

Social differentiation in the consumption of a pastoral idyll through tourist accommodation: two Portuguese cases

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Abstract

Whilst it is widely recognised in the scholarly literature that idyllic representations of the countryside are an integral part of its consumption through tourism in the contemporary, global world, little empirical research has been conducted on the role that social differentiation plays in shaping the corresponding tourist experience. The purpose of this article is to bridge that knowledge gap while studying the demand for two of the most well-known tourist accommodation products in the Portuguese countryside, namely, *TER* and the *Pousadas*. Drawing on a range of sources of material, it shows that the pastoral idyll sought by tourists is experienced differently through the lens of social class representations. In addition, there is evidence here that the choice of accommodation at a destination may well be regarded as a means of social differentiation through tourism.

Keywords Rural tourism; Pastoral idyll; Tourist consumption; Social differentiation; Tourist accommodation; Portugal;

Introduction

Rural tourism is commonly described in the scholarly literature as a diverse phenomenon, embracing a range of tourism activities which take place in the countryside, such as agritourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, ecotourism and nature tourism (e.g. Lane, 1994; M. Smith et al., 2012). Rural tourism is growing in the tourism industry worldwide, but principally in developed countries, and has substantially expanded since the 1970s, both in terms of demand and of supply (e.g. Long and Lane, 2000; Roberts and Hall, 2001). This growth of rural tourism echoes two societal trends, namely, the rise of a lifestyle-led and leisure-oriented society, and the widespread mobilization of tourism as a strategy for rural development and revitalisation (Walmsley, 2003).

A considerable body of research has already been amassed in Europe and other parts of the world on the subject of rural tourism (e.g. the special issues of the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 1994 (2: 1-2), the journal *Tourism Geographies*, 2007 (9: 4), and the *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 2015 (15: 1-2)). Research has shown that the social representation of the rural as idyllic is at work in its current consumption/commodification through, and in terms of, tourism (e.g. Bunce, 2003; Cloke, 2007; Crouch, 2006; Frisvoll, 2013; Woods, 2011). However, with a few exceptions (e.g. Howland, 2008), little empirical research has been conducted on the relationship between social differentiation and the tourist experience of the rural idyll.

Although rural tourism includes a range of activities, accommodation is one of its key elements, differentiating visitors and residents in leisure times, from tourists in the countryside (e.g. Oppermann, 1996). Today, the supply of rural tourist accommodation is quite diverse in terms of size, type, catering and activities offered (e.g. Morrison et al.,

1996; Oppermann, 1996; Pina and Delfa, 2005). The past two decades have witnessed an increasing interest in the connections between commercial hospitality/accommodation and the production/consumption of the rural idyll. Some scholars (e.g. Brandth and Haugen, 2014; Daugstad and Kirshengast, 2013) examine the hosts' involvement in the idyllization of the rural for touristic consumption. Hall (2009) tackles the co-creation of rural idylls by hosts and guests. The guests' motivations/experiences have also been much scrutinized in the literature (e.g. Frochot, 2005; Ingram, 2002; Nilsson, 2002; Pina and Delfa, 2005). Most of these studies are specifically concerned with farm-based accommodations. Relatively less attention has been devoted to other types of rural tourist accommodation.

This article aims to contribute to bridging these knowledge gaps while examining the demand for two of the most well-known tourist accommodation products in rural Portugal, both of which are regulated by specific legislation. One is *Turismo em Espaço Rural* (TER – Tourism in Rural Areas). Created in 1986, this is a set of small-scale and family-based tourism businesses offering accommodation in a household environment as well as additional facilities permitting outdoor activities (e.g. swimming, tennis, horse riding), which includes agritourism. The other is *Pousadas* of Portugal,¹ a state-owned chain of tourist accommodation created (in 1939) by the Portuguese right wing dictatorship, to provide lodging to travellers in search of a nationscape. Its facilities resemble those of hotels, but the material settings and the services offered are designed in line with an idea of Portuguese traditions and history (see <http://www.pousadas.pt/en>).² Table 1 shows their figures in relation to 2013: the number of TER units exceeds the number of *Pousadas*, but the latter have a higher accommodation capacity and higher occupancy rates.

Table 1

TER, the *Pousadas* and the national accommodation sector: supply and demand

Year	<i>TER</i>			<i>Pousadas</i> of Portugal			National accommodation sector		
	No. of units	No. of beds	No. of overnight stays	No. of units	No. of beds	No. of overnight stays	No. of units	No. of beds	No. of overnight stays
2013	832	12,874	744,800	35	3,230	383,000	2,880	310,836	41,569,716

Source: *Instituto Nacional de Estatística*.

Our contribution will be developed as follows. After setting the study's theoretical framework, the article presents the research methods. Then, it addresses the tourists' reasons for participating in tourism activities in the Portuguese countryside, stressing the pursuit of a pastoral idyll as a driving force and singling out the key elements of its depiction. The subsequent section sheds light on the importance of social differentiation in the shape of rural tourism. It does so by looking into the tourists' distinct forms of relating to the rural past through the consumption of different features of their pastoral

¹ All translations by the authors. The literal translation of *Pousadas* of Portugal could be Inns of Portugal, but this is a distinct and exclusive legal category of tourist accommodation. For that reason, the original name of *Pousada* will be maintained throughout the article.

² Although the *Pousadas* are still a state property, its tourism management was leased to a private company in 2003.

imaginary. The main conclusions and theoretical implications of the research findings are put forward in the concluding section.

2. Framework

This article revolves around two linkages: one is centred on the pastoral idyll and tourism, the other deals with tourism consumption and social differentiation.

