

The Michelin Guide: A Geographical Perspective of the Famous Red Guide through Time

In 1889, the brothers André and Edouard Michelin founded the famous company that has their name, encouraged by a positive outlook from the French car industry. To support the development of this industry and, at the same time, the development of the Michelin group, they decided to provide motor bikers with a small guide to facilitate the journey. André had worked in the cartography department of the Ministry of the Interior, from where he had reached the conclusion of the importance of this type of maps, with complementary information. Thus arose the famous MICHELIN Guide, which from 1920 would be paid. The 1923 guide featured the rubric "Recommended hotels and restaurants", title that gave it the surname of Red Guide. Aware of the growing interest in the guide's restaurant section, the Michelin brothers recruited a team of mysterious diners, known today as inspectors. Currently, the Michelin Guide has become a world reference in the field of gastronomy, thanks to its constant commitment to readers and its rigorous selection process, which is applied throughout the world independently. However, the most famous gastronomic guide does not offer the reader only that, but allows to analyse its evolution from different perspectives. This book allows us to analyse the artistic evolution that it has had since its birth, among which aspects include the cartography of the places that appeared on it, the decoration that varied according to the countries as well as the content included about different regions. With this article we pretend to analyse how the evolution of this type of guides and European cartography has been through history, how the vision of geography in different countries has changed, as well as its tourism promotion. Beside, our final goal is to offer a historical and geographical perspective about this famous work in Europe, something that only has been applied to France.

Keywords: cartography, cities, Michelin' guide, road models, Europe

Introduction

As a result of transport's development, changes on the conditions and perspectives of road extension within the aftermath of the 19th century, lead the apparition of a new type of literature, accompanied by cartography. European cities were reflected in a new way, and were subjected to different containment strategies and measures to be visited. Within the last century, such maps had - and still have- strongly impacted the economic base of the countries and cities, for the foremost part connected -but not limited- to tourism, leisure, and cultural consumption. More extensively, the very lifetime of and in countries was highly affected, from the purpose of view of mobility and leisure time, and so on. Especially the previous, contemporary and potentially future use of the maps exposes a scope of possible evidence-based speculations to rethink the kinds and paths of economic and more-than-economic use that's possible in

1 cities, especially when it involves ways of connecting economy, lifestyle and
2 citizen-led-innovation.

3 In the unfolding of the 19th century, then, social rhetoric came to the fore,
4 building on the thought of learning from facts such as the changes on war and
5 the industrial revolution and prospecting a “urban renaissance”. However, the
6 extent to which such discourses can contest and review pre-existing urban
7 regimes is clearly questionable, and that they seemed to romanticize quite
8 concretize new urban scenarios and agendas. In such a context, it was of
9 particular interest to reflect on the areas, domains and potentials of
10 transformation of the European countries within the centuries. In the last two
11 centuries we can observe in cartography a pattern that was repeated in
12 European – and later non-European-countries-: the change of their structure
13 due to external agents. We can speak of transport extension, such as roads or
14 railroads, during the nineteenth century to cities of leisure tourism, in plural
15 during 20th and 21th centuries. The tourism development has allowed changing
16 the purpose of infrastructures as well as city consumption using few resources
17 such as guides. Governments have used unique situations like this in which the
18 city is transforming to achieve economic development.

19 The question that arises in first place is how the temporary experiment of a
20 guide became permanent. To that, we should add who is really in charge of this
21 change, if the governments or the society. And last, but not least, we should ask
22 ourselves as researchers or experts if maps have acted as a real trigger for the
23 change of connection configuration and urban picture or was something that
24 have been previously agreed.

25 26 27 **Literature Review**

28
29 The Michelin Guide, often nicknamed the Red Guide, is a book in the
30 form of a directory and gastronomic guide for hotels and tourists launched at
31 the end of the 19th century by the tire company Michelin, which is still the
32 publisher and claims it by decorating its cover with the famous Bibendum- a
33 symbol that appeared years later than spectators and readers think-.

