Food and Glocalization

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An overview of food, globalization and glocalization <b>

Since ancient times, long-distance trade has enabled the spread of both staple foods and luxury products, such as wine, tea, coffee, rice, spices and dried fish (Nützenadel & Trentmann, 2008). Colonial expansion further enlarged food markets, linking distant places and cultures of the world, until the so-called contemporary 'globalization', in which the multiple modes of interaction of the economic, political, social and cultural spheres 'affect food-related matters, and … the latter in turn come to affect the former, in a series of ongoing dialectical relations characterized by the constant generation of forms of complexity' (Inglis & Gimlin, 2009, p. 9).

Such processes do not merely involve food products, but also – and especially – practices (of preparation and consumption), habits, rites, systems of valorization, as well as images of one's self (that is to say, the construction of local and national identities, and self-understanding of social and cultural groups) and of others (for example, migrants, ethnic communities and travellers).[1] And they are frequently marked by unevenness and incompleteness, as they entail changing cultural, social and economic hierarchies, which constantly redefine the boundaries between groups and nations, identities and alterities (Geyer & Paulmann, 2001, p. 6).

Thus, while some scholars have emphasized the homogenization resulting from the process of food globalization (see, in particular, Ritzer, 1993, 2003, 2004),[2] others have instead stressed the huge heterogeneity (Poulain, 2002) and hybridity (Appadurai, 1990) originating from it, especially as a result of a process of confrontation of the global dimension with localized food styles and, conversely, of ways of living local lives with and through global imagery:

> The exotic fruit now routinely available on supermarket shelves may be used casually to enhance a traditional English fruit salad – a careless cosmopolitanism invoked through ignorance or choice. Alternatively, these fruits may be carefully selected and deliberately employed, to recreate authentic 'local' tastes at home, by the food gourmet, the new immigrant or the politically exiled. The globalization of food is not, therefore, just a matter of the movement of food stuffs between nations; nor is it simply the amalgamation or accommodation of cuisines. It is a complex interplay of meanings and intentions which individuals employ subjectively to make statements about who they are, and where and how their Selves are to be located in the world. (James, 1994 [1996, p. 92])

Furthermore, as Jean-Loup Amselle (2001) interestingly remarks, all societies are crossbred even within themselves: building on James Clifford's concept of traveling cultures (1997) and the studies carried out by Ulf Hannerz (1987, 1992) and Édouard Glissant (1990 [1997]) on the idea of creolization, the French anthropologist strongly criticizes a conception of globalization as a collision among previously pure and intact elements, instead defining it as the encounter among already hybridized and heterogeneous systems, which relies precisely on the confrontation between the global and the local dimension. In glocalized societies, therefore, 'the blurring of global and local distinctions causes established meanings and authenticities to be no longer broadly defined but rather expressed through myriad interpretations' (Matejowsky, 2007, p. 37).

As we will show in the following paragraphs, food is particularly susceptible to this process of 'blurring', and can therefore play a crucial role in understanding its functioning mechanisms and effects of meaning.

Theoretical background <b>

As the above overview suggests, investigating glocalization in the food realm necessarily implies considering the links between signs, texts, discourses and practices concerning the food universe, on the one hand, and the processes of construction and forms of expression of cultural identity – or, rather, identities – and alterity – or, rather, alterities –, on the other.

Within the wide range of possible approaches to deal with such issues, we would like to adopt here a semiotic perspective, specifically focusing on the processes of signification and identification associated with them. While starting to focus on food later than other disciplines such as sociology or anthropology, semiotics has in fact proved essential in providing insights on the practices of identity- (and alterity-)making associated with it and the processes of translation between different food systems and codes (see, in particular, Greco, 2016; Marrone, 2016; Stano, 2015, 2016; Stano & Boutaud, 2015). However, a comprehensive semiotic approach to food glocalization is still lacking, with only a few and limited attempts (see, in particular, Sedda, 2016; Stano, 2020). This chapter therefore expressly aims to contribute to filling this gap, drawing on existing attempts, as well as on relevant interdisciplinary literature, to describe how glocality works in the food realm (and beyond it) and what its effects are on the level of signification processes.

