



Article

# Contingent and affective disruptions: Towards relational tourism geographies of what makes things food

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## Abstract

Human intentionality forms just one aspect in understanding the tourist's engagement with food, and yet tends to dominate food tourism research; whilst food itself tends to remain somewhat 'passive stuff'. A focus on the active presence of food we argue is rare in food tourism scholarship. This paper thus explores how tourist scholars offering insights into the practices and experiences of eating in tourism contexts have taken to spatial and relational approaches to explore what it means to eat during travel. We argue that tourist studies literature on food holds the potential to unlock the complexity of what tourists eat, and why. We do this by discussing two broad 'spatial turns' relating to tourism geographies of eating as relational. In doing this we attend to questions of how things become food through attunement to sociospatial-material relationships, experiences and situated practices. We show how these two relational approaches offer exciting research agendas that rethink food tourism not as a predetermined, structured human experience or touristic agenda – but as something that is ongoing, and made through individuals' sensorial engagement with the social and material world.

## Keywords

embodied, food tourism, more-than-human, relational, spatial

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## Introduction

The study of food is integral to tourist studies, with tourist studies scholars taking the study of food in several directions to consider the meanings and significance of eating during travel. One key research agenda, for example, positions food as an attraction (Robinson and Getz, 2014). The World Food Travel Association (2020) claims that 7 out of 10 travellers choose a destination by its food and drink, with food tourism prefaced as a key sector of the international tourism industry (UNWTO, 2017). There is an increasing number of examples of how food tourism is pivotal to the events calendars and marketing campaigns that sustain the identities of cities, regions and nations (Ab Karim and Geng-Qing Chi, 2010; Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Getz et al., 2014). Equally, this strand brings to the fore how tourist flows are sustained by celebrity chef television programs (Busby et al., 2013), documentaries (Xu et al., 2020), cooking schools (Bell, 2014) and themed restaurants (Sørensen et al., 2020). However, in taking focus with the use of food as a destination promotion tool, within this research agenda less attention is given to the food itself and its earthly materialities, alongside the different ways that food attractions become embodied (Falconer, 2013).

A second related strand of food tourism research engages with food politics, specifically that which conflates sustainable forms of tourism with 'wild', 'local' and 'slow' food systems as alternatives to industrial ones (cf. Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Fuste-Forne and Jamal, 2020; Hjalager and Johansen, 2013; Jung et al., 2014; Sims, 2009). This strand draws attention to the contradictions surrounding 'slow food systems', specifically the class and racial privilege required to advocate for local food (Mostafanezhad and Suryanata, 2018). This strand, however, gives less attention to the affective and embodied experiences of consumers, limiting insights into the role of food in becoming a tourist and making tourist destinations, including selecting, smelling and tasting specific foodstuffs.

In this paper we identify the contributions a third key research agenda can make to thinking through these broader relationships between food and tourism, and allow us to explore the question: what do tourists eat and why? (Hjalager, 2004). This third research agenda initially focussed on personality attributes to understand what tourists eat (Cohen and Avieli, 2004), alongside the notion of cultural capital (Bardhi et al., 2010; Boniface, 2003; Mak et al., 2012). Early work in this strand sought to render distinctions between neophylic and neophobic travellers (Fields, 2002; Hjalager, 2002); the former referring to those seeking unfamiliar foods during travel and the latter encapsulating those who seek familiar foods. Studying what tourists eat, Bourdieu's (1979) notion of cultural capital is equally central to tourist scholars' understanding of eating as enabling the performance of cosmopolitan identities that demand pushing the comfort zone and tasting the Other (Germann Molz, 2005; Mkono, 2011). This work argues that food tourism is mobilised and sustained around notions of novelty, and the achievement of social status through 'tasting the Other' (Long, 2004: 22). To consider eating unfamiliar foods as social capital Long (2004) argues that individuals may satisfy their 'curiosity about otherness', and 'confront the impulse to explore the unknown'. Echoing Bourdieu (1979) there is a politics implemented by the tourism industry to taste, and tasting lesser-known foods. When considering eating food as an object and desire of

social capital, tourist studies scholars attend to questions of how food often tends to be romanticised as part of a traditional past, in ways that tell us things about what individuals are seeking in relationship with food while travelling.