34 The Michelin maps are considered the most exhaustive maps in the world,
35 but they were not born with the purpose that we know but with the idea of
36 offering complementary information to the traveler on the road and they were
37 distributed free of charge among the main tire customers. The Michelin tire
38 company was established in 1889 by brothers André and Édouard Michelin,
39 who gave the name to the famous guides – the red and the green one-. It was a
40 time when driving was perceived as a novelty to most, with less than 3,000 cars
41 in all of the country. However, the brothers were quick to recognize driving and
42 mobility as a lasting trend.

43 To encourage more road travel, and hence boost tire sales, they decided to
44 create a comprehensive guide book for motorists which cataloged hotels,
45 restaurants, mechanics and gas stations. In 1900, the very first edition of the
46 Michelin Guide was published and 35,000 copies were given out for free.

1 The reason of this publications and its success was the Universal
 2 Exhibition of 1900. At that moment, it was then an advertising guide offered
 3 with the purchase of tires. Due to the success of that 35,000 copies, the same
 4 number was printed for its first edition in August 1903. André Michelin is
 5 aimed at cyclists but at that time it also made the bet. to bet on the still
 6 embryonic automobile market, France then had 2,400 drivers, pioneers of the
 7 automobile and to whom the guide provided valuable information: a list of rare
 8 garage owners, doctors, a road map with a map of some locations and a list of
 9 curiosities.

10 As the tire company grew, so did the guide. Country-specific editions were
 11 published throughout Europe, starting with Belgium in 1904. A charge was
 12 introduced for the first time in 1920 when André Michelin walked into a garage
 13 and saw copies of the guide book being used to support a workbench. Realizing
 14 that "Man only truly respects what he pays for," he started charging 7 francs
 15 for the guides.

16 In France they spread rapidly so that between 1910, the date of appearance
 17 of the first map, and 1913, the entire French territory was already covered by
 18 47 Michelin maps at a scale of 1:200,000. For tourists, it often complements
 19 the Michelin Green Guide that describes the main visits and regional curiosities
 20 of interest, as well as the Michelin maps of routes and orientation, which have
 21 been incorporated into the GPS for several years. The set, made up of the
 22 Michelin maps, the Green Tourist Guide and the Red Guide, can be easily
 23 juxtaposed, being practical to store thanks to its identical format extended in
 24 height.

25 Since 1920, the guide was no longer delivered, but sold. André Michelin
 26 pointed out indignantly that "the guides sent to a storekeeper were used to
 27 support the legs of a table". In exchange, the restaurants appeared in a new
 28 way, with a new perception. The information provided by Michelin customers
 29 and by the first anonymous inspectors. This incorporation of restaurants
 30 increases the number of pages and, therefore, the cost price of the guide.
 31 However, indications of "worth the detour" or "worth the trip" should,
 32 logically, encourage motorists to consume tires. The payment formula does not
 33 work, few people are inclined to pay what they have always received for free.
 34 Finding thousands of unsold items, Michelin distributes them free of charge to
 35 schools to reward the most deserving students during prize distribution. The
 36 operation was excellent in terms of image, thus enhancing the guide, which
 37 would find buyers the following year.

38 By that time, the restaurant section of the Michelin guide had become so
 39 popular that the company started to recruit anonymous inspectors to visit and
 40 review restaurants. Six years later in 1926, the Michelin star system was born.
 41 There were other notable changes as well, namely listing restaurants by
 42 specific categories, the debut of hotel listings and the abandonment of paid-for
 43 advertisements.

44

Methodology

Urban planners, builders and geographers look at the same information or problem with different perspectives. Each one analyses and joins new information in geographic studies about a specific problem. Taking into account the relevancy of maps to develop a new perspective of a territory, we have collected some and used them in this study, and in order to achieve the goals, it is proposed a thematic analysis through selection and comparison. With these sources of data, the corresponding analytic treatment was administered to get the correlations that would be extracted for the aim of possible connected variables that ratify or not the work hypotheses.

