 2020, p. 29). As both natural and cultural conservation are part of the F&B tourism's DNA, this segment of the market is particularly promising in the short term, considering the increasing concern of consumers about acting ethically.

Predictably, resilience will be a main driver in the new era, more and more anchored in digital technologies (UN 2020, pp. 4-5; Marques Santos 2020, p. 31). The UNWTO already recommended taking advantage of the growing use of IT during the first wave to create partnerships with this sector to endorse the attractiveness of F&B destinations (UNWTO 2020). The hunger of internauts for topics on food had favoured the emergence of different kinds of related home-based experiences since the first confinement, as mentioned above. If the numeric avatars are not enough by themselves to guarantee the sustainability of the business, they undeniably have the merit of maintaining the connection between suppliers and customers, or even convincing new ones to plan onsite visits as soon as possible (Garibaldi & Pozzi 2020, p. 49). This is particularly timely for entrepreneurs operating in large cities, previously famous for their culinary ICH. According to a recent report of the OECD (2020, p. 9), the recovery will be slower in metropolises more exposed to the propagation of the virus. The industry will likely reboot first in the less-populated rural areas, benefiting from the growing agoraphobia, contrary to the urban offer, often based on social events and indoor activities (Berg & Sevón 2014; Perkins 2017, p. 6). To survive, gastronomic capitals like Paris or Barcelona will have to create another path or, more probably, pick between formulas experienced before the pandemic, those which better fit the 'new normal'. Stakeholders must have in mind that the COVID-19 crisis is an exogenous shock and predictably does not represent a structural change in the F&B tourism market (Keller 2020, p. 16). Consequently, the previous recipes, which take advantage of trends exacerbated by the confinement, eventually still work.

Increasing the use of digital technologies is certainly important, as many believe presently, but it is not enough. The network-based strategies, which proved their worth earlier (Richards 2012, p. 24), are now more relevant than before. Incidentally, multisectoral alliances anchored in strong values and betting on cultural heritage can be the key to the recovery. The world is more connected today than ever, so thinking globally can pay, too, making the UNESCO's ICHH list, the 'Gastronomic Cities' brand and new labels, such as the FAO's Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), more attractive. The quintuple helix innovation model (Carayannis et al. 2012; Sumarto, 2020) should also be explored more deeply to find solutions which conciliate resilience with sustainability, responding to the new needs of consumers. To be successful, such synergies will involve action programmes based on a more reflexive approach to deal with the growing diversity of actors and agendas.

5 Conclusion

Eating and drinking has been part of the tourism package since the beginning. However, we have witnessed the unprecedented repositioning of food and beverage over the last twenty years. In 2002, the contributors of *Tourism and Gastronomy* were among the first to testify to this shift from being 'nonoptional' components to a very promising niche. They already knew that the key to success would be the willingness to respond to emerging consumption patterns, considering various factors: the puritan rejection of the modern lifestyle, the growing appetite for safeguarding heritage related to identity issues, the concern for sustainability, the boom of the foodie culture and the spinoffs of the experience economy. As some authors of the volume augured, an increasing number of large cities would turn into gastronomic capitals in the following decades. However, none of them predicted the devastating effects of the universal cataclysm which has debilitated the whole industry since the beginning of 2020. The Covidocene whetted the interest of the public in cooking, for sure. Incidentally, not everyone will benefit equally from the reborn appetite for edible legacies. Rural hubs, where tourism of taste as we know it today emerged in the 1990s, are better positioned again. Suppliers from metropolitan zones, to the contrary, are severely affected by a growing agoraphobia. Investment in digital solutions can serve as a bandage in the short term. However, the future still depends on an overarching strategy, oriented by a network-based approach sized for the global scale. The cooperation between industry, science, culture and civil society around shared values continues to be the key. This, however, entails a growing effort to truly understand what big words such as sustainability or resilience really mean for each party involved.

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Abbreviations

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
F&B: Food and Beverage
GIAHS: Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems
ICHH: Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
MD: Mediterranean Diet
SF: Slow Food
T&G: Tourism and Gastronomy
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHL: World Heritage List

Bionote

António José Marques da Silva holds a PhD degree in History and Archaeology from the University of Coimbra (2009) and took post-doctorate training in the same field (2010-2015). His domain of expertise includes various topics, such as the safeguarding and management of heritage, digital humanities, intangible cultural heritage, museum exhibitions, food history, food ethnology, and cultural tourism. He is an integrated researcher of CITUR (Centre for Research, Development and Innovation in Tourism) and guest professor at the ESTG (Higher School of Technologies and Management), University of Madeira. He also is a scientific committee member of the Foundation ‘The Routes of the Olive Tree’, associate expert of the PhD School ‘Food Heritage, Cultures and Identities’ — University of Coimbra (FLUC), collaborator of the UNESCO Chair in Intangible Heritage and Traditional Know-How: Linking Heritage — University of Evora (CIDEHUS), and member of the international network ‘Food Heritage of the Lusophony’ (DIAITA).

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