As Halfacree (2007, p. 131; emphasis in original) points out, nowadays, rural areas are often regarded as “consuming idylls”, where “key spatial *practices* are consumption-oriented: leisure, residence, counterurbanisation, dwelling, contemplation”. Associated with an image of the countryside as a place of peace, tranquillity, closeness to nature, agriculture, rusticity, community spirit and simple virtue, in contrast to the city (e.g. Bell, 2006; Bunce, 2003; Little and Austin, 1996), the rural idyll occupies a central position here.

Bell (2006, p. 150) distinguishes three forms of rural idyll, namely, the *pastoral idyll* of farmscapes, reflecting an agricultural landscape of artisanal agriculture; the *natural idyll* of wildscapes, with its emphasis on pre-culture, pre-human, pure wilderness, untamed nature; and the *sporting idyll* of adventurescapes in which the countryside is understood as an adventure playground. Such forms constitute what Bell calls “a mobile combination” of nature (natural wonders, closeness to nature), romanticism, authenticity and nostalgia (for simpler ways of life), “all stamped onto the land and its inhabitants (plants, animals, people)” (*ibid.*, p. 150). This article focuses on the pastoral idyll.

The *Idylls* of Theocritus (310-250 BC) and the *Eclogues* of Virgil (79-19 BC) are usually considered the main sources of the pastoral in writings about rural life (e.g. Short, 2006; Williams, 1973). According to Alpers (1996, p. 22), the pastoral’s main features consist of an idyllic landscape, landscape as a setting for song, an atmosphere of *otium*, a cognisant attention to art and nature, and herdsmen as singers. However, in his perspective, “we will have a far truer idea of the pastoral if we take its representative anecdote to be herdsmen and their lives, rather than landscape or idealized nature” (*ibid.*, p. 22). Hence, the pastoral idyll originally meant a short descriptive poem or story about the imagined life of herdsmen, “where some sort of happiness is dramatically presented, where no tragic elements enter” (Shackford, 1904, pp. 586-587), and came to be centred on husbandman/farmers (Marx, 1964).

The link between the pastoral and tourism and leisure in the countryside was first theorised by Marx (1964) in terms of a “sentimental” form of pastoral ideal. According to the author, the pastoral state of mind, produced by city dwellers, is “generated by an urge to withdraw from civilization’s growing power and complexity” and a corresponding attraction to “the felicity represented by an image of a natural landscape, a terrain either unspoiled or, if cultivated, rural” (*ibid.*, pp. 9-10). Marx distinguishes two forms of pastoral ideal, notably the “imaginative and complex”, and the “popular and sentimental”. Whilst the former is characteristic of fictional literature, the latter “is an expression less of thought than of feeling”, “insinuating itself in many kinds of behaviour”, of which the “flight from the city” toward the countryside is a good example (*ibid.*, p. 5).

But the first explicit reference to the entwining of the pastoral idyll with tourism was made by Urry (1988), who pointed out shifts in taste following the emergence of a new service class that have led to a greater emphasis on consumption in rural environments. Such tastes have also influenced other social groups, who have adopted similar values in the consumption of the countryside, including the pursuit of a pastoral idyll, acceptance of cultural symbols associated with the rural idyll and a greater emphasis on outdoor pursuits in rural areas. More recently, research has confirmed (implicitly or explicitly) that ideas about the pastoral idyll are both a driving force of rural tourism

experiences and a selling point for rural tourism in various central and northern European countries like Austria, Britain, Denmark and Norway (e.g. Cloke, 2007; Daugstad, 2008; Daugstad and Kirshengast, 2013; Knudsen and Greer, 2011). The same occurs in Portugal.

In Portugal, since its emergence in fictional literature in the nineteenth century (e.g. Dinis, 1952 [1868]), the pastoral idyll refers mainly to a picturesque and bucolic landscape, a landscape shaped by artisanal agriculture and architecture, most especially vernacular architecture, which has been a focus of attention in the debate on the Portuguese national identity from the late nineteenth century onwards (Leal, 2000). In other words, the Portuguese pastoral idyll is similar to the pastoral idyll of “farmscapes” described by Bell (2006) and it corresponds to a “middle landscape”, along the lines set out by Tuan (1974, p. 109), that is, “the ideal middle world of man poised between the polarities of city and wilderness”.

Although the visual dimension is often considered the most important (e.g. Urry, 2002 [1990]; Woods, 2011, p. 101), the consumption of the rural idyll is a multisensory experience, as the consumption of rural soundscapes, food and landscapes exemplifies (e.g. Daugstad, 2008; Frisvoll et al., 2015; Woods, 2011, pp. 110-119). The empirical question that remains largely underexplored is how social differentiation issues shape the tourist consumption/experience of the rural idyll.

Indeed, the idea that tourism consumption is a form of differentiating oneself from other types of people within a population is well established in the scholarly literature. From its early beginnings, tourism studies strove to typify tourists (e.g. Cohen, 1974), tourism (e.g. V. Smith, 1978) and tourist experiences (e.g. Cohen, 1979) according to their motivations, destinations and practices. The social capital of tourists was implicit in the distinction of their more recreational or cultural interests, even within a single category of tourists. Cultural tourists, for example, have been differentiated according to the seriousness of their practices (e.g. Stebbins, 1996), the centrality of their motivations (e.g. Richards, 1996) and the depth of their experiences (e.g. McKercher, 2002). The acknowledgement of these schemes’ arbitrary criteria (e.g. D. Pearce, 1992) emphasised the social prejudice at stake and the neutralisation of the multidimensional quality of tourism (e.g. Butler, 1992), notably in market-oriented studies (e.g. Pina and Delfa, 2005). Regarding tourism as a consumption practice can therefore widen the understanding of social strategies within its practice.

As a social practice, tourism informs and is informed by what Bourdieu (1979) called a “habitus” and “cultural capital”; it constitutes and is constituted by practices of consumption through which social groups maintain, challenge and update their social status. These practices of consumption are mediated by taste, and taste is dependent on the social groups’ “aesthetic dispositions” and “cultural capital” (see also Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Munt, 1994). Each tourism practice, destination or product is thus the subject of multiple “indexes of representation” (Rojek, 1997). They appeal to and satisfy socially different groups of tourists in different ways, particularly through various modes of consumption (e.g. Featherstone, 1990).