Our ongoing research examines the countries and cities in different time periods of the guide and posing questions related to changes over time to these places, and then collages these together to provide a multiple viewpoint. Time periods for cartographical development include 19th and 20th centuries and current conditions. These correspond to periods of road appearance and mark times when maps or guides are available. The application of knowledge organization and new visualization techniques provides a method for analyzing the transformations of territories before, during and after Michelin guide and for posing questions about the urban changes due to different situations.

Discussion and Results

European cities experienced a transformation due to another technological development; in other words, inner connections, like railroads and roads, started in the end of 19th century, and were subjected to different containment strategies and measures. In the last century, such changes impacted strongly the economic base of the cities such as Paris, New York or Barcelona, for the most part truly associated with external agents like tourism, leisure, and cultural consumption, with major consequences. More extensively, the very life of and in city was highly affected, from the point of view of economy, mobility, access to public spaces, and so on. Having access to new places or in an easier way forces us to think about how we Europe experienced that changes and how it was reflected in a new different type of maps.

Searching the answers to the questions previously exposed, we can find a range of different proposals in big cities, as for example Paris, city model taken into account for the rest of cities in Europe before, and overall, during the development of Michelin Guide along the time. The road proposals made by the different governments created a new perspective of connections and supposed the beginning of a deep knowledge of Europe, something reflected by first time in the Michelin guide.

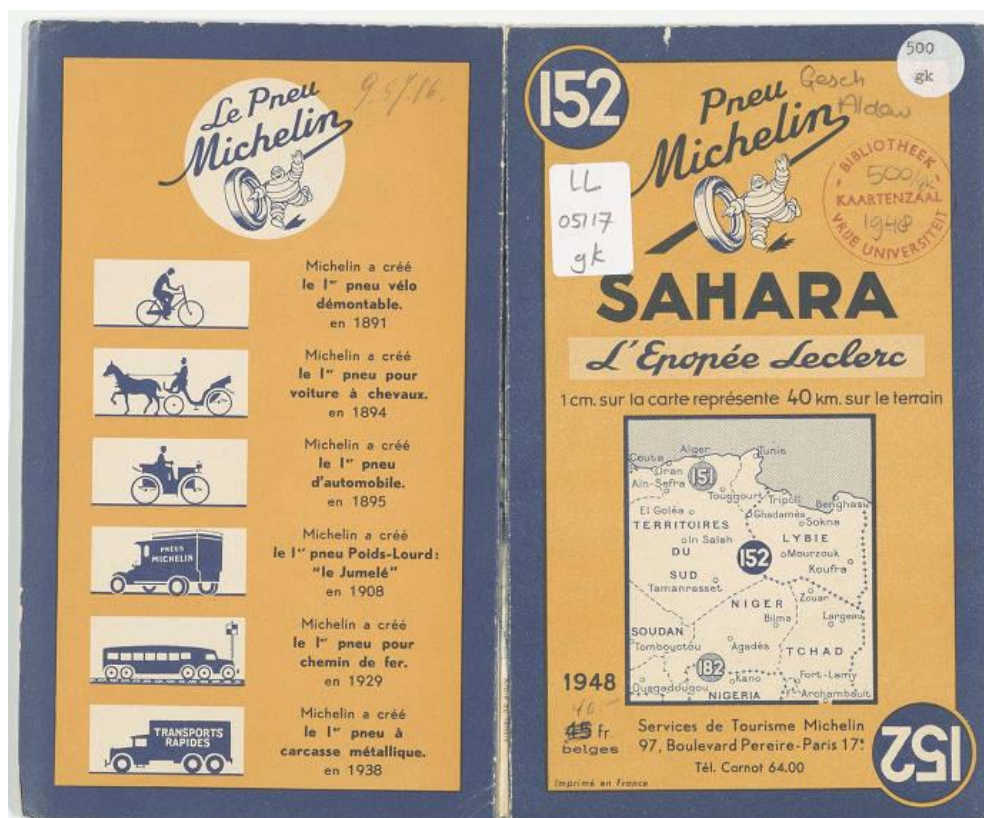
It contained a page of introductory text where the publisher proudly boasted of the reliable and up-to-date information offered by the volume, as well as its artistic quality, characteristics that were endorsed by the praising press articles published as a result of the presentation of the book volume in