Understanding glocalization: The lesson of the Columbian exchange <b>

In order to better evaluate some of the processes that tie the phenomenon of glocalization[3] to food, it is worth considering a specific example in recent history: the discovery of the Americas, and, with it, the so-called 'Columbian exchange' (Crosby, 1972). Even though other examples could certainly be beneficially considered here, the Columbian exchange is particularly interesting for different reasons. First, it represents the moment when 'transport and communication systems bridged spatial distance and when world-wide mass migration changed societies and cultures, fostering a world of unprecedented global exchange of goods, services and people' (Nützenadel & Trentmann, 2008, p. 5). Second, but no less importantly, such dynamics went hand in hand with processes of imperial expansion and migration and new systems of distribution and consumption of food, which also resulted in tensions and movements of resistance, reshaping social and ethnic identities, and emphasizing the relation between the global and the local scale.

Adopting such a perspective necessarily implies focusing primarily on the European context. However, in the final part of the paper, we will generalize the results of such an analysis, also relating them to contemporary and trans-national foodspheres.[4] In fact, on one side, this example will allow us to understand the significance of glocalization as an ongoing and multilayered process of intercultural and intersemiotic translation,[5] concurrently involving 'national', 'religious', 'ethnic', 'class' and other semiospheres, as well as asymmetrical relations of power. On the other side, it will help us draw a comparison with today's processes of glocalization, with the complex efforts of non-European and non-Western societies to rediscover their ancient traditions and reinvent European foods, dishes, and culinary techniques, while bringing up questions and debates about authenticity, hybridity, power, decolonization and so forth. More generally, the tension between past and present food glocalization will allow us to highlight the sense of the consumption of food – and some emerging and dominating practices that are inherent to it – in contemporary societies.

Exclusion <c>

First, and in a general sense, we can talk of a process of exclusion: not all species of plants and animals living in the Americas were immediately imported to Europe. This means that of the overall difference characterizing their foodsphere(s), only a part was selected and 'translated' toward Europe. If we readapt a fitting expression by Bateson (1977), we may say that only a part of difference was utilized to produce a novel difference, while the remaining part fell within the sphere of what became semiotically inexistent (Lotman, 1984 [2005]). This discarded or unperceived difference may be regarded as an untranslatable part of the initial system, which remains nonetheless able to spur further innovations and translations – as proved by our unceasing ‘discoveries’ of new ingredients from such culinary cultures.

Purification <c>

Second, the import of cultivated species did not correspond to the awareness of the fact that the imported plants (and animals) were already the result of a remarkably long cultural work of selection, cross-fertilization and cross-breeding operated by the indigenous cultures, nor to the transfer of the techniques, habits, manners and beliefs that were normally associated with these types of food. The universes of belief and knowledge, the structures of everyday life and the structures of power, incorporated in food, in its production and in its consumption, were in fact neutralized by means of a non-neutral sociosemiotic process. Such a process was certainly enabled by a diffused ignorance deriving from cultural distance, as well as by the impossibility, for the large majority of Europeans, to have a direct contact with the life and cuisine of the Americas. Moreover, an asymmetrical power relation, mainly due to the European thirst for domination, or, at the very least, claim to superiority, certainly played a crucial role in such processes. In any case, the need to ‘purify’ what belonged to the Other (which was generally conceived as ‘savage’ and ‘heathen’), before making it one’s own emerged. An emblematic case in this sense is that of pellagra, an illness caused by the consumption of corn, which could have been avoided by teaching farmers to add a small amount of lime or alkaline vegetable ashes during the cooking process, like Mesoamerican women did. The Western process of ‘purification’ of corn, in fact, resulted in the lack of necessary knowledge to prevent the disease, even though such knowledge was widespread in the context of its origin. Whether this process of purification, which we will consider in more detail below, depended on conscious sociocultural dynamics, or rather on more profound and unperceived structural dynamics, is still an open question.

Naturalization as universalization <c>

The above-discussed mechanisms describe a complex cultural process of re-naturalization of food, that is to say, a process that, as stated above, ‘purifies’ food, at least within the perception of those who appropriate it, from the social and cultural relations that it embodies. In the case of the Columbian exchange, various foods were detached from the life-worlds of which they were witnesses and active producers, and then reduced to the condition of material and natural elements available for novel cultural formations. Here the effect of naturalization merges with a mechanism of universalization. The imported foods and plants belonged to no one. They were considered ‘natural’ elements, available to all types of knowledge ready to manipulate them. In this sense, their glocality, which was inherent to them as cultural objects, and which was propelled by the unfolding process of exchange, was in effect annihilated.