Building on the abovementioned theoretical contributions, this article aims to extend and deepen research on the touristic consumption of the rural idyll through providing an empirically informed examination of the role that social differentiation plays in shaping the experience of a pastoral idyll in the demand for two types of commercial accommodation in rural Portugal.

3. Research methods

This article draws upon different sources of material. First, there was work on a wider investigation of rural tourism developed by the authors in Portugal. Initially, the research focused on *TER*. This involved the corresponding author examining *TER* in the context of regional development while exploring the influence of pastoralism in rural tourism (e.g. Silva, 2009, 2013). Although mostly based on data collected between 2001 and 2006, this examination has been complemented by insights from subsequent research on another rural tourism product (e.g. Silva and Leal, 2015). Meanwhile, having gained perspective from the study on *TER*, the investigation then tackled the *Pousadas*. Conducted by the co-author between 2006 and 2011, the *Pousadas*' study aimed to *spacialize* representations of the past through the analysis of its objectification in architectural settings that designed a map of national destinations and experiences of nationhood in the Portuguese countryside (e.g. M. Prista, 2013, 2015).

In spite of their different aims, the studies on *TER* and the *Pousadas* have aspects in common. They not only have looked into comparable tourism products and used similar ideas and concepts, but were also closely related in their methodological construction. In fact, both studies were carried out on two levels of observation. On the one hand, they surveyed the networks under scrutiny at the national level. Questionnaires were sent to the 626 *TER* establishments located in mainland Portugal in 2001, with a response rate of 24 percent,³ and to all the *Pousadas*' directors (43), with a response from 37. Although distinct, the questionnaires were both designed to characterize the architectural and design settings, the facilities and services offered, and the number and profile of employees and guests, allowing a comparative analysis of the two tourism products, particularly in terms of supply.⁴

These were complemented differently in *TER* and the *Pousadas*, bearing in mind that their particular traits – the unequal number of units and the different juridical nature of the networks – required the mobilization of distinct methodologies. In the case of *TER*, short-term (2-4 days) case studies were carried out in 30 *TER* units located in different regions of the country, during which 30 owners and 72 tourists – 45 of whom were Portuguese – were interviewed, often in couples, and 3 guest books were consulted. In the case of the *Pousadas*, there was research in the public and private archives that contain the network's legal and operational documents, its management plans and correspondence, as well as its buildings' architectural plans and visual records. Moreover, most of the *Pousadas* running at that time (31) were visited, and interviews were conducted (both locally and nationally) with nine current and former representatives of the central administration and sectors such as the Heritage, Cuisine, and Studies and Planning Departments.

On the other hand, both studies involved long-term (6-16 weeks) fieldwork in small villages with established units that represented different rural settings in the country, namely, Estorãos (6 units), Sortelha (10 units) and Monsaraz (7 units), in the case of *TER*, and Bouro, Óbidos, Arraiolos and Sagres, in the case of the *Pousadas* (see Fig. 1). During the fieldwork, the authors worked and stayed in the villages, gradually expanding their network of acquaintances and respondents. The main methods of data collection were participant observation, qualitative interviews and detailed field notes. Over time, 74 *TER* guests – 42 of whom were Portuguese – and 160 *Pousada* guests – of

³ The sample obtained in the questionnaire (hereafter IUTER, 2001) is representative of *TER*'s universe, notably in terms of the official classification of the units, and their regional distribution and size (number of rooms and beds).

⁴ In the case of *TER*, the responses to the questionnaire were inserted into a database and analyzed through the SPSS program.

whom 84 were Portuguese – were interviewed; usually in couples. The interviews were both structured on the guests' profiles, motivations, consumption, representation of tourism, rurality, history and particular experiences. Normally conducted in the units themselves, most of the interviews with tourists were recorded, transcribed and subject to content analysis, while notes were taken on the remaining ones. In addition, eight guest books, in the case of *TER*, and some local archives, in the case of the *Pousadas*, were consulted.

Second, this article is based on two sets of secondary sources. The first one consists of some of our own texts on *TER* and the *Pousadas*, some of which were already published (M. Prista, 2011, 2013; Silva, 2009). The second one lies in the statistics produced by various tourism entities, namely, the *Empresa Nacional de Turismo* (ENATUR), *Direção Geral do Turismo*, *Turismo de Portugal*, and *Instituto Nacional de Estatística*.

4. The quest for a pastoral idyll

Taking into account the statistical sources mentioned in the previous section, between 1987 and 2013, *TER* units registered more than 10 million overnight stays and the *Pousadas* registered more than 9.1 million overnight stays. The Portuguese accounted for about 47 percent of the overnight stays in *TER* and 45 percent in the *Pousadas*, well below the domestic demand for rural tourist accommodations in other European countries (e.g. Fleisher and Pizam, 1997; Nilsson, 2002). This is due to two main factors: the strong appeal exerted by the seaside on the Portuguese people (e.g. TP, 2007, p. 36); and the characteristics of the urban population, the main consumers of rural tourism in Portugal. Representing 64 percent of the country's inhabitants (numbers for 2015) (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/po.html>), many city dwellers maintain bonds with the countryside through visiting resident family and friends, or owning a second home. Often they are the children of ex-rural dwellers who settled in the city from the 1960s onwards.

Based on the 306 interviewees, tourists staying in *TER* and/or the *Pousadas* do not form a homogeneous group. Nevertheless, a dominant profile can be drawn: the *TER* or *Pousada* user tends to be an urban dweller living in a developed country, relatively young (around 40), and has a high education level and a managerial or scientific occupation. Most often they travel by car with their nuclear family and stay in *TER* or the *Pousadas* from one-to-three days, mainly during Carnival, Easter or long weekends. This dominant profile resembles the findings of other authors working on cultural tourists (e.g. Prentice, 1993, Richards, 1996) and rural tourists (e.g. Blekesaune et al., 2010; Fleisher and Pizam, 1997; Park et al., 2014) in other countries.