1930. Certainly, the atlas collected maps with the main road lines, as well as other services, and in them no author appeared, apart from the publisher itself and the company to which they referred. Undoubtedly, and as the press pointed out, the work revealed the professional creative capacity and the quality with which the Michelin brothers' company worked.

According to the Green Michelin Guide created as a continuation of Red Michelin Guide, and the strategies laid out along these lines by the brothers Michelin, some of the purposes of the guide before the development of the current restaurant's system, were addressed to preserve and to improve the tourism and accessibility to any city to enable each and every one among us to profit from and enjoy it. To become successful, the guide promoted, and currently does, different lines of action. From its birth until 1908 the guide only offered technical questions to drivers to evolve to a touristic area, which last until 1933, moment that the brothers added the most interesting part currently: the gastronomic one.

Accordingly, these guides suffered a development depending on the requirements of the moment. At the beginning, and due to the very few development of car's business, André Michelin decided to focus on bikers. But with the extension of the railroad for every part of the planet and the birth of the first car's companies, he decided to bet for a new model of guide. By then, France had 2.400 car drivers, pioneers and for who the guide could have valued information, like garage, doctors or a full with a maps where different cities and curiosities appeared. So, logically, the name of the guide was *Guide Michelin pour les chauffeurs et les vélocipédistes*. Through this single presentation, the guide associated the automobile with the infinity of travel possibilities, integrates a France that had remained out of reach of the railroad and restores to the traveler a capacity for individualization that the railroad had partially taken away from him. But for this freedom to be exercised, it was necessary to neutralize prejudices, remove dangers, dissipate ignorance and arouse desire for travelling.

After that, the guide's expansion rocketed and changed its goal. A new model of guide was asserting itself which focused on humans more than on machines, which targeted an increasingly large audience and which actively participates in the construction of a tourist France of which we are still the heirs. In 1904, appeared by first time – in its fifth year of publication – a classification of hotels with different prices, such as the necessity of a candle. Three years later, the Guide expanded the business abroad, like Argelia and Tunisia. But, in 1908, the guide changed its style. Every announce was replaced and not was until 1909 when the readers could observe which kind of changes were made. With 76.000 guides over the market, informed that from that point, if someone had interested about that type of information, a sales worker would attend then.



Carte Michelin Sahara / Michelin
University of Amsterdam <https://vu.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/krt/id/5879>

The relationship between the maps and the text in the first editions of the guide was innovative. Drivers met not only a description of the famous monuments that they could visit, but also they count with a guide to travel to a city, locate a hotel, or find mechanical assistance. The comparison of the maps of these editions of the Michelin guide with the other guides of the time reveals differences in the form in which the information on the motorized tourist is presented in comparison with the tourist walking. Because the color used in the Michelin maps was scarce (or non-existent), its success lay in educating readers to identify different signs and hear the meaning in various ways. The new style of Michelin map was intended to free motorists from train itineraries, and the success of the Michelin Guide and its maps allowed many car drivers to explore France.