Relational geographies of eating, we argue, further unlocks the complexity of what tourists eat, and why. To consider tourist spaces as relational, is to conceive of the co-constitution of identities and places, made, remade and unmade through the experience of ongoing social and material interactions. A relational approach to what tourists eat, and why, therefore reinvolves paying close attention to the embodied geographies of food consumption in place, through attunement to the senses – touch, smell, taste, sound and sight – in addressing the situated practices, relationships and interactions that make and are made by eating (Waitt, 2014). This direction, as noted by Bezzola and Lugosi (2018) and Therkelsen (2015) troubles the fixed and categorical understandings of food and eating often found in representational approaches informed through Bourdieusian thinking. A relational approach, presented through the geographies of eating, contents that what tourists eat and why, is always spatially contingent and fluid, made through social and material interactions that are ever-changing and unbounded.

Building on this, we argue that closer inspection of relational tourism geographies of eating offers exciting possibilities for understanding food in tourist research. We do this by discussing two broad ‘spatial turns’ relating to tourism geographies of eating as relational. In doing this we attend to questions of how things become food through attunement to socio-spatial-material relationships, experiences and situated practices. We show how these two relational approaches offer exciting research agendas that rethink food tourism not as a predetermined, structured human experience or touristic agenda, but as something that is ongoing, and made through individuals’ sensorial engagement with the social and material world (Bennett, 2010). The first spatial turn builds on the notion of ‘relational materialism’ and the second builds upon feminist notions of ‘embodiment’ (Everett, 2009; Falconer, 2013). Our aim is to further advocate for how these two more-than-human lines of inquiry might advance spatial conceptualisation of food tourism within tourist studies.

Our paper is structured through two themes, what we term ‘contingent disruptions’ and ‘affective disruptions’, to help reveal the geographies of how things become food. Contingent disruptions direct our attention to the flux and flow of socio-spatial-material relations that comprise things as food in certain places and not others. Affective disruptions of travel take focus with the empirical illustrations of emplaced embodied practices of eating in unfamiliar places and the narratives of becoming that emerge. Ontological overlap exists between these two approaches and taken together this scholarship draws our attention to how the notion of ‘good food’ is a relational achievement, dependent on a range of socio-material relations that enable and hinder certain things to become edible, across multiple spatial working arrangements. Thus, food is no longer taken to be a relatively stable object comprised of organic material. In contrast, understanding food as relational redirects empirical interest to the process of how things become food (borrowing here from Roe (2006)) at the intersection between sentient bodies, technologies and food, in ways that does not conform to dualistic or static ways of apprehending materiality.

These two turns are presented to bring attention to important scholarship that offers a relational understanding of what people may eat while travelling, and why. Crucial to this work is the identification that human intentionality forms just one aspect in understanding the tourist's engagement with food, and yet tends to dominate research; whilst food itself tends to remain somewhat 'passive stuff' (Bennett, 2010). A focus on the active presence of food we argue is rare in food tourism scholarship. In exploring these two themes we do not seek to provide a comprehensive literature review. Rather we deliberately draw on selected articles that best illustrate how these two spatial turns allow us to understand why we eat what we do in tourism setting. As such the articles are united by their varied and unique insights, with each article presenting a diverging perspective of food tourism. The notion of 'food tourism' employed in the article is deliberately not prescriptive because we hope to accommodate the diversity of eating within travel settings. To conclude we consider the implications for tourism studies in conceiving of food from outside the dualistic categories of the corporeal and technological, the social and material.

### **Contingent disruptions: How things become food in and through the socio-material relations that comprise place**

The notion of contingent disruptions is a way of tracing the provisional and uncertain connections between bodies, the experience of eating and place. Contingent disruptions alert us to the multiple potentials of becoming, a reminder that a material item such as food does not necessarily follow predictable futures, despite appearing relatively stable and fixed. As anthropologist Mol (2008) and others working within Actor Network Theories (ANT) (Abrahamsson et al., 2015) show, materials do not exist on their own, prompting us to consider the socio-material relations that comprise food. For example, Colebrook and Miele (2017) remind us through their experiments at the Resonances: Sciences-Art-Politics festival, that humans can eat many things, however it is through very particular devices, settings and collectives that only certain things become valued as food. What becomes perceived as edible in tourist settings, or something that tastes good, is not just a requirement of the body to learn to appreciate such things, nor is it simply a matter of promotion or the perception of a food as 'good', through its positioning as a 'local' or 'sustainable' product. Rather, it is a process emergent through socio-material relations that hinder more than they enable. For this reason, food, when conceived as always emergent and embedded in socio-material relations through which we make sense of the world, becomes a mechanism to reflect on how tourism plays a role in how things are brought together as food.