Although tourism categories are useful tools for comparative analysis, their aforementioned shortcomings became clear in looking more closely into *TER* and *Pousada* tourists. In fact, differences can be found when the tourists' choice of accommodation is taken into consideration. For example, the average age of the *Pousadas*' guests is higher than in *TER*'s, mainly due to the demand for the oldest units by longtime, middle-aged customers travelling in couples. Moreover, *TER* and more recent *Pousadas* are more popular among younger couples with children who stay for longer during holiday periods. In addition, the *Pousadas* are sought by people with higher levels of education, particularly architects, and art or history-related professionals. What drives these tourists as a whole to rural Portugal? Fieldwork shows that, despite deviations from the dominant profile, the quest for a pastoral idyll is the driving force.

Landscape and *architecture*: these are the key words of the aforementioned Portuguese pastoral idyll. Research by some other scholars working on rurality and

tourism in Portugal has highlighted that representations of a farming landscape and architecture are two key elements in the quest for rurality (e.g. Figueiredo et al., 2013; Kastenholz, 2004). In the cases under analysis in the article, three elements are at the core of the tourist consumption/experience of the pastoral idyll: landscape, architecture and ways of life. They centre the tourists' representations and satisfactions on the authenticity of the tourism experience which, in the end, is the predominant motivation of rural tourists. The statements that follow exemplify the point:

“What interests us in coming to this particular area? The scenery, culture, food, wine, and peace and quiet. We have been in other parts of Portugal [...] and we wanted to explore more of the country. We read a little bit about the Minho and the Lima valley, how attractive it is, and the Peneda-Gerês national park, and it is just another area to explore” (British couple, 60-65 years old, interviewed in a *TER* unit in Estorãos).

“When one chooses to go to a place as quiet as this is in Portugal, it is because one needs some peace, tranquillity and genuine things and people: the ways of life, the decoration of the houses and the food” (Portuguese woman, 45-50 years old, interviewed in a *TER* unit in central Portugal).

“I'm seeking two things. First, the peace, the possibility to rest and be away from all the bustle of city life [...]. And then, also the beauty; I love this landscape and also these houses, these villages” (Portuguese man, 30-35 years old, interviewed in a *TER* unit in Monsaraz).

“The fact that it is very quiet and, usually, far away from civilization. We seek out those *Pousadas*, the contact with the countryside... [...]. It has to do with our roots, feeling our cultural identity [...]. Since I was little [...], my parents have always made me aware of the ancestral issues, the history and traditions” (Portuguese woman, 30-35 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos).

“On summer holiday, we now tend to go more to the country rather than going to the beach [...]. She wants to see more and not just lie on the beach, see more of the country [...]. I also like it very much when you walk around and you just see the landscape and walk in the village and see what happens. Sometimes nothing comes, but sometimes you meet people, you sit in a very nice place to drink and you have dinner there” (Dutch man, 45-50 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos).

Projected in the landscape, architecture and ways of life, the authenticity of the tourism experience in rural Portugal is either explicitly or implicitly based on its association with the past by tourists staying in *TER* and/or the *Pousadas*. In other words, the Portuguese countryside is object of what Fabian (1983) would call a “denial of coevalness”. Although viewed in the present, the countryside is viewed, above all, as a testimony of the past. The three elements objectify the imagined tranquillity of former lifestyles, the building traditions of rural settlements and its intangible culture. As a Portuguese woman in her 30s interviewed in the *Pousada* of Bouro has put it, “knowing that it was inhabited by other people, years ago, in a different time, is a little bit like experiencing how they lived back then too”. Similarly, a Briton man in his 50s interviewed in a *TER* establishment in Estorãos stated that “coming here takes [them] back to old England”, and “that's why [he] like[s] Portugal and the Portuguese”.

TER establishments and the *Pousadas* are tourists' preferred form of accommodation in the countryside and play a critical role in shaping their pastoral experience, for different reasons. On the one hand, they have a rural location, often outside of the villages' fabric, but they also present spatial and material features in tune with the surroundings and its building traditions. This in spite of the fact that *TER* and the *Pousadas* are a set of distinct accommodations that anticipate fluctuations in the tourists' "indexes of representation" (Rojek, 1997) of the rural and its dwellings.

Considering the characteristics of the buildings, their furniture and interior decoration in general, *TER* and the *Pousadas* provide two forms of rural dwelling, in reference to a noble and a peasant (imagined) rural past, for touristic consumption.⁵ In *TER*, the noble past corresponds to accommodation in manor houses and other residential houses with recognised architectural value. They are furnished and decorated with antiques and exquisite objects obtained through family inheritances or purchased at antique shops. These include crystal tableware and silverware, tapestries, paintings, coats of arms, family portraits, and eighteenth century Portuguese furniture, especially *Dom José*, *Dom João V* and *Dona Maria* styles (Silva, 2009). In the *Pousadas*, the noble form of dwelling is provided by accommodation in national monuments like monasteries or fortresses, with palaces and civil architecture having been added in the 2000s. These were initially restored conservatively and furnished with antiques and exquisite objects similar to those used in *TER* units. Yet, from the 1990s onwards, the rehabilitation of monuments was awarded to Portugal's most renowned architects, who designed adjacent wings in modern styles, and intertwined historic artefacts, vernacular and contemporary art, and signature furniture in interior design plans (M. Prista, 2011).