In other terms, something that was already glocal, since it was produced and made meaningful by a series of complex translation processes inherent to the history and cultures of the Americas, was made further glocal by a new process of translation toward Europe. It thus lost all its connections to human history and specific semiospheres, traveling toward new cultures and becoming part of a process of translation and relatedness between different worlds. It became a ‘global’ element – belonging to everyone and at the same time to no one – available to a variety of ‘localities’ ready to appropriate it.

Such a deprivation of glocality also promotes a further redefinition of ‘globality’. As it was the Europeans – carriers of new ways of trading, as well as of a universalizing and civilizing mission – who made the American foods become ‘global’, a twofold movement of globalization can be identified, involving a position of semio-political dominance: what is global is what was circulated by the Europeans, what passed through their networks of exchange, that is, what they defined practically and symbolically ‘global’. In this sense, it is interesting to note that such a process of ‘production of naturalness’ gives rise to various strategies of appropriation, or ‘domestication’, of newness and otherness. These strategies are precisely what allows recognizing the ‘alterity’ incorporated by food – even though this is always a distorted or at least only partially recognized, since it operates from within the target foodsphere(s).

Processes of incorporation <c>

The process of cultural incorporation discussed above does not unfold in the same manner and time for all foods at play in the Columbian exchange. As Jean-Louis Flandrin wrote:

> The most striking historical fact of the early modern period (1400–1800)—namely, the European conquest of the Seven Seas and the subsequent integration of the other continents into Europe’s commercial network—had an impact on the European diet that has continued to the present day. Not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did the tomato, potato, corn (maize), and other American crops transform European agriculture and cooking. Nevertheless, while it took three centuries for these new crops to be fully assimilated (and then only as a result of a gradual deterioration in the popular diet), other exotic crops entered the European diet much more quickly. The pimiento was accepted in some countries, for example, while the turkey was adopted almost everywhere; three new beverages—coffee, tea, and chocolate—soon accounted for a substantial portion of global trade; and sugar, which had long been known in Europe, began to be produced in vastly greater quantities under European control. (Flandrin, 1996 [1999, p. 313])

The process of translation and incorporation of such elements, along with the relative syncretism and the new ‘indigenization’ of these foods, occurred with different rhythms, forms and valorizations. In other words, the insertion of new foods in the target foodspheres is based on diverse semiotic strategies. Let us focus, for instance, on the process that brings foods from foreignness to familiarity, and from alterity to identification, or rather, to the ability of new consumers to identify with them as if they were their own.[6]

First of all, it is essential to point out an evident, yet very important consideration. In any alimentary mechanism of translation, the first border to cross is that between food and non-food. A paradigmatic example in this sense is the tomato, which was used for a long time as an ornamental plant, before being recognized and consumed as a proper food. The plant was initially incorporated into everyday life and aesthetically valorized, but not as a food substance.[7] And even when it became a common product, it was in the form of a sauce,[8] replacing Medieval European soups or other types of sauces. In other words, to be 'incorporated' into the European foodsphere – that is, to pass from being perceived from an *other's* to *one's own* –, the tomato had to cut across diverse semiotic borders: the 'ornament' (*non-one's own*), the 'salad' (*non-other's*), and the 'sauce' (*one's own*). Until it finally became an element of continuity and cultural identification (as proved by the emblematic case of Mediterranean cuisine) in the European context.

Other foods, such as potatoes and corn, were immediately admitted into the foodsphere, but as nourishment for animals. These were therefore also cases where American foods entered the European cultural space, but maintained a trait of 'foreignness', by means of a connection to the non-human (that is, animal) sphere, while in the case of the tomato, it was with the non-edible (that is, ornamental) sphere.

Structures <c>

It is interesting to note that several examples show the workings of a historical-structural device made of a complex and paradoxical play of discontinuities and continuities, discordances and coherence. To evaluate the scope of this device, it is worth considering the process of incorporation of the turkey into European cuisine. This case is emblematic, as Flandrin notes, because it demonstrates that there is no a priori inflexibility to alimentary change or to the reception of food: ‘The slow rate at which American foods were generally adopted is typical of the process of culinary change in early modern society. Yet some species gained acceptance much more quickly than others, or more quickly in certain regions than in others. Indeed, the turkey caught on with amazing speed’ (Flandrin, 1996 [1999, p. 321]).