Attending to the discomforts emergent through eating allows insights into the dynamics between food and travel. In our first example that captures the potential of contingent disruption to illustrate how things become food is research that involved sharing a meal as part of an experimental performance, held as a side event at the Milan World Expo 2015 (Colebrook and Miele, 2017). Milan Expo 2015 is a mega urban event designed to attract millions of international visitors to Milan to discuss the topic of environmental sustainability. As part of the experimental performance, participants encountered a first course of unprepared raw vegetables, laid on a bed of soil, rather than plates. Diners were

presented with only domestic cutlery laid on the soil to assist in the consumption of whole cabbages, onions and peppers. Stripping away the technology, as part of the first course, challenged the way in which things become food; confronting diners with elements of food production not generally present at the table. The second course was curated to conflict with the first, being brightly coloured sweets displayed on polystyrene trays, requiring minimal effort to pick up and eat. Contrasts between the two courses unsettled the materials, presentation and performance of eating familiar foods. Such contrasts were not just seen but were also tasted and felt through the gut, fingertips, on tongues and saliva glands. The ordinary became unfamiliar, with the ease of popping a sweet into the mouth, compared to the challenge in making sense of a whole, raw vegetable at the dining table (Colebrook and Miele, 2017).

The contingent disruptions of raw vegetables, soil, brightly coloured sweets and polystyrene trays disrupted the usual process by which foodstuffs become food. The unsettling of what food tastes, smells and looks like made visible the industrialisation of everyday foods. Bringing diners' attention to the material processes things undergo to become easily consumable (or not), hoped to render reflection and discussion concerning food futures, and how food might be otherwise. Such contrasts challenge the idea that our food choices are personal preferences, entirely independent from the agentic forces of the things around us (Bennett, 2010).

Our second empirical example of contingent disruptions captures how things become food through the creation of tourism destinations. The example of how mussels became food in Strandir, Iceland, is a telling illustration of how things that become food is not predetermined. Lund (2015) writes that mussels were previously not often considered food in this part of the world, despite being widely available along Strandir's coastline. Lund (2015) notes, 'consuming them is neither a local nor traditional practice. . . and it is only in the past few years that people have started farming them' (p. 24), in response to international demands (Northlight Seafood, 2021). Lund (2015) explains that it was the consumption of a dish of mussels in Brussels by the Director of the Strandir Tourist Information Centre, that allowed mussels to be reconfigured as something that could be served to visitors. In following the heterogeneous path of mussels 'towards, around and away from' (Lund, 2015: 24) rural Iceland as they become food, Lund shows that whilst tourism does not determine nor control what becomes food, tourism often undertakes an important element in how things are brought together as food. Rather than the use of mussels by the Strandir Tourist Information Centre being understood as something that had emerged through destination branding, Lund (2015) references ANT, to explain how networks 'make their way through minds, matter and bodies' in undetermined ways, bringing things together as food in tourism settings (Bærenholdt and Haldrup, 2006: 214). The potential of theorising food tourism through the lens of actor network theory (ANT) involves weaving together the human and non-human. And as Bærenholdt and Haldrup (2006) argue, the importance of such an approach is that it 'sheds light on the production of tourist places because of the complexities of the spatial patterns and the cross-cutting of material, social and cultural aspects' (p. 214). The use of relational approaches in tourism, such as ANT, assist in capturing the emergent qualities of how things become food including their taste, alongside the ease of supply and notions of 'uniqueness' and 'localness', without being deterministic.

And finally, we turn to Coles and Hallett (2012), and their examination of how contingent disruptions of decaying salmon heads is configured differently as food and waste, through the practices, relationships and interactions that comprise food markets. Their focus seeks to build on Cook's (2006) approach in food geographies that suggests we 'follow the thing', and look for connections, informed through Latour's (2005) motto to 'follow the actor'. In following salmon heads, Coles and Hallett (2012) identify the contingent disruptions that engender the salmon heads, as they decay, in their diverse journeys through markets, where they become categorised as either waste or food through the coming together of different social and material relations that comprise place. Explaining their focus with salmon, Coles and Hallett (2012) argue that, unlike white fish, where the heads might be used as a base for fish stock – salmon is an oily fish, and as such cannot be used in the same way. Due to its oily nature, salmon spoils faster than white fish: a process made obvious through its smell. They trace the social and material places making relations between producers and consumers of salmon heads that helped constitute the Borough Market in London as a tourist destination, and the Bull Ring Market in Birmingham as a place frequented by some lower socio-economic patrons. Salmon heads become waste in the social and material process that create the Borough Market as a tourist destination that is pitched to consumers of 'alternative', 'ethical' foods, where in this space, salmon heads are used for display, conjuring a marine atmosphere. In comparison, salmon fish heads become a possible food source for some lower-socio economic patrons in the Bull Ring Market, due to the low cost of this swiftly perishable material.