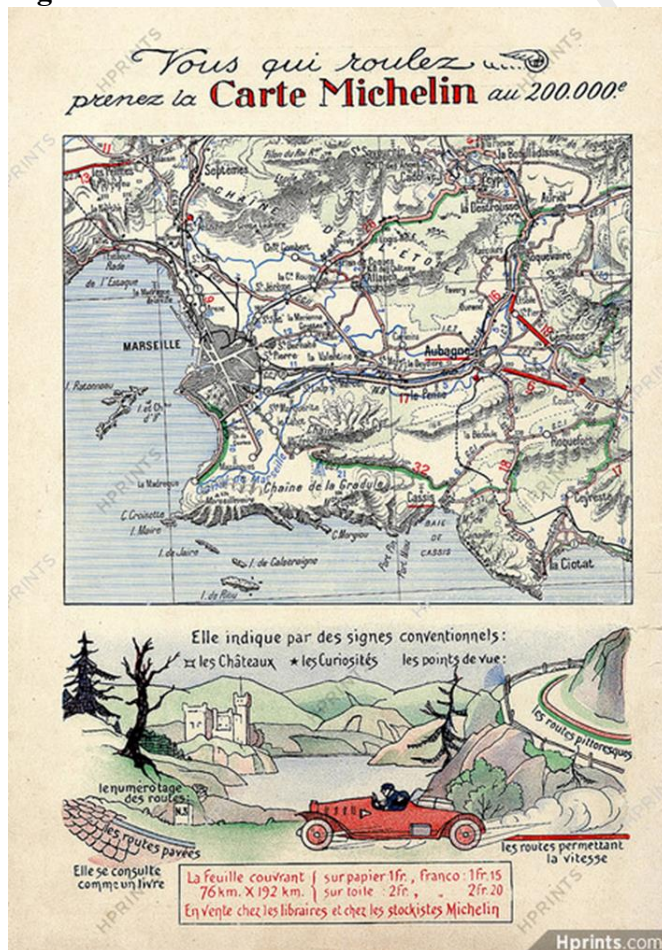
From 1918, with the end of the Great War World and with the approval of every government in reference of the utility of knowing the territory thanks to these guides, a new concept of tourism was born: the gastronomic one. A new route was set up in the South of France. The RN7 road was established as a central point to connect the South, like Cote d'Azur, and the North of Europe. This created a luxury type of tourism with the biggest cities of the country: Paris, Lyon and Marsella. Besides the route, city maps started to appear. If the reader looks at the first guides, such as Niza, now maps can be similar to traditional guidebooks of cities. Private businesses are labelled and colour is

used to highlight prominent buildings. A reference in the lower-left hand corner points readers to the location of Nice on one of the four reference maps to the whole country at the end of the volume.

The guide had changed its original concept. After a few years, the guide, with the same title, the same cover and the same presentation, was no longer the same. The appearance of anonymous inspectors and new restaurants made that the size of the guide grew, and so the price. Few people were interested in paying something that until the previous year was free. Thousands of guides in the warehouses made to Michelin's brothers distributed them between the best students of the schools. That was a good marketing strategy and the next year the selling's sped up.

By that time, the restaurant section of the Michelin guide had become so popular that the company started to recruit anonymous inspectors to visit and review restaurants. Six years later in 1926, the Michelin star system was born. There were other notable changes as well, namely listing restaurants by specific categories, the debut of hotel listings and the abandonment of paid-for advertisements.

Figure 1. Michelin 1914 - 94ème tableau "Carte Michelin" Marseille map



Source: <https://hprints.com/en/item/15067/Michelin-1914-94eme-tableau-Carte-Michelin-Marseille-map>

On the other side, Road guides were multiplied and provided more precise information on gastronomic stops. The Michelin guide even offers a star rating. It was in 1931 when the classification in 1, 2 and 3 stars was created, which rewards first the Paris-Lyon-Marseille axis -axis of Nationale 6 and Nationale 7-.

At that time, the reward weren't starts, if not "macarons". The term "macaron" is frequently used, incorrectly, in place of "star". According to Michelin, a former journalist used this term to avoid repetition in an article, thus creating this confusion. Besides, in the 1930s, the guide wove France with establishments every 10 kilometres, such as the Continental Guide and the Kléber Guide did.

