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Eating Ants: Understanding the Terroir Restaurant as a Form of Destination Tourism

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This paper explores the idea that there is a new form of restaurant that requires definition recognition that if fulfills a significant role in contemporary tourism. The adoption of foraged foods frequently reflects the historical and cultural foundations of place; in this respect it is possible to adopt the French notion of 'Terroir' to conceptualize this new hospitality movement. The paper utilises Noma in Denmark as a case study of this new gustatory movement and provides an exemplar of the terroir restaurant. The Terroir restaurant provides a space in which the diner can consume tangible elements of both culture and landscape, often this involves entry into constructed visceral 'Sensescape' where the dining experience becomes elevated to a higher level. The Terroir restaurant provides the tourist with a gustatory concept and philosophy that moves far beyond the notion of food as fuel, to one that is underpinned by a geographical and cultural aesthetic that reinforces the consumers 'being in the world' and their individual identities.

Keywords

Terroir, Food Tourism, Culture, Identity, Sensescapes, Destination Restaurants

Introduction

This paper explores the cultural foundations of a new and distinctive category of restaurant that has emerged since the new millennium and can be seen to include highly regarded restaurants such as, L'Enclume (<http://www.lenclume.co.uk>), Fäviken Magasinet (www.favikenmagasinet.se/en/) and Noma (www.noma.dk). These three restaurants differentiate or position themselves outside of traditional approaches to hospitality and cuisine, through adopting a creative and organic approach to the sourcing of ingredients through foraging and embedding the cuisine within local culture, history and environment. As a consequence of these characteristics, such restaurants are not easily categorized by existing definitions, and as result it is argued that we should entitle or label these establishments as 'Terroir Restaurants'. Noma has been chosen to form the case study as it is arguably the best known of all of the terroir restaurants in the world and has been identified as paving the way for similar establishments (Healy 2014).

Noma has been recognized by various organizations such as Visit Denmark, Visit Copenhagen and the World Food Travel Organisation as being solely responsible for creating and establishing the now vibrant Danish food tourism industry. The Food Organisation of Denmark (2014) goes as far as to state:

Noma is more than a restaurant; it's a global message of understanding the wild and a love of nature. And it's a revolution in Denmark and the entire region" French-Danish top chef Francis Cardeneau explains, pointing out the fact, that in a middle of a recession, the restaurants in the small nation of Denmark created almost 5000 new jobs last year, and that the entire restaurant sector have had a 18 % increase in turnover since 2008 - the first year of the global economic collapse... Because of the dining experiences of the city, Copenhagen is among the fastest growing tourism-cities in the world. The restaurant (Noma) is also changing it's home city of Copenhagen: "Now Copenhagen is mentioned, for example by top chefs like Anthony Bourdain, as one of the top places to eat in the world, along with New York or Paris, that would never have happened without Rene Redzepi and Noma.

As the complete sensual dining experience of Noma is explored, it is clear that René Redzepi's approach to hospitality requires the reconceptualization of the definition of restaurant within tourism studies as a Terroir Restaurant. Noma held the accolade of being recognized by the Restaurant Magazine as the 'Best Restaurant in the World' for three years running, although it lost this tile in 2013 after a serious incidence of food poisoning (The Telegraph 2013), but regained this accolade in 2014. Noma's status as one of the great destination restaurants of the world is best summed up by the influential 'Restaurant' magazine that:

Noma's innovative, inventive and – of course – ground-breaking approach to cooking has created a maelstrom in the culinary world. The restaurant, for example, has taken the tired old concept of the amuse bouche and turned it into a dazzling array of one-bite starters that are alone worth the airfare to Denmark. Through the use of innovative cooking methods, Rene Redzepi's former warehouse on the dockside has changed diners' perceptions of Nordic cuisine. It is a restaurant of extraordinary pedigree, where passion and honesty is reflected in every mouthful.

(<http://www.theworlds50best.com/awards/1-50-winners/noma/>)

The cuisine utilizes a wide range of locally foraged foods to create a distinctive yet groundbreaking and creative gustatory experience that directly links Noma to the landscape and resources of Denmark. The growing trend in providing a food experience that is underpinned by the local environment raises a number of thought-provoking conceptual, political and philosophical debates that may be seen to impact upon current thinking that surrounds food or gastronomic tourism.