Moreover, while *Pousadas* in monuments outnumber their peasant-referenced units, the latter are the more common form of *TER*. In both cases, the peasant form is the cheapest offer. But there are significant differences between the ways the peasant past is displayed in the two types of accommodation. Either built by the nationalistic and nationalising policies of the *Estado Novo* (New State) dictatorship (1933–1974), or by the post-war modernist reinterpretation of tradition, this group of *Pousadas* was afterwards extended and redecorated to meet contemporary tourism's functional and aesthetic requirements. Nowadays, they offer accommodation recalling traditional culture in building materials or the display of ethnographic objects. However, they resemble a country house more than a peasant one, echoing the social status of their upper-class guests (M. Prista, 2011). For their part, the peasant form of *TER* establishments adapted rustic houses or outbuildings on a farm, providing interiors to match. They are decorated with artisanal and vernacular objects, from handicrafts to farming tools, either collected or purchased at thrift and arts and crafts shops, in order to represent the "old ways of life" (Silva, 2009).

In the end, both forms of accommodation provide an idealised and sanitised version of traditional countryside life and dwelling. References to peasant misery or the scarcely inhabitable nature of peasant dwellings are absent. As Butler (2007, p. 189) comments, the appeal of the past vanishes if its displays are not in line with the modern requirements of tourists. An entry in a guestbook of a *TER* unit in northern Portugal confirms this: "[t]he house is very well restored, retaining all traces of an old manor house and the necessary comfort of modern life". However, in the *Pousadas*, modernity is more than a functional requisite. It is also a time period and repertoire of the displayed culture,

⁵ Since 2009, some *Pousadas* have opened in major cities. But this is a recent trend that does not emerge in the tourists' representations of the network, nor in their individual motivations and practices.

which distinguishes the “aesthetic disposition” of the guests via the confirmation of their advanced “artistic competences” (Bourdieu, 1979). In the words of a Portuguese woman in her 50s, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos,

“in *Convento do Desagravo*, the rooms were rehabilitated with an unusual kind of modern beauty and design. I was amazed. It is a convent where we almost cannot see the ceiling, but they adapted it with a suspended ceiling and curtains with floral motifs, then some recesses and a long, huge bathroom. They played with the convent. It is one of the best *Pousadas*, to me, in terms of religious artefacts, relics, beautiful stuff”.

On the other hand, tourists prefer to stay in *TER* and/or the *Pousadas* because they offer a set of accepted intangible signs of rural and vernacular culture in the service they provide. Hospitality is one such service. As in rural tourism elsewhere in the world (e.g. Kastenholz and Sparrer, 2009; Morrison et al., 1996; Nilsson, 2002), another compelling reason to choose accommodation in *TER* establishments or *Pousadas* is the customized service and the customized experiences provided by the hosts to the guests:

“We like the personal touch. A big hotel is lovely and comfortable, but this is someone’s home, and we like that kind of relationship” (American woman, 50-55 years old, interviewed in a *TER* unit in northern Portugal).

“I prefer the *Pousadas* [...]. Here the service is really familiar, all very personalized. In hotels, I think that people learn how to be friendly but, genuinely, they are not. Here I think that people are really kind and a person feels at home” (Portuguese woman, 30-35 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos).

There are some motivational differences, though, with respect to the two, or four, types of commercial hospitality. A more detailed analysis suggests that issues of social differentiation are at stake, as the experience of the pastoral idyll that drives tourists to *TER* and the *Pousadas* is mediated by taste, and their accounts of the latter reflect representations of social class and distinctive forms of consumption. The section that follows addresses that point.

5. Social differentiation issues

As noted above in the article, there is evidence that tourism consumption is part of the strategies and representations of social differentiation. Fieldwork shows that rural tourism is a good example. This is detectable on two levels of analysis. On the one hand, tourists staying in *TER* and the *Pousadas* do not want to be considered tourists. They not only tend to reject their participation in tourism itself, but also adopt an “anti-tourist attitude” (Jacobsen, 2000) when they travel by their own means, avoid tour operators, and see their interests and practices on site as counterpoised to those of sun and sea mass tourists. In their own terms,

“A tourist is someone who spends months travelling from one country to another. I consider myself someone who likes a change of scenery, likes to meet other people [...]. A tourist is someone who runs here and there, runs around the whole country without stopping” (Portuguese man, 55-60 years old, interviewed in a *TER* unit in northern Portugal).

“The difference is that a tourist has a camera. I don’t have a camera. I like to visit places, meet the people and, then, move on again. I am not the same as somebody who goes somewhere to be entertained, in one way or another. I am not really looking to be the typical ‘tourist watching the main attractions’” (Dutch man, 55-60 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Bouro).

The way that *TER* and *Pousada* guests distance their interests, behaviours and leisure practices from those of sea and sun mass tourists, falls into the prejudice of class, which Butler (1992) reasoned to be the basis of the alternative forms of tourism. Symptomatically, guests repeatedly mention the most touristic Portuguese region, the Algarve, as an antithetical destination, claiming to be seeking the “more untouched, unspoilt, remote and authentic” places of the country (British couple, 30-35 years-old, interviewed in a *TER* unit in Sortelha).

On the other hand, tourists’ stays in *TER* and/or the *Pousadas* may be viewed as practices and strategies through which guests aim to authenticate and update their individual “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1979). Variations in the motivations and experiences of the two groups of guests suggest that their formulations on particular cultural and economic capital fall within wider representations of social groups and their differentiation. Three aspects stand out regarding the different expectations of *TER* and *Pousada* guests, namely, (i) their desired modes of consumption of a rural domesticity; (ii) their attitudes towards the display of the historical or vernacular past; and (iii) their personal relationship with the countryside and the consequent intended depth of the rural experience, which was particularly notable among Portuguese tourists. Through these aspects, tourists in *TER* establishments and the *Pousadas* show how different social capital and “artistic competences” (Bourdieu, 1979) are at work in tourism experiences. The fact that tourists are aware of such differences, relating them to specific cultural and economic capital, sometimes even to family backgrounds, often verbalizing it when accounting for their choice of accommodation, suggests that some sort of social assertion is at stake.