Why did the tomato need three hundred years, while the turkey took only a few decades to become an established presence on European dining tables?

> The turkey was accepted almost from the moment it arrived because all sorts of large birds were already served on aristocratic tables, including some that we consider inedible, such as cormorant, stork, heron, crane, swan, and peacock. Hence there was no problem with introducing the turkey, which was large, decorative, and tasty in the opinion of satisfied consumers both then and now. (Flandrin, 1996 [1999, pp. 321-322])

In other words, the turkey was readily introduced in the European foodsphere since its place was already envisaged within the European culinary system – much more, or in a much more evident way, than that of the tomato. Thus, it could move directly from being the *other’s* to *one’s own*, without passing through the intermediate stages of incorporation. In fact, on the perceptual and also cognitive level, it was already recognizable as part of the structures of the target foodsphere and its (both implicit and explicit) ethno-taxonomies of taste.

The increases of pace – or even the syncopations – in the rhythm of incorporation are based on this type of translation, which innovates the food systems by entering its structures and occupying already attested categorical positions, either gustative or cognitive – that is to say, tied to culinary flavours or types of knowledge – within them. Relevant examples in this sense include chili pepper, which easily replaced the more expensive black pepper; American beans, which readily supplanted the types of beans consumed in Europe up to that moment; and corn, which was rapidly adopted by those who formerly consumed millet.

This highlights the crucial role played by food in the increasingly rapid interpenetration between semiospheres, that is, the creation of a glocal ensemble of glocalities. More specifically, such a process seems to be enabled by the ability of some foods to innovate and deeply transform alimentary practices by becoming part of the profound structures of the language of the foodspheres they innovate.

Practices <c>

Further proof, yet a reversed one, of the above-described dynamics is the slow and laborious incorporation of the potato in the European context. Potatoes had to overcome a series of semiotic thresholds that are even more complex than the ones we described in the case of the tomato. Unlike the turkey, the potato did not have a European trailblazer favouring its positioning within the local foodsphere, neither from the culinary and botanical point of view nor from the point of view of figurative appearance or taste. Not only was it new both at the cognitive and gustative level, it was also unattractive, and the fact that it grew underground facilitated its incorporation of negative values. We can compare its reception to that of the topinambur, which looks like a potato but tastes like an artichoke, resulting in an easier and wider acceptance by European aristocracy. By contrast, potatoes were first adopted to nourish animals, stressing their foreignness. After initial resistance (see Poulain, 2002), their otherness was accepted into the new semiosphere, but still in a condition of marked peripherality and distance. This condition did not improve much when the potato became, due to its affordability, first a source of nourishment for convicts, soldiers and the sick, and later a food for the lower classes, and more generally for subjugated or extremely poor people (such as in the case of the British introduction of the potato in Ireland). The passage to the *non-one's own* (prisoners, in particular, at the time were regarded as beings at the limit of humanity) and to the *non-other's* (food for the lower classes and for subjugated or poor people), rather than fostering an approach to appropriation – that is, to an appropriative identification –, created a series of de-valorizing correlations that projected on food. Such correlations were in turn always related to and reinforced by popular narratives, more or less grounded on demonstrated data, which attributed negative qualities to food itself. As in a sort of labyrinth, the passages leading toward the potato's exit from social exclusion resolved in a blind alley. Another difficulty consisted in the failure of the attempt to establish the equivalence between potatoes and bread set forth by Augustine Parmentier and others in the late eighteenth century. By means of the mediation of medical-pharmaceutical knowledge, and prompted by the conditions of implosion of the local food system (that is, war and famine), Parmentier suggested to replace bread with potatoes, positing a de facto equivalence between these two elements in an extreme attempt that ultimately failed[9] to transform the potato into an object that was *one's own*, that is to say, familiar, and therefore incorporable.

It was only in the nineteenth century that the potato was effectively integrated into the European popular diet, by means of a series of related changes that affected the prevalent culinary system and practices: the demographic growth; the affordability of food; the recognition of its nutritional values; and the emergence of new recipes and narratives. To provide an example of a process translation that made the potato 'appropriable', we could mention, at least in the Italian foodsphere, its use in the preparation of gnocchi: only in this manner, after having 'disguised' itself, did the potato gain full access to dining tables.