The terroir restaurant can be seen to differ from other restaurants by privileging the central relationship between food, culture, history and geographies to generate experience. It can also be argued that the cuisine cannot be created or replicated once the experience of dining has been removed from its geographical locations. The approach by restaurants such as Noma, redefines food chain management and the impact of globalization by almost returning to a more simplistic

mythical time. Foraging for products ties the restaurant to the seasons and the land, it provides an organic viscosity to the cooking experience and harkens back to a time that the production of food was more in-tune with the world, the seasons and environment in which it was consumed. Yet, Noma's approach to sourcing is both labour and cost intensive, and was abandoned by our predecessors, as foraging only supported a subsistence, and often-precarious way of life. The rise of the terroir restaurant, may be seen as a response to the ongoing industrialization and globalization of food production, supply chains and consumption, by embedding the cuisine and experience in the land and culture that surround the restaurant.

The Rise of the Terroir Restaurant

The emergence of the Terroir Restaurant may be seen as a reaction to the ethical issues surrounding the globalization and impacts of the increasing carbon footprint of modern global food production. There has been a growing trend within the hospitality sector to locally source food stuffs, with the benefits of this being conceptualized in debates surrounding freshness and taste and is reflected in the work of the slow food movement (Hayes-Conroy 2010, Peace 2008, Andrews 2008) and in explorations of the relationship between food and the tourism experience and place (de la Barre and Brouder 2013) However this philosophy of locally sourcing has been taken to the extreme by Terroir restaurants such as Noma. Noma's viewpoint is best understood by the statement made on the home page of their website:

In an effort to shape our way of cooking, we look to our landscape and delve into our ingredients and culture, hoping to rediscover our history and shape our future
(www.Noma.dk)

This declaration moves both the sourcing and cuisine beyond concerns about globalization, exploitation or resources and genetically modified food, by locating the experience in the geography and soil of the locality or destination. The statement also reflects the recognized role of localization and 'glocalization' in defining the distinctive nature of Denmark and its cuisine. In one way it is possible to think of cultural intermediaries such as Rene Redzepi as fulfilling the role of a tour guide very much in the vein of Salazar's (2005) 'Tour Guides' who skillfully represent glocalized as distinctive "local".

What is interesting to note that there is a clear link between the imagery used in advertising and the creation of atmosphere that impacts upon personal experience, at both the bodily and emotional level (Biehl-Missal 2012), yet the total lack of the usual imagery of the set table, the presentation of food and carefully preened kitchen gardens that accompanies hospitality marketing (see Tresidder 2011). The mission statement or philosophy of Noma is the major source of stimuli and reinforces the relationship between cooking, history, culture and landscape of the region. As such, the experience can only truly be authentically consumed or sensed at

source, as consumption is dependent upon being immersed in the geography and culture of the locality. In attempting to categorize and define the nature of Noma's approach to hospitality and cuisine draws similarities to the French concept of 'Terroir'. By accepting and drawing parallels to this it become possible to label Noma's style of cooking and hospitality as an exemplar of what may be termed a 'Terroir Restaurant'. In order to justify and appreciate this designation it is important to define the notion of terroir and to understand where the terroir restaurant may be located or positioned within the contemporary hospitality industry.



Figure 1: Noma's Signature Dish: Live Ants in Mayonnaise and Ebelskiver (Doughnuts) with Sardines

Dining and food continues to play a significant role in contemporary society and culture (Artbury 2005, O'Connor 2005, O'Gorman 2007), Sutton (2010:215) goes on to state that society and culture are a '...causal force of a particular flavor and the way this can be found at the very heart of our understanding of society and its transformations', food can define both people and places, food offers a direct insight into the nature and state of a culture at any particular moment in time. Food continues to be a significant factor in defining and shaping the tourism experience. For Cohen and Avieli (2004), indigenous gastronomy remains significant; as it immerses the tourist in the local culture more than if they were merely gazing on the destination's cultural capital. Additionally, our understanding of, and individual relationship to food and dining, acts as a marker of who we are, where we come from and where we wish to go (Howes 2004, Delind 2006, Ruben 2008, Dawkins 2009). The consumption of food in the area of fine dining is often seen as a sensual and luxurious exercise (Reed-Danahay 1996, van der Veen 2003, Howes 2004, Magee 2007, Dawkins 2009), however although Noma offers a luxurious dining experience it moves from the sensuous to the visceral by creating a challenging cuisine which tests our modern conceptions of food by utilizing and presenting dishes that are not usually utilized in Western Cuisines (see Figure 1).

However although this may be seen as one of Noma's most recognized dishes, the live ants are not used as a prop to shock or to gain publicity. In Denmark there are no indigenous citrus plants, so traditionally ants were eaten to provide the sharp citrusy flavor our palate craves and to cut through the richness of the fish and mayonnaise.