Regarding the first point, the experience of *TER* and *Pousada* guests reflect Urry’s (2002 [1990]) romantic form of the “tourist gaze”, which has been considered central in the consumption of the rural (e.g. Woods, 2011). Vision, however, is not the only sense at stake. In fact, tourists also experience their destinations through taste, hearing, smell and touch, confirming the aforementioned multisensory quality of rural tourism practices. This is clearly expressed by a Portuguese woman in her 30s, interviewed in a *TER* unit in the Alentejo region, according to whom “these flavours, the bread, the locally made jam, the rotten cake, the smell of trees and of flowers... Álamo, the dog, who is a real host... All these details contribute to a very pleasant guest experience”. In a similar vein, a Portuguese woman in her 30s, staying in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos, stated that “[she] like[s] the people, the food, the smell, the light most of all”, while a Spaniard in his 40s, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Bouro, even criticised the fact that “the ascetic is becoming the new standard” in other types of tourist accommodation like conventional hotels.

In fact, in Portugal, domestic hospitality and food tourism are at the core of the relation between leisure and rurality (P. Prista, 1996, p. 459), stressing the importance of senses other than vision in the touristic experience of the rural. *TER*’s guests are of the opinion that “talking to people and eating local food [...] is a way of understanding what people do and like to do” (Portuguese man, 45-50 years old, interviewed in Alentejo), “their culture” (South African couple, 30-35 years old, interviewed in Sortelha). Tourists in the *Pousadas* also appreciate the localness of their hosts and seek regional cuisine “to feel a little bit how the local population is, their traditions, live it a little bit” (Portuguese

woman, 30-35 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Bouro). Overall, because employment in tourism commoditises the hosts' belonging to a place and is a cultural performance (e.g. Crang, 1996; Herzfeld, 1991), the relationships between guests and hosts are experienced as genuine interactions with the authentic local population. The consumption of local/regional cuisine/food, on the other hand, is a form of appropriating history and tradition in terms of eating habits (e.g. Bessière, 1998; Cohen and Avieli, 2004).

Yet, representations and motivations regarding the experience of *Pousada* and *TER* tourists of rural hospitality and gastronomy, disclose differences between and within the two types of accommodation, depending on the peasant or noble form of its material setting. From the outset, the gastronomic experience is a motivation in the choice of accommodation solely for the *Pousadas'* guests. After all, only 32 percent of *TER* units offer restaurant services (IUTER, 2001), while regional cuisine is widely advertised and acknowledged as a brand image of the *Pousadas*. Recalling how the *Pousadas'* chefs were called on to represent Portugal in international fairs or accompany political elites on official business, the Portuguese guests in particular tend to stress the cultural value of the *Pousadas'* cuisine and, at the same time, imprint a social status on its consumption.

In the last decade, however, the *Pousadas'* menus have been altered with the inclusion of nouvelle cuisine, vegetarian and children's specials. Far from reversing the tourists' motivations, these transformations reveal the distinct understandings and uses of food in tourism. In more recent units, where the changes were more profound, most guests appreciate the updating of traditions for modern consumption. "They really try to make regional menus with more advanced cuisine", stated a Portuguese woman in her 30s, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos. In older units, notably those with a peasant evocation, traditional dishes were more likely kept and their consumption is now a practice in which guests realise their cultural capital through their claimed ability to distinguish the "quality of locally caught fish" or "the authenticity of traditional confections" (Portuguese man, 55-60 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Sagres).

Foreigners, like Portuguese tourists, may appreciate both kinds of menus. However, they make less distinction between the two cuisines, always considering that the *Pousadas* serve "mainly local food, like vegetables, local cheese, local vegetables, local meat" and tend to "associate Portugal with traditional food, a lot" (Dutch man, 50-55 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos). In a sense, they are closer to *TER's* guests in longing for the consumption of rural authenticity through eating habits. Overall, then, edible traditions are appreciated in accordance with the guests' aesthetic dispositions. Nevertheless, they are always consumed as cultural commodities, by individuals who manifest distinct cultural capitals and tastes through that particular practice.

Representations and expectations regarding the tourists' experiences of hospitality in the *Pousadas* and *TER* units unveil even greater differences. In the case of *TER*, as in farm tourism (e.g. Nilsson, 2002; P. Pearce, 1990) and other types of rural tourist accommodation (e.g. Kastenholz and Sparrer, 2009; Tucker, 2003), tourists want to have a customized encounter with local people in their family environment, or to experience the private life of their host. "In *TER*, we are staying in the home of a local family" is a common refrain in their discourses:

"[We have chosen to stay in this unit] because of the hosting and the authenticity of the place. We are in a place that has always been inhabited by local people and we participate in its ways of living. It is a cultural experience. [...] Staying in the home of

local people means participating in local culture” (Spanish couple, 35-40 years old, interviewed in central Portugal).

The case of the *Pousadas* is different from that of *TER*, in that its guests do not want to experience the host’s familial private life, because the customized service is provided by the network’s employees. Nonetheless, these are reckoned to be true representatives of rural communities who exhibit local lifestyles and idiosyncrasies in the way they talk, the stories they tell, and the hospitality they offer. “I do not sense a false affection; I feel that it is honest. I think that it has to do with – and it is wonderful – the fact that they are local people. People have local accents, tell local stories...”, commented a Portuguese woman in her 30s, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos.

Moreover, both tourists in *TER* and the *Pousadas* feel at home due to the employees’ amicability and the cosy ambience. However, while *TER*’s guests long for domestic intimacy with their hosts and their homes, the *Pousadas*’ guests value a customised treatment that ensures the social distance between hosts and guests. They even feel that, in *TER*, “the hosts sort of poke their noses into the guests’ life”, preferring the “VIP service” provided by the *Pousadas*:

“A house with history, a noble family that gives it continuity. It was a great pleasure, this encounter with the history and the noble tradition of Minho” (Guestbook, *TER* unit in northern Portugal).