Despite of this increment of the presence of restaurants in the guide, the most remarkable content carry out by the brothers were the accurate information of the territories, something useful in the Second War Word. In 1940, during the Battle of France, the Germans on the front lines of the Blitzkrieg were equipped with a Michelin guide which facilitated the French invasion. In 1944, the Allied General Staff feared that the advance of the troops after the Normandy landings would slow down on the roads and especially in the French cities, because all the signs had been destroyed or dismantled by the German occupier. With the secret agreement of Michelin's management in Paris, he chose to print in Washington, DC and distribute to each official a reproduction of the last edition of the Guide, the one from 1939, because it included hundreds of maps of the city, detailed and up-to-date. 13.

Figure 2. *Bataille de Normandie juin-août 1944*



RMN-Grand Palais (Château de Blérancourt) / Gérard Blot

1 It provoked that the road axis of the Saône/Rhône valley quickly was
 2 distinguished itself with its many starred restaurants. As an example, Jean-
 3 Robert Pitte indicated that in the 1956 edition of the Red Guide, half of the
 4 three provincial stars were near the “royal axis”, with seven restaurants, Paris
 5 does not have only four. In 1957, the guide began rewarding accolades to
 6 restaurants that provided “good meals at moderate prices,” a feature now called
 7 Bib Gourmand. But the Bib Gourmand symbol—the image of Bibendum or the
 8 Michelin Man licking his lips—didn’t debut until in the Michelin Guide in
 9 1997.

10 The 1999 edition was still printing 600,000 copies and the centenary
 11 edition reached a record with 880,000 copies, before the digital revolution
 12 brought down the paper edition. In the 2000s, an average of 150,000 copies of
 13 the Red Guide were sold each year. The mintage, which is by no means a sale,
 14 would be 150,000 copies in 2016. In February 2018, the group launched its
 15 brand of high-quality cookware, “Le guide Michelin”, at the Ambiente fair in
 16 Frankfurt. This brand is the result of a partnership between the group and the
 17 FDG Group, the non-food leader in the GSA [What?] sector in France.

18 At the end of 2016, the guide was entrusted to the British company
 19 Bookatable, 5th Floor, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London17, which is a
 20 foreign subsidiary of the Michelin group. This is reflected in a steady decline in
 21 the number of hotels listed in the Red Guide: in France, we went from 5,300
 22 hotels listed in 2006 to 900 in 2020 (as indicated on the back cover in both
 23 cases); many French municipalities thus disappear from the Guide Rouge.

24 Over time, the number of products offered by the Michelin guides has
 25 grown. The website allows you to find the hotels and restaurants in the red
 26 guides. There is an app available for iPhone, which only includes selected
 27 restaurants and is still paid, unlike the site. All these different “guides” and
 28 plans might count with the support of most part of citizens. That’s the main
 29 reason to develop ways to assess their opinions about new changes, such as
 30 online surveys or an online system to send your requests.

31 At the end of 2016, the guide was entrusted to the British company
 32 Bookatable, 5th Floor, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London17, which is an
 33 extra subsidiary of the Michelin group. This is reflected in a constant decrease
 34 in the number of hotels that appear in the Red Guide: for example in France,
 35 from 5,300 hotels enumerated in 2006 to 900 in 2020.

36 The evolution along the years means that the “artistic” part has been lost.
 37 The guide was the first “decorative” advertisement, in French and later in other
 38 languages, of the services offered by a company and one of the first examples
 39 of a poster with the characteristics that would later define the advertising
 40 world. The purpose of this type of guide was to promote trips with the famous
 41 tire. In the year that the ad that occupies these was launched, the road
 42 connections were very new. 1888 was the starting signal to start creating the
 43 famous art deco-style posters to announce the services, coming to form over
 44 the years a very interesting collection and typical of the tastes of collectors.
 45 The advertising posters became famous for the scenes they depicted. The
 46 impact created by these cartels made other companies request their services,

such as traveling companies, municipal festivals, drinks and liquors, perfumes, soaps, cosmetics, pharmaceutical products or railway companies.