The ant dish as seen in Figure 1 is often used in the media to represent the Noma dining experience, as it is perceived as challenging or out of the ordinary. Our understanding of food is an ideological construct (Ferguson 1998, Ruben 2008) that is perpetuated by the representations of hospitality and food in films (Ferry 2003), art and literature (Hollander 1999, Martin 2005), television, contemporary cultural movements (Ferguson 1998, Magee 2007, Ruben 2008), and advertising. Although Noma has been named as the world's best restaurant in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2014, there is still limited knowledge about the restaurant, in fact there has been a general anti-marketing of the restaurant, for example Visit Denmark use Noma as a focal point of their food tourism strategy and state in their promotional literature:

You've probably heard the name, Noma, blending the words Nordic and mad (food). But managing to eat there is another matter entirely! Getting a table at the World's Best Restaurant...is not so easy.
(<http://www.visitdenmark.com/noma>)

However, they use this anti-marketing approach to direct prospective visitors to other restaurants in Denmark that offer similar experiences. This marketing strategy is further reflected in Noma's minimalistic website which devoid of the usual semiotic language of hospitality (see Tresidder 2011) to communicate its products or experiences, instead the site merely communicates Rene Redzepi's gastronomic

philosophy on a pure white blank screen. The construction of hospitality websites usually rely on representing the 'servicescape' as denoting and representing the promised gustatory experience, as Chronis et al (2012:265) state, '...the servicescape is always commercially staged and it is never disassociated from considerations of power.' Although Noma's website does not present a recognizable 'servicescape' it is still connected by considerations of power, the consumption and understanding of the Noma product requires a certain specialized cultural capital on the part of the consumer. As a result, the restaurant, its philosophy, its marketing practices are all the direct result of macro and micro social and cultural economic movements and trends and include or exclude guests according to the amount of financial and cultural resources they possess. In order to understand the significance of terroir restaurants it is important to locate them within the existing definitions and analysis of food tourism. It is possible to recognize that there is a distinction between the notion of food tourism and gastronomic tourism, although the experience offered at the terroir restaurant may be seen to be part of both food and gastronomic tourism. However, the restaurant's link with the soil provides a geographically grounded or embedded experience that separates it from mainstream definitions of food and gastronomic tourism.

Re-Conceptualizing Terroir

The use of the phrase terroir may be seen by some as controversial as it has been appropriated by the French wine industry as almost a brand or definition of origin and quality for its products. Wine defines a country or region's image and is helped by '...the distinctions in character that are derived from geographical differences, or *terroir*, an oft-contested concept denoting the unique combination of topographic, soil, climate, and cultural particularities that impart a special character to the wines...' (Mason and O'Mahony 2007:501). This view is also explored by Barnham who identifies that: 'This story of terroir is not unusual in it's blending of human and environmental history, to the point that it is difficult to disentangle the two. (Barnham 2001:19). Although the ownership of the term has been adopted by the A.O.C. (Appellation d'origine contrôlée) as a marker of quality and pedigree of wine, Aurier et al (2005) also maintains that: 'The food product constitutes a relevant category to study the terroir concept due to its natural and strong link with the geological, climatic, cultural, sociological characteristics of the production area.' (2005:4) They go on further to state:

Thanks to 19th century anthropologists, we are aware of the strong relationship between what one eats and what he (sic) is or thinks to be, and we understand that when someone eats a 'terroir' product, he feels like if he incorporated the territory with the product. (2005:5)

As such, food may be seen as a direct expression of a society and its way of life (see Boniface 2003).

However, the phrase offers a term that is rich with significance and philosophical implications and that perfectly defines both the concept of the terroir restaurant and the axiological foundations of the Noma experience. Terroir can be simply defined in environmental terms, however the origins and significance of the phrase may be located within wider philosophical historical, social and cultural debates that define the soul of a particular locality or region. Douguet and O'Connor state that:

...terroir (an untranslatable word that connotes the local spaces and soils, and also symbolic relations of goods and services production), tend to identify features of their food, cuisine, buildings and wider habitats as 'critical' patrimony in view of their symbolic as well as functional significance... (2003:238)

There is a great deal of discussion that surrounds the concept of terroir, this is reflected in the work of authors such as Riley (2005) and Tikkanen (2007) who examine how the relationship between the local cuisine and culture is sustained and reinforced by local food festivals and a small number of highly visible chefs or specialist suppliers. Lopez-Guzman and Sanchez-Canizares also link both food and wine within the same category and as such question the ownership of terroir by the A.O.C., they assert that:

Food and wine form an integral part of a local life, and the history, the culture, the economy and the society of a given area, and have been shaped by history by local lifestyles. This intensifies the contrast between one locality and another, and between rural tradition and urban modernity'. (2012:64)

Alternatively Crove and Perri (2010) define terroir as the characteristics of landscape associated with food and wine production.