“I can still remember eating on golden markers [...]. The customised treatment was indeed something that I highly appreciated. When I started visiting the *Pousadas*, I used to come to Marvão a lot, because I knew the staff. My friend always said how good it was to arrive and have the employee asking: ‘I have this great cheese here just for you, do you want to taste it?’ Those are the treats offered by the *Pousadas*” (Portuguese man, 40-45 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos).

Despite sharing a key purpose and destinations, sometimes even alternating tourist accommodations, most of the *TER* and *Pousada* guests acknowledge a distinction between the two products and their target audiences. The *Pousadas*’ guests portray themselves as “selective people” (Swiss man, 65-70 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Sagres) who “know enough to travel to this kind of place” (Portuguese man, 50-55 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Bouro). They emphasise the cultural capital required to value heritage attractions and high culture, recalling the role played by the “patina” (McCracken, 1988) in the social differentiation of consumption practices. To *TER*’s guests, in turn, the difference is mainly based on the *Pousadas*’ exorbitant prices, despite the recent privatisation of its management having mitigated differences between price-lists. Furthermore, both *TER* and the *Pousadas* offer commercial hospitality, but only in *TER* have the interactions between hosts and guests given rise to long-term friendships like those observed in farm tourism in other countries (Ingram, 2002; P. Pearce, 1990). For example, as written in the guestbook of a *TER* unit located in Sortelha,

“What a wonderful place to stay and with such friendly and helpful people. Dona L. has managed with Portuguese, French, English and much warmth... to convey such a wealth of information about the family and house, which we shall never forget. Hopefully, she and her husband will make a trip to England, where we can continue our friendship” (Guestbook, *TER* unit in Sortelha).

Likewise, a Portuguese woman in her 30s, interviewed in the Alentejo region, claimed to be a “regular” guest of that *TER* unit “to rest and have tranquillity”, but also, and above all, “to be with them [the owners], because [they] became friends”. Conversely, in the *Pousadas*, frequent guests often extol the benefits of repeating visits to one unit due to employees’ remembering their preferences or being willing to help beyond their duties by, for example, babysitting the children. Although guests in both the *Pousadas* and *TER* may speak of affection, the latter seem to dilute the economic exchange in course, while the former reassert the nature of guests and hosts’ distinct social positioning.

The second difference between the *TER* and *Pousada* guests’ attitudes towards their experiences in these establishments concerns their appreciation of material repertoires. There is a widespread opinion that the buildings’ tangible qualities are an unshakable proof of their authenticity. However, the material elements vary between and within the *TER* and *Pousada* networks. The demand for the peasant form of dwelling provided by *TER*, for example, is satisfied by the domesticity and rusticity of the spaces, described as fully equipped houses/outbuildings representing traditional rural architecture and dwelling, cosy and often located on a farm.⁶ “In *TER*, we almost feel at home” is a recurring refrain in the tourists’ discourses. By contrast, the demand for the noble form of dwelling in *TER* results from the seduction of the historic quality of the buildings. For example, a Portuguese man in his 50s, interviewed in a manor house in northern Portugal, stated that “the fact that it involves ancient houses is very attractive”, while an American couple in their 40s, interviewed in the same region, declared that they had chosen that *TER* establishment “because [they] like places with history”.

The *Pousadas*’ guests profess similar appeals regarding the *Pousadas*’ peasant or noble forms. “What we like is the historical ambience; it is even a bit scary to sleep in a space with so much history”, stated a Briton man in his 60s, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Óbidos. Even in more recent *Pousadas* in historic monuments, rehabilitated in line with modern aesthetic canons, the distinctive quality of the historical-modern intertwining is considered “a good choice, a good combination, and it also has a very sober quality, but is not cold” (Dutch woman, 30-35 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos). Overall, guests sanction the authenticity of the experience in the materiality of a social or monumental history. Nonetheless, the buildings and decors are not historically specific, or subjected to intellectual interpretations. Rather, they are the stage and ambience of an affective and sensorial perception of “pastness” (e.g. Crang, 1996; McIntosh and Prentice, 1999), confirming heritage to objectify the past, and its understanding to be mediated by the intelligibility and longing of the present (e.g. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Lowenthal, 1985).

However, the way this “pastness” is prized diverges among *TER* and *Pousada* guests. In *TER*, individuals tend to stress the original and the unchanged when depicting buildings, furniture and decorative objects as material testimonies of history, culture and vernacular tradition. Similar understandings can be found among *Pousada* guests. More commonly, though, they acknowledge that the past is an intellectual construction, thereby enjoying its intertwining with other forms of culture, especially the high culture of modern architecture and contemporary art or design. This variation suggests that the *Pousadas*’ guests mobilize a distinct aesthetic disposition and hold a cultural capital sensible to the contemporary intellectual conceptions of culture and heritage as more dynamic and construed processes:

⁶ About three quarters (72 percent) of the *TER* houses are located on farms, 63 percent of which also carry out farming activities, and about a third of the beds are located in outbuildings previously devoted to agriculture (IUTER, 2001).

“In this house, what I see and what I feel is that there is an arc of memories and traditions. It is as though I entered an attic and opened up a trunk, and everything that was locked in for so many years got out” (Portuguese woman, 35-40 years-old, interviewed in a *TER* unit in Alentejo).

“All history of all buildings is made of additions, historical layers and styles. People are scared of intervening in heritage, which is weird because that is what heritage is made of – the time that goes by it. I think that it is perfectly normal to add, use, transform, move it...” (Portuguese woman, 35-40 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos).