Contingent disruptions provoke questions regarding why we eat the way that we do in tourism settings, if we were to acknowledge the centrality of both social and material agency, and the limitations of individual choice. Human intentionality and human innovations are essential elements in discussions of tourism consumption; influencing why we eat the foods that we do. They, however, just serve as part of what makes things food (Bennett, 2007, 2010); despite such human-centric conceptualisations dominating approaches to food tourism research. Alongside ideas, materials are agents, influencing what we become through consumption, as well as the ways that we engage in questions concerning what we eat, where we eat and why we eat. What comes, is always a human-nonhuman collective. In attending to the ways matter informs what and how things become food through the different shapes of travel, attention must be given to how the things that we consume along the way have their own active materialities, reconfiguring the centrality of humans within food narratives. Through this reconfiguration of food as more than something that is grown/hunted/farmed, cooked, promoted, sold and consumed (Lund, 2015), we can appreciate the multiple realities of food within different travel settings.

## **Affective disruptions: Embodiment and how things become food**

In this section we ask, what we can learn from the ways embodied approaches have been used to investigate experiences of eating during travel. Food tourism relies upon how the richly olfactory, auditory, tactile, visual and taste-full sensation of eating helps to sustain

pleasure and ways to relate to other people in cultural and social terms (Everett, 2009). Travellers are often in a privileged position of being able to choose sensations of belonging or estrangement through taste. Germann Molz (2005, 2007) conceives of experiencing 'local' food in terms of seeking cultural capital in the construction of the cosmopolitan identity of the 'foodie' or food tourist. Unfamiliar tastes as 'treats' are conceived through the work of Bourdieu (1979) as integral to accruing social distinction through the demonstration of adventure, fashion and style.

Whereas, at the same time, experiencing 'familiar foods' can address tourists' craving for comfort during extended periods of travel (Bezzola and Lugosi, 2018). For example, Falconer (2013) and Germann Molz (2005) explore the digestive discomfort of long-term western travellers in Asia that evoke cravings for memorable tastes and sought comfort in familiar foods and surroundings, such as McDonald's. The travellers' embodied food history sticks as an absent presence, showing itself through digestive issues and fatigue. Essentialised North American tastes, that include standardisation and hygiene practices work to produce the familiar places and tastes for some white travellers. Turning to consume the familiar led to feelings of guilt, shame and disappointment for the backpackers in Falconer's (2013) study, due to their perceived inability to live up to the identity of the cosmopolitan adventurous traveller; illustrating how our food choices during travel go beyond predetermined intentions. The familiar extends beyond the food on offer at McDonald's, into the various spaces of this restaurant; as travellers shared how they seek out this restaurant because of the cleanliness of the bathroom facilities and dependability of the air conditioning and seating arrangements. Thus, this work illustrates how international fast-food chains, such as McDonald's, produce territories of standardisation, whereby certain requirements, practices and material arrangements come together in ways that produce comfort and safety, within unknown geographical locations.

Standardisation has become integral to the market strategies of the fast-food industry – standardisation in this setting provides more than economic efficiencies across geographical locations; the familiar rhythms and routines of the western fast-food industry create a sense of order, helping to sustain not only a sense of self but a secure place from which to draw strength to venture into the unfamiliar. Through foregrounding the embodied and situated experiences of eating while travelling, this research underscores the complexity and unpredictability of how things become perceived as edible, or not, and the ways a sense of place is integral to travellers' sense of taste.

Building on and contributing to discussion of place as an active co-constituter of the experiences and practice bound up with taste, Edensor and Falconer (2015) examined 'Dans Le Noir?', a gastro-tourist London restaurant, that removes light from the dining experience. This dining experience is a key London attraction, featuring in London guides (including Visit London, Secret London and TripAdvisor), and has won tourism awards for its unique touristic offering (including an Alimara CETT Travel Award). Edensor and Falconer (2015) take focus with 'Dans Le Noir?' to explore how diners make sense of place, eating and fellow diners when the habitual reliance on the visual is removed. While the social circumstance remains familiar, in darkness, even the most adventurous consumer becomes challenged in exploring the boundaries of taste, touch and texture. Without light, embodied eating practices are disrupted, inhibiting abilities to

place taste. Temporary confrontation of darkness instigates attunement to different ways of being, tasting and engaging with space. Even utilisation of utensils becomes challenging without the guide of sight, forcing some to resort to the use of fingers to seek meaning in the food placed before them.