The concept of terroir provides a refuge from the modern world, as Houston and Meamber comment 'Embedded within this notion of escape lies the implicit search for an 'authentic' past; one that is unsullied by the contemporary cloak of commodification' (2011:178). Resultantly, terroir is a response to what Douguet and O'Connor (2003:234) refer to as 'le revers du progrès' (progress in reverse) by creating an environmental awareness that '...is not just a matter of people displaying, individually and collectively, *different forms of life*.' (249) It offers a gateway into a more organic reflexive life. As such, terroir provides a conceptual and symbolic refuge from modern production systems and environmental degradation (Aurier et al 2005, Charters 2010). Douguet and O'Connor in reinforcing the significance of terroir assert that, for the French people there is a '...strong preoccupation with maintaining integrity of their environmental space and ecosystems, where this is to be understood in the sense of the terroir, as the quality of food, as the identity and integrity of an

organism, or the relation of oneself to one's origins and symbolic space' (2003:250). In this vein of thought Trubek (2008) defines Terroir as a 'foodview' that enables the concept to become naturalized and associated with a specific place or destination, and is underpinned by a particular set of production and consumption practices that are directly informed by local historical and social practices and is reinforced by institutions and practices that shape the ways that taste comes to define place and its people.

Terroir can be seen to provide an experiential link to the past, if we accept Jameson's (1991) definition of post-modernism as 'the cultural logic of late capitalism', we can identify cycles of food trends that reflect cultural movements that are linked to culture and the economy; Fonseca (2008) posits that food is more than a unit of sustenance as it represents an important form of cultural expression (see de la Barre and Brouder 2013 for discussion on food and Arctic tourism experiences). Noma has emerged out of a cultural and economic malaise in which it is recognized that the service based post-industrialization economy has not worked, and that the world as we understand it can never return to the excesses of the post-modern era. Consequently, the concept of foraging takes us back to the beginning of time, to pre or proto-industrial ideal in which we eat the seasons and the environment: It links us back to a myth of the past: As Barnham (2003:127) states, terroir is part of a '...biopolitics of food that relinks the local and global through an emphasis on place.' and localization. By accepting that the terroir restaurant represents the development of a new post-post-modern niche in the area of food tourism we can see that it:

...is part of a process of globalization, mobility and migration, of finding itself involved in political and economic agendas, yet also the creation of modern identities that have also entered political conflict on a personal level.
(Trauer and Ryan 2005:482)

The terroir restaurant may locate itself as both a response to, and a refuge from globalization, yet because it is embedded in its terroir, the cuisine cannot be transported to other locations. Then it encourages global movements of tourists to travel to the destination to consume the food and experience. For example in 2012 Noma undertook residency at Claridge's Hotel in London for one week and was promoted as a 'Taste of Noma'. The BBC as part of a series focusing on Claridge's filmed this event, the documentary highlighted the difficulty of transporting the terroir concept out of its geographical context, the menu was considerably reduced as a result of not being able to source locally many of the ingredients needed. Ants were imported for the Ant dish, however many died during transit. Although it was possible at short notice to source another delivery from Denmark the number of ants given to each customer was rationed. Although the residency was a success and sold out in just over two hours, many food critics were less than enamored with their experience giving only average reviews. Mathew Norman (2012) from the Daily Telegraph after awarding the meal 3.5 out of 5 stars commented:

Undoubtedly this is a chef of rare talent and inventiveness. No doubt he's wonderful, wonderful in Copenhagen. But Keller's tasting menu smashed this one into oblivion, and on this form Redzepi struck me as less the Federer of the pots and pans than the Caroline Wozniacki, the Danish compatriot whose stint as women's tennis number one despite not having won a major title, some feel, devalued the rankings.

Although it was possible to replicate some of the Danish menu, removing Noma from its terroir decontextualized the cuisine creating a hyperreality of the experience and is at odds with Redzepi's philosophy defined in the Noma website. Although the cuisine produced by restaurants such as Noma is seen to be at the cutting edge of contemporary cuisine, its success is governed by the history and culture tradition that permeates the food with an essence of mythical nostalgia (see also de la Barre and Brouder 2013), it is this essence that links the Noma experience to terroir and once it is removed from its origins then its significance as an expression of tradition is dissipated.

Food only plays one part in the Noma experience, 'servicescapes' also play a part in the reinvention of traditions and cultural memories (Chronis et al 2012). Consequently, 'servicescapes' play an active role in generating experience and that place experience becomes an artifact of joint cultural production (see Penzona 2000 and Kozinets et al 2004). In this co-production, the notion of terroir is the fulcrum around which experience moves and is generated and can be conceptualized as a cognitive category (Aurier et al 2005) that mediates experience and which is negotiated by customers. The design of the Noma restaurant is not formal, food is served on undressed wooden tables and customers sit on wooden benches, service is formal but underpinned by a form of hospitality where people are welcomed in as friends or guests rather than customers. As such, there is a synchronistic relationship between the food and the 'servicescape' and is very much at odds with the opulent décor of Claridge's. Markwell (2012) in her article 'World's best restaurant comes to town...and it's serving ants' continually refers to the "real" Noma in comparison to the Claridge's version, which 'loses the intimacy of the real one'. In this sense, the terroir restaurant is more than cuisine, it is a vessel that brings together all the aspects of culture, tradition and place and cannot be transplanted anywhere else.

It is argued that our experiences of places and landscapes are an example of a corporeal involvement in the world and that people travel to find a sense of harmony (Li 2000). Terroir restaurants enable visitors to immerse themselves within the world by sensing, eating and tasting the terroir. This view has been clearly identified by De La Barre and Brouder (2013) in their exploration of Arctic food as being surrounded by stories. As such, the body interacts with the environment and reflects embodied experiences through their immersion in what may be labeled 'sensescapes' (Trauer and Ryan 2005). In commenting on the notion of embodiment Chronis et al (2012:263) maintain that:

...human perception privileges sensations felt through the body, they conceive imagination too as steeped in embodied perception. For them, perception is a synthetic experience. Consumers grasp the world directly through their multiple senses and by imaginary modes of embodiment.

Noma offers an experience that enables the customer to explore their senses and their sense of being within the world. As Marshall (2005:73) states, the consumption of hospitality and food is an 'authoritative act', that 'authenticates' our desired identity and position within the world, acting as a social marker of who we are and who we wish to be (see also Gillespie and Morrison 2001, Gvion and Trosler 2008, Brownlie et al 2005), and who we do not want to be (Cronin et al 2012).

Terroir and Senses: Transforming the Traditional Dining Experience

It can be argued that that terroir creates a tangible sensual space that is accessed through restaurants such as Noma, this space is underpinned by a multi-sensual dining experience that challenges traditional conceptions of dining. The significance of senses in contributing to the tourism experience is well charted (Pan and Ryan 2009, Low 2005, Law 2001). As Dann and Jacobsen (2003:19) in recognizing the significance of recognizing other sense apart from the gaze in within the tourism experience, state:

...the successful tourist destination, which otherwise could be regarded as something of a hybrid and living anachronism, blending ancient with post-modern, now can be the winning formula, precisely because it does not rely on sight alone.

Thus, the essence of the terroir dining experience is that it creates a multisensory gustatory experience, in which the social, cultural, geographical, eco-system and 'servicescapes' offer a unique sensual experience in which all of the senses are engaged during the consumption process. Noma offers one of the clearest examples of the relationship between the tourism experience and what Law (2001) identifies as the 'sensory geography' of tourism (or alternatively Low's 2005 notion of 'sensory landscapes'). In the case of Noma the tourists do not merely metaphorically consume the landscape, they tangibly consume elements of the physical landscape and culture. We can take this idea of consumption further by building on Curtin's (1992 xiv) notion of a 'food centered philosophy of human being' and which is interpreted by Martin (2005:75) as meaning that '...food becomes part of the self, it obliges us to reconceptualize not only the other but also the identity of a self that is so permeable, it can physically incorporate the other'. So in fact what results is an incorporation of place, food and the self in some form of sensual and sensory touristic landscape.

In exploring the complexity of senses and their linking to touch, smell, feel etc., Sutton (2010:217) goes further by introducing the concept of 'synesthesia' which represents the idea that senses do not operate in isolation, but rather operate in relation

with all of the other senses. The significance of this is important when attempting to define and comprehend the experience offered at terroir restaurants, and how it differs from more traditional dining experiences. Sutton identifies that:

Synesthesia ...blurs the objectivity and passivity of western sensory models by showing the ways that sensory experience is not simply passively registered but actively created between people. Synesthesia is a reminder of why food and the senses should be considered together.

This view of the senses has been explored recently in tourism studies. For instance, Pan and Ryan (2009) identify the multisensory nature of tourism and its significance to the contemporary tourist. Senses have always been an important part of tourism. We can chart this beginning with Baudelaire's (1863) notion of the 'flâneur' and the idea of exploring the city through a heightened sensual awareness of the environment. According to Biehl-Missal (2012), we need to consider the impact senses have on our understanding of the world and how it influences our behavior. She states we gather '...aesthetic experiences through out five senses create an embodied, tacit knowing that...can influence behavior' (2012:5). However, as a result of their New Zealand research Pan and Ryan have found that although tourists utilized all of their senses, taste was privileged as the most significant sense experience within all of the sites investigated in New Zealand (2009).

Since the publication of John Urry's 'The Tourist Gaze' in 1990, tourism research has been overly reliant on the notion of the gaze, and in particular the ocular. It is only once organizations such as Noma are analysed that sight as one of the senses only plays a very small part in the overall gustatory experience. This theme is also reflected increasingly being reflected in scholarly research, where the primacy of the gaze is being challenged by identifying the significance of other senses within the realm of tourism and hospitality. This exploration of the senses is particularly reflected in gastronomic tourism. According to Lopez-Guzman and Sanchez-Canizares (2012:63) the exploration of the senses through the consumption of food is one of the major motivations for the tourist to engage in gastronomic tourism. This association between food, wine and sensory experiences (see Getz 2000), is lucidly summed up by Sutton, who comments on the significance of the relationship between food and the senses:

...food is central to cosmologies, worldviews, and ways of life' and is reflected in the term 'gustemology' is a means of understanding the spectrum of cultural issues that exist around taste and the sensory aspects of food.
(2010:215)

Intrinsically, the experience offered at the terroir restaurant is an ontological journey that through the challenging of senses grounds the individual metaphysically within the terroir (see Brownlie et al 2005). By challenging and stimulating the senses, terroir cuisine provides a rupture or break from the everyday, it creates a purity of

experience and a re-establishment of an awareness of the senses that have been dulled by the act of 'being' in a world dominated by catastrophe, homogenization and technology. As Levi-Strauss affirms in assessing the significance of senses:

The senses...are operators, which make it possible to convey the isomorphic character of all binary systems of contracts connected with the senses, and therefore to express, as a totality, a set of equivalences connecting life and death, vegetable foods and cannibalism, putrefaction and imputrescibility, softness and hardness, silence and noise.

(1983:153, quoted in Sutton 2010:210)

Thus, for Levi-Strauss senses are codes that transmit messages and the 'Gustatory Code' (1983:164) is privileged over other sensory codes, but most importantly for this article is the idea that he links the codes that surround the food system to the 'social system' in which we live (Sutton 2010:210). This view is supported by Weismantel (2005:97), who ascertains that sensory aspects of taste change, '...the social and economic structures that make consumption possible...', therefore, although the production of 'sensespaces' within in tourism provide us with place and space to explore the sensual side of life, we cannot remove or isolate them from social and economic structures.

Terroir Restaurants as Identity Projects

It is possible to think of senses from two different perspectives, firstly, in terms of synesthesia and secondly, in terms of the individual's being in the world. There is a strong academic discourse that surrounds the significance of food within society (Cronin et al 2012), and is notably reflected by Bourdieu's (1984) use of food in understanding habitus, embodiment and aesthetics. Bourdieu explored how the individual's knowledge of food is an expression of their cultural capital, and that food is a part of '...a system of classificatory schemes...' (1984:174), that codifies contemporary society. If we accept that the Noma experience is a visual, aesthetic and performative practice then it also becomes a form of spatial practice in which the consumer can accumulate, express and trade cultural capital (Biehl-Missal 2012). Even though there is a purity of consumption within the terroir restaurant, its product and philosophy still require high levels of both cultural and economic capital to engage in the experience.

There is a well-defined link between consumption and identity, as Mason and O'Mahoney assert:

...the reality of culinary tourism often seems constrained to high-end wining and dining – a component of cultural tourism aimed at attracting well-heeled and the well educated to restaurants...Assessing culinary tourism in a way posits it as a niche tourism aimed at a particular demographic.

(2007:499)

The philosophical tenants and practical aspects Noma may be seen as a reaction to globalization and homogenization, the reality is that the restaurant is an elitist space in which access to the experience is restricted by their minimalistic marketing strategy (rationing knowledge), limited space/covers (rationing access) and high prices (exclusion through financial resources).

As stated previously, the simplicity of Noma's marketing and in particular their website offers a philosophy rather than the visual information that usually underpin contemporary hospitality marketing. The result of this is that exclusion of visual information creates blank canvas for or liminal space for the consumer to explore his or her own understanding of the cuisine, experience and 'servicescape'. This minimalistic approach to promotion and the subsequent rationing of knowledge encourages the consumer to undertake a 'cultural calculation' (Bjerrisgaard et al 2012), which obliges the consumer to directly draw from their reservoir of cultural capital to find meaning within the site. Thus, if the individual does not hold the appropriate levels of cultural capital and most importantly cultural 'knowledges' then the marketing message will remain un-interpretable.

Nevertheless, Noma remains a brand, but what is interesting is that it can be located within Firat and Venkatesk's (1995) notion of the post-modern branding paradigm. This paradigm recognizes that the individual is an active consumer and is involved in the creation of brand meanings. The latter '...celebrates the imagery of the emancipated consumer, who mobilizes brands as cultural resources, and uses these as building blocks in the formation of personal biographies and identity narratives.' (Bjerrisgaard et al 2012:4). From this view, engagement with the Noma philosophy becomes a significant part of an individual identity project. In addition, the 'glocalization' of the food experience also reinvigorates national or cultural identity by highlighting the significance of indigenous food and the stories that surround it (de la Barre and Brouder 2013). Thus, although the concept of the terroir restaurant is a utopian ideal of cuisine, it operates through a policy of inclusion and exclusion that is enforced by market and cultural forces, rather than an underpinning philosophy of omission or integration.

The Terroir Restaurant and Tourism

In assessing the impact of Noma upon the Danish tourism industry, it is necessary to think about the relationship and the different categories of experience offered by food and hospitality providers, and the role each of them play within the tourism industry. Henderson (2009:154) identifies that there are four primary relationships between food and tourism:

- Food as tourism product
- Marketing of food to tourists
- Food tourism as tool for local development

- Impact on locally grounded practitioners that utilize their environment to source materials

Each of these categories need to be understood in isolation, as each is reliant on different relationships between the destination, landscape and the host/guest interaction. These categories create a wide range of differing discourses and areas of analysis. This complexity of the subject area is also complicated by Fields (2002), who identifies four different types of motivation for engaging in food tourism. These include, physical, social, cultural and for status. These fields have been further explored by authors such as; Hjalagar and Richards (2002), Boniface (2003), Long (2004), Cohen and Avieli (2004), Hall et al (2003), Croce and Perri (2010). Their resulting scholarly work represents a dominant discourse that has underpinned the academic analysis of food tourism, and has primarily focused for instance on the development and of management of food tourism, food producers, and attendance at food festivals. However, what is significant for the recognition of terroir tourism is that for such research, food is still often seen as a secondary consideration for tourists and as a consequence, is rarely seen as the major motivation for international travel (Riley 2005, Tikkanen 2007), but rather, that it enhances existing attractions (du Rand and Heath 2006). The nature of the terroir restaurant is that it is located within the terroir of the location, tourists have to travel to the destination to consume the experience.

The characteristics of Gastronomic tourism as an identified niche, share a number of properties with terroir restaurants. The food element is the center of the experience and it elevates the notion of dining to a much higher level of production, experience and theatre. The Noma experience can be seen as part of the Gastronomic/Culinary tourism sector as it directly attracts tourists to Copenhagen for the purpose of consuming food, in this way it can also be argued that the other attractions such as the Harbor and the 'Little Mermaid' become secondary elements, that support Noma as the primary attraction. So for the tourist, Noma comes to reflect the essence of experience and link to place. Ignatov and Smith in reflecting on culinary tourism state, '...culinary tourism concerns the self-aware and conscious interest in experiencing a destination through its foods' (2006:238). However, although the terroir restaurant can be defined as a niche within the gastronomic tourism sector, it still differs by its relationship to history, land and culture to create an experience that differs from traditional fine dining experience. As a niche area in contemporary tourism practices,

...gastronomy is classified as the primary motivation of the tourist who travels specifically to experiment with the local cuisine, and as a secondary motivation when the tourist considers the local cuisine as an important, but not the only, option among other attractions available in the chosen destination' (Lopez-Guzman and Sanchez-Canizares 2012:65).

Gastronomic tourism traditionally elevates the significance of food to a level whereby it revels in its 'extraordinariness' and distance from the routine and often un-reflexive consumption of food as merely fuel (Marshall 2005, Jolliffe 2006). Traditionally, gastronomic tourism differs from food tourism by creating what may be defined as a 'Pleasure Zone' (Fantasia 1995) that manipulates exchange (Gillespie and Morrison 2001), and in which we can escape into a utopian space that is defined by the dining experience. This space signifies a 'graceful way of living' (Delind 2006:128), it bounds our past and memory creating a sense of belonging by drawing on embedded definitions of hospitality and gastronomy.

The terroir restaurant challenges this established definition of gracefulness or pleasure, as the dining experience involves challenging the guest's senses and ontological preconceived conceptions of gastronomy and service, by offering unusual ingredients or encouraging the customer to fry their own egg at their table. Noma offers a truly 'authentic environment' (see Johns and Pine 2002:127) or space in which the tourist may search for the authentic experiences and ultimately offer a juxtaposition to the world of fast or industrial produced food and the commercial homogenization of taste that is dominated by the French influenced haute cuisine offered at the majority of Michelin starred restaurants. However the terroir restaurant offers an experience that immerses the senses into a maelstrom of experiences that are linked back to the terroir of the destination. It is this idea of elevating the dining experience to a multi-sensual level that distinguishes itself from other cuisines; the idea of sense provocation is not a new idea and is a major component of molecular gastronomy. Terroir restaurants utilize the soil rather than a chemical processes to create the experience. Again it links the consumer back to the soil, history, culture and heritage.