With respect to the third point, tourists in the *Pousadas* and *TER* accommodation both experience the pastoral idyll by engaging in activities such as sightseeing, eating, sleeping, talking to local people, playing sports, being near the swimming pool or talking next to the fireplace, depending on the season/weather. However, not all tourists wish for close contact with rural life. Interviews with the Portuguese guests, in particular, suggest that variations do not simply depend on tourists’ former liaisons with the countryside, usually related to their family capital, but mainly on how these are put forward in the present, announcing a current intellectual and social positioning. The statements that follow show how some *TER* guests long for an educational immersion in the rural lifestyle, while most national tourists in the *Pousadas* feel rather beyond such cultural quests and are focused on the rural landscape, but not on rural-specific activities:

“Well, I already knew what I would find, because I am from a little village, I grew up in this life, [...] because I am the son of peasants. My kids, no; that is why I have brought them to this house” (Portuguese man, 55-60 years old, interviewed in a *TER* unit in northern Portugal).

“We are not urban enough to feel the appeal of cows... I am granddaughter of farmers, my grandparents had dairy cows and my mother raised chickens until recently. To me, this is trivial” (Portuguese woman, 45-50 years old, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Arraiolos).

In short, tourists staying in *TER* and the *Pousadas* wish to experience the genuineness of local culture through lifestyles, material culture, hospitality and gastronomy. Yet, while *TER* guests endeavour to consume authenticity from *within* rural culture, either vernacular or noble, guests in the *Pousadas* seem to expect these experiences to be in tune with the monumental and high culture displays that they relate to the consumption of individuals with differentiated cultural and social capitals. Some of these guests even consume tradition, history and rurality by osmosis via the *Pousadas*’ facilities and services (M. Prista, 2013). They fulfil their pastoral experience by the act of accommodation in itself. They thereby manage to avoid the inconveniences of social and material realities, evincing a postmodern understanding of authenticity that accepts its staging and representation (e.g. Cohen, 1995; Crang, 1996; Rojek and Urry, 1997). In the terms of a Portuguese woman in her 30s, interviewed in the *Pousada* of Bouro,

“We would like to live like this a little more; it is so quiet, so beautiful, I feel like I see it right away. In this kind of thing, I would rather be left alone. I feel like living this more than living it out there. We are so fine here, why go outside?”.

Although the lack of further knowledge on the tourists' backgrounds and quotidian precludes this study to pronounce on their social status and distinction *per se*, there is evidence that issues of social differentiation are at play in the expectations and experiences of the *Pousada* and *TER* guests which resonates in their choice of specific accommodations and their self and cross representations as tourists.

6. Conclusion

This article set out to examine the role of social differentiation in shaping the tourist experience of a pastoral idyll, in order to bridge a knowledge gap in rural studies. The study was centred on the demand for two of the most well-known tourist accommodation products in rural Portugal.

Taken together, the study results provide an empirical illustration of the linkage between rural tourism and social differentiation. Although they do not form a homogeneous group, tourists staying in *TER* and the *Pousadas* are driven by a common purpose: they pursue a pastoral idyll consisting of a landscape created by artisanal agriculture and architecture, mainly vernacular; that is, a pastoral idyll that resembles Bell's (2006) "farmscapes" and Tuan's (1974) "middle landscape". Landscape, architecture and ways of life are three key elements in the tourists' experience/consumption of that pastoral idyll. And *TER* and the *Pousadas* are an integral part of those elements, in both material and immaterial terms.

However, aside from considering themselves different from conventional sun and sea mass tourists, the tourists under study in the article have dissimilar modes of experiencing the pastoral idyll. These are manifested in their distinct expectations regarding tourist accommodation and their appropriation of the cultural repertoires on display. In particular, the cross-examination of the different fieldwork showed a distinct affective bond with rurality, particularly among the Portuguese. Moreover, the professed wishes and distastes of tourists established distinct ways of consuming rural domesticity, with an emphasis on hospitality and gastronomy. They also showed that multiple "indexes of representation" (Rojek, 1997) of the past are at stake; its variations rely on the tourists' distinct "aesthetic dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1979). Overall, tourists staying in *TER* and the *Pousadas* are driven by a common motivation, but seek satisfaction in experiences that differ in line with their tastes, cultural capitals and representations of social groups.

Two main theoretical implications may be advanced. First, in his discussion of the tourism social science literature, Holden (2005, p. 53) highlights four types of social differentiation through tourism, namely, (i) "the ability to participate in tourism"; (ii) "the type and class of travel"; (iii) "the choice of destination"; and (iv) "the type of holiday (e.g. mass or eco)". This article shows that the choice of accommodation at a tourist destination may be viewed in the same way. In fact, several researchers (e.g. Morrison et al., 1996; Pina and Delfa, 2005) have stressed, but not scrutinized this issue in detail, through noting that the choice of one rural tourist accommodation over another falls into the category of taste.

The second implication concerns the classification of tourists. The findings on *TER* and the *Pousadas*' consumption, showed a dominant profile of its guests to which the authors acknowledged deviations. Several references were made to other studies on rural tourists, recognising the importance of categories in comparative analysis and the structural order of ideas. Nevertheless, the practices and representations examined differed between *and* within the two, or four, types of offer. These accommodate alternating cultural and recreational practices, are indifferent to fluctuations in socio-demographic indicators, and never deviate from the chief motivation of experiencing the

pastoral idyll. An attempt to classify the demand for *TER* and the *Pousadas* in terms of individuals' characteristics or particular experiences would most probably lead to a limited analysis of a practice that cuts across social groups and integrates variations. In this sense, efforts to classify tourists and tourism should be more aware of the disadvantages of oversimplifying a phenomenon in order to make it more operative.

This study can also be taken into consideration in the debate on the touristic consumption of the countryside. In particular, the cases of *TER* and the *Pousadas* suggest that the "countryside capital" (Garrod et al., 2006) may be differently experienced by tourists according to their cultural, social and economic capitals.

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