For some, the disruption of normative eating experiences and displacing of taste is disturbing, with participants noting feelings of hopelessness, confusion and worry in attempting to eat and drink in the dark. For others it is enthralling, offering opportunity to become more attuned to the material consistency and flavours of the food. What becomes important is how eating in the dark overwhelms habitual immersion in a familiar spatial and social circumstance of taste. The discomfort and pleasures of eating in the dark challenges habituated practices of what it is to eat and taste. Tools, such as knives, spoons and forks, for example, are claimed to have been introduced as a civilising process in the French court – aimed at separating ‘rational man’ from animals and ‘savages’, through the distancing of eating bodies from their food (Elias, 1997 [1939]; Mann et al., 2011). Once light is removed, utensils are rendered useless within the western setting of *Dans Le Noir?*. Eating in the dark with fingers generated different understandings of taste and food. For some, the omission of light ensured there is a reduction in the distance between food and bodies that offered new ways of navigating space through touch. Mann et al. (2011) conveyed similar finding from curating a methodological anthropological experiment designed to explore what it means to eat with fingers, bringing to question the notion of taste as something confined to the tongue. ‘To taste’, they note, is something that spreads out to the fingers, if given the chance, introducing different sensations that feel somewhat transgressive for those who do not generally eat certain foods, in certain settings, with fingers. This research highlights the potentialities of different sensations (darkness and fingers) in shifting conditions in the ways we become attuned to food and taste.

There is a politics to ‘ethnic food tourism’ that trades on the symbolic qualities of food in relation to place as the exotic, strange, different and novel. Thus, on this view, we can come to understand how food tourism is often more about satisfying a demand for adventure and openness to difference, rather than experiencing or knowing another culture. Visceral approaches extend the understanding of the politics of travellers’ eating unfamiliar foods by thinking of the agency of food in co-constituting a sense of taste, self and place. Waitt (2014) makes this clear in his visceral account of the kinds of places and version of the self that deem kangaroo edible or not. He offers an embodied and emplaced understanding of why kangaroo remains largely absent from Australian domestic meal schedules, and yet is present on restaurant menus in Australian ‘outback’ tourist destinations. By considering taste as a socio-material assemblage, Waitt considers eating kangaroo in terms of the sensual politics of food. The ability for many to eat kangaroo on vacation can often amount to claiming and affirming identities and nationalities that are valued by the Australian tourism industry. Many white settler Australian travellers become open to the possibilities of kangaroo’s edibility – because of how taste and space are co-constituted through colonial-settler ideas of kangaroo positioned as a quintessential ‘bush tucker’, alongside the sensations sustained by the material comforts of a restaurant and skilled chefs. By contrast, the socio-material relations that comprise the kitchens that sustain everyday domestic lives through meal preparation, ensure that kangaroo meat becomes disgusting, unfamiliar and out of place within the home. In Waitt’s

discussion the body is conceived as a mechanism for establishing the limits of what is edible, or not, by how it is conceived to be folded in and through space by the affective force generated by food. Here the visceral response of disgust is taken as an entry point to understand how a person inhabits the world. There is not necessarily anything that resides within the materiality of kangaroo that rendered it edible or not – rather people experience the embodiment of both discursive and material relations simultaneously in the process of understanding kangaroo as food, or not food, within different spatial settings. Within the Northern Territory kangaroo consumption becomes an opportunity to perform as a white, middle-class settler tourist. Within the confines of the home, however, disgust presents a spatial border between the exotic touristic destination and home. Waitt (2014) insists that body-centred scholarship, that better understands the viscosity of food, points to not only how oppressive regimes may become embodied, but also how bodily capacities can be mobilised to generate changes in eating practices.

As things become food, it is not just their edibility that matters. Eating is a biosocial process inclusive of memories, notions of care, symbolism, imagined futures and so on (Burgess Watson and Cooper, 2021; Carolan, 2015). As we can understand through examining travel's affective disruptions, it is a privilege for a body to be an adventurous consumer, with many not possessing the economic means; whilst food intolerances, illness, culinary confidence or biomedical requirements such as dentures, may inhibit one's abilities (Falconer, 2013; Mann, 2018). Sense of place further serves as particularly pertinent in making certain foodstuffs stick – whereby certain affective comforts, such as those emergent through assemblages of standardisation, formulate expectations regarding how certain foods should look, feel, smell and taste. All of which ensure limits to what our bodies are open to – limits that can come to the surface through the tensions of travel and encounters with 'new' and 'local' foods. To date, such limits are not often explored within food tourism research, given the absence of the tourist's body from such discussions and the resulting tendency to give greater focus to the discursive positioning of food.