As seen earlier in this paper, one of the main characteristics of the terroir restaurant is that, the customer has to travel to the actual geographical location to explore the true or authentic experience of consuming the terroir. As such the customer by default has to become a tourist. While the experience offered at Noma may be opposite to the extension of food as ontological comfort (see Quan and Wang 2004), it is about challenging and exploring preconceptions and comfort of being in the modern world. However, the Noma product/experience broadly fits into the idea of food consumption as 'peak tourist experience' rather than 'supporting tourism experience'. These experiences can be defined as follows:

..the tourist experience consists of two dimensions, namely, the dimension of the peak touristic experience and the dimension of the supporting consumer experience. The former mainly refers to the experience of the attractions that constitute the major motivations to tourism. By contrast, the latter mainly refers to the experiences of gratifying basic consumer needs on the journey, such as eating, sleeping and transport, which do not constitute the major motivations to tourism. (Quan and Wang 2004:301)

When assessing the impact of Noma upon the Danish tourism industry, it is possible to think about the restaurant in the following terms rather than as merely a secondary supporting activity:

...under certain situations, tourists may quest for food experiences that are beyond the boundaries of the routine and the familiar. Indeed deep motive for tourism is to search for novelty and change...tourism as context of novelty offer new opportunities in food consumption... (Quan and Wang 2004:302)

Noma receives over 100,000 booking requests per month, yet seats on 40 customers at any one sitting; the majority of these requests are generated from overseas markets (Markwell 2012). As a result, 97,600 potential visitors are disappointed each month. However, the limited availability at Noma has led to what Goulding (2013) defines as 'Nomanomics', whereby '... the success of one restaurant positively impacted Denmark's national economy, including its ripple effect on other industries in the region and how it re-ignited a country's love for its own cuisine.' In short Noma as a 'peak tourist experience' has enabled Denmark to create a niche food tourism industry that utilises the terroir restaurant format As Goulding (2013) reports:

"We've seen up to an 11% increase in tourism in Copenhagen and the major cities," says Jan Olsen, CEO of VisitDenmark, the country's chief tourism board, attributing some of that to a rise in culinary tourism countrywide. "You don't come here for the climate. You come here for the people and the food. We're marketing very heavily on New Nordic cuisine."

The role and significance of destination restaurants as a tool for tourism development is not to be underestimated. The idea of the Terroir Restaurant provides a means of locating food within the cultural landscape of a destination and more importantly a means of differentiating a non-transferable tourism product from other destinations.

Conclusion

The terroir restaurant as a category raises some interesting conceptual debates. It can be persuasively argued that it does not fit comfortably into the existing perceptions of what is fine dining, food or gastronomic tourism. The link between the dining experience and cuisine to the social, cultural, historical and geographical landscapes of the destination elevates Noma to what may be defined as a destination restaurant, in which it acts as the primary motivation for tourists visiting the locality. It is clear that Noma has made a significant contribution to raising the profile of Nordic food and Denmark as a tourist destination. The concept of 'terroir' enables us to explore and understand the significance of location to restaurants such as Noma, and to recognize that in fact the restaurant itself becomes embedded within the terroir of the location. By removing the terroir restaurant from its historical and cultural context means that the cuisine, experience or 'sensescape' is no longer in context.

Meaning become lost or devalued. It is easy to see foraging as a return to a more simple time, motivated by an anti-global sentiment through the search for experience, production and forms of consumption that are more authentic or organic. However, we can also argue that terroir restaurants such as Noma are creating a hyperreal gustatory experience by blurring the boundaries between, time, history and location, to create a unique and challenging experience. As Gillespie and Morrison stated over a decade ago:

...commercial hospitality is well positioned to convert dreams into a hyperreality of manufactured fantasy that enables [them] to undertake transformative experiences of self. (2001:186)

The terroir restaurant is still part of commercial hospitality, it is still a part of both food and gastronomic tourism. Yet, the terroir restaurant creates a unique geographically grounded experience that is worthy of its own category within tourism studies, as it is as much the product or result of a creative philosophy as it is of the history, geography, society and culture that defines and locates its cuisine within a geographical moment in time and a cuisine that can truly only really be consumed in its specifically located geographical context. This research illustrates the importance that food has in defining place and culture for tourists and that 'Nomanomics', can provide a blueprint for tourism development. However in order for this to be successful and tourists to be attracted it is vital that we understand the terroir of locality and how we communicate this to potential visitors.

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