The poster were made by lithography, a technique widely used at the time because it allowed a greater number of impressions to be obtained and with a higher quality than the techniques previously used such as engraving or the pen. The most notable differences with respect to them was the possibility of printing in several colors, cheaper and with greater precision due to the evolution of the molds – it went from the use of limestone to a zinc mold. The result of the work in this case was a poster with bright colors -except for the title in blood red- and of great beauty, characteristics of the Art Nouveau movement of the time.

These characteristics turned this poster, like the rest that shared the same characteristics, into a new language for the observer, since the whole made it possible to transmit a message in a simple and direct way-in this case, the offer of routes and places where stop. What was sought was to create a link between the viewer and the company through visual stimuli. This poster, in short, represents the “fin de siècle” spirit, that is, it was given an allegorical meaning and was linked to the promotion of a specific product.

The images of the destination city are presented as an ideal world. The city appears in the form of a view with its most important buildings, such as Paris or Madrid, thus inviting the viewer to visit it. What was intended was to create a world on paper much better than reality to sell their ideas. The announcement promises a direct connection with various parts of the world such as London-Vienna, Paris-Constantinople or Paris-Bucharest. It was even the case that he promised to travel to other places even further away such as Cairo or Baghdad, places that in reality would still take time to reach.

In short, the Michelin brothers made the guide a symbol of transport that continues to function today and created a trend in advertising that has maintained its importance over the decades. The incorporation of maps in advertisements became an advertising claim until today.

Conclusions

The three historical forms of the Michelin Guide correspond to as many objects of exchange – interchangeable technical goods, cultural objects, hotel and culinary products – and as many methods of economic regulation. The technical guide, on the one hand, the tourist guide and the gastronomic guide, on the other hand, respectively order two radically different forms of market: the neoclassical market and the quality market. The Michelin Guide, which everything seemed to orient towards a unitary meaning, shows that the designation does not make it possible to save on an analysis of the characteristics of goods and services.

Experts are already beginning to consider the answers to these questions and some cities begun to work on their transformation thanks to these guides. In almost all of them there is a constant that we already knew: the

transformation that transports brought us consisted of changing the journey of countries towards tourism, which was directly related to economy. This article has tried to provide examples of European geography countries that got known through these ideas.

However, despite the clear contribution of the Guide Michelin to the world, the main problem of knowing the world is how to make it possible with a luxury guide at it is right now. Both guides, green and red, represent symbolic constructions that dissipate opacity, indicate uncertainty about quality and therefore create the conditions for the formation and continuity of the quality market. In both cases, they shape the figures of the producer and the consumer. In both cases, even if they are neither omnipotent (they are ultimately subject to competition from other judgment mechanisms) nor omnipresent (the quality market finds its limits), by their scale of action, they orient financed the formation and transformation of economic regulation and, with it, of French society, and, in both cases, they invite us to share, deliciously, a world fashioned for pleasure.

References

- Guide Michelin France (Clermont-Ferrand, Michelin, 1900)
- Claval, Paul. *Histoire de la géographie française de 1870 à nos jours* (Paris, Editions Nathan, 1998)
- Fierro, Alfred. 'Les guides de voyages au XIXe siècle', in *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Roger Chartier (Paris, Promodis, 1983), 192–93.
- Francon, Marc. *Le Guide Vert Michelin, l'invention du tourisme culturelle populaire* (Paris, Economica, 2001), 17.
- Herbert R. Lottman, *The Michelin Men: Driving and Empire* (London and New York, I.B. Tauris, 2003), 69.
- Kory Olson *Maps for a New Kind of Tourist: The First Guides Michelin France (1900–1913)*, *Imago Mundi*, (2010), 62:2, 205-220.