Discourses <c>

One of the ways of food incorporation that gradually emerged and became increasingly relevant in the modern age passed through the medium of scientific – medical at first, nutritional afterward – discourse, which was popularized in particular by means of recipe books.

An emblematic case is the Italian recipe book by Pellegrino Artusi in 1891, which has the significant title of *La Scienza in cucina e l'Arte di mangiare bene* (*Science in the kitchen and the Art of eating well*):

> It is a culinary philosophy … reduced, on the one hand, to the physiological order, according to the reigning positivistic canons; and, on the other hand, to the economical order, following an unconscious ideal that Artusi translates into a system of recipes mirroring a political-economical system, the structure of the society of his time and the myth of the bourgeois order. (Camporesi, 1970, p. XXIII, our translation)

This highlights a further nuance of the translative process of alimentation, also pointing to another strategy of appropriation of the foods imported from the Americas. First, it corroborates that food translations operate at the crossroads of multiple filters of translation, that is to say, of several languages that, all together, shape the globality of the target culture.[10] Second, it enables us to reconsider the strategies of appropriation of the foods coming from the Americas, identifying a further typology. In fact, the reference here is to foods, and in particular to beverages, that penetrated rather rapidly into the European foodsphere by being semanticized as medicaments. That is to say, they were valorized as substances with healing, therapeutic and energizing properties (see Huetz de Lemps, 1996 [1999]). From coffee up to chocolate, the acceptance of several products into the foodsphere passed through their positioning within the space of 'medicines' and 'magic substances'. This is the case, for instance, of aromas, which were sold in 'aromatist's shops', such as that of Modica (the Sicilian capital of chocolate since the seventeenth century), where

> on the shelves there were packages of zinc and alum powder and camphor,

> 'quicksilver', cumin, yellow and white amber, 'Jamaican rum', and also fine chocolate, which back then was fed to people suffering from 'exhaustion' or as a 'reinvigorating' substance to newlyweds after their wedding night. (Bolzoni, 2014, our translation)

This scene immediately recalls the chocolate shop from the 2000 movie *Chocolat*, which points to the Aztec origins of this food to highlight its shamanic-cathartic power and its capability to overwhelm the quiet (and overly disciplined) lives of the religious citizens of a small French town.

Such dynamics reflect a twofold and almost paradoxical device, which neutralizes and at the same time synthesizes the conflict between *one's own* and the *other's*. On one level, the substance is neutralized: it becomes *non-other's* and *non-one's own*. This means that it is no longer outlying, as it is legitimized by the (presumed) medical-pharmacological knowledge, but it is not entirely familiar yet. It remains something to be used on special occasions and for certain purposes, exactly because it is a medicine whose effects one cannot fully control (and sometimes is not even completely aware of). On another level, it becomes both *one's own* and the *other's*, which makes its 'magical' aspect emerge. Arriving from elsewhere, food is capable of reconciling opposites. Its cathartic-therapeutic force resides precisely in that one can and must appropriate something which is by all means an other's, and, as such, carries unknown and mysterious powers, through established modes and rites.

Naming <c>

The entire process of incorporation, with the various adaptive strategies outlined above, is accompanied by a linguistic work of denomination, which is often an actual re-nomination, a sort of 'baptism of plants' (Guigoni, 2009, p. 122). In fact, the very fixing of the name, which at times may require multiple years, can be seen as a further form of sanction of the completed process.

Let us consider two interesting cases which may help us further reflect on the relation between food and glocality – that is to say, on the way in which foods, even through their names, translate and betray (in the sense of distorting, but also of unintentionally giving a glimpse of) the crossing of worlds which they themselves are.

The typologies of designation identified by various scholars, if taken on a more general level, seem to trace the tripartite division of the functions of culture (functional, aesthetic and mythical) discussed by Algirdas Julien Greimas in *De l'imperfection* (1987). In fact, the names of imported foods are sometimes calques of the original denominations used in the Americas: *mahiz* turned into *mais* (Italian for 'corn'), *tomatl* became *tomato* (in English) or *tamata* (in Sardinian), *xocolatl* was translated