## Conclusion

New approaches to understanding food tourism are more important than ever, given food's positioning as a promotional tool, visitor attraction and concerns about sustainability. With this paper we thus illustrate the importance of relational geographies to better understand how and why certain things become edible in tourist settings. Relational approaches, however, remain somewhat peripheral within food tourism research – leading to conceptualisations that position food as somewhat passive stuff. We argue that a focus on relational tourism geographies can facilitate spatially, socially and materially attuned understandings of what makes things food.

Our aim in this paper is to advance understanding of food tourism by discussion of the relational geographies of tourism settings as contingent disruptions and affective disruptions. Both themes approach how things become food as a spatial achievement, comprised of the interactions, practices, relationships and engagements of socio-material arrangements. We argue that whilst these two thematic trajectories remain peripheral within food tourism research, they both offer exciting possibilities to consider the

more-than-human in why we eat the way that we do in tourism settings. Contingent and affective disruptions offer new ways of thinking geographically, whereby the process through which things become food in tourism settings is understood as a relational and emergent endeavour, rather than one determined solely by tourism management structures or individual choice.

Adopting the notion of contingent disruptions to food tourism shows what can be learnt from the complex social relations that co-construct contingent materials of things as they become food in certain tourism settings and not others. In presenting food as a series of becomings we can question constructions of food tourism as something that is predetermined and wholly influenced by human intentions – opening capacity for things to unfold differently. The capacity to become food was shown not to be determined by *someone* or *something* but is rather a relational human and non-human achievement, not fully controllable by any one actor. How certain things act and become understood as food is always socially and materially contingent on how different journeys may order and associate things differently. This is an important consideration given the human-centric conceptualisation of food within much food tourism research, whereby food is often conceived as something that can be manipulated by humans to promote destinations or enhance the sustainability of touristic practice. In emphasising how social-material relations organise things within tourism settings in ways that go well beyond individual choice, we can come to better make sense of the openings and closures that may enable and prevent travellers from considering certain things as food, and not others.

There are potential future research avenues here for tourism scholars seeking to explore how and why certain foods become valued in tourism settings, and not others. For contingent disruptions within tourism settings enable questions at multiple scales about what is ‘normal’, making visible the ways uneven powers operate through socio-technological networks. Food tourism scholars examining relations between food, tourism and sustainability may also gain value in broadening focus beyond the human. Sustainability policies could benefit from a more nuanced understanding of how eating practices are configured relationally. Emphasis on the relational geographies of contingent disruption of tourism settings, could shed light on the relations that constitute food and potentially shift value towards the animals, plants and chemicals that bring to question our ‘wasteful and planet-endangering consumption’ (Bennett, 2010: 39).

The notion of affective disruptions turns to senses and sensations, and the interruptions to experience that bring everyday practices into question. We illustrated how abrupt interruptions to the sensations of food in different travel contexts present us with a useful entry point to question why we eat the way that we do. Attending to the affective disruptions emergent in travel settings allows us to understand how certain foods are rendered edible or inedible – whereby edibility and inedibility are shown not as constituting conscious reflection but rather come to be through relations between bodies, things and place. What becomes food in travel settings is read as involving not only the social and material context, but sensations through the ways we use eyes, fingers, tongues and stomachs. Exposure of the sensuous body to disruption through the exclusion of light, or cutlery, for example, challenges how diners know what might acceptably become edible.

Here, food tourism scholars might find value in understanding the limits of what our bodies are open to, by attending to how identities are configured through and across space. Looking beyond the promotion of new or traditional food in tourism settings, and instead positioning the ways food is experienced at the centre of analysis, will bring attention to why travellers seek certain foods in particular settings, and not others. Importantly, such insights are not merely about identifying how we might cater to travellers' needs. But rather provide us with knowledge of our political subjectivities, and the power relations at play in the construction of settled and fixed formations. Going forward, tourist studies adopting a relational geographical approach to food can more sensitively address and appreciate a greater diversity of subjectivities than has been afforded in current research, as well as the many injustices that eating food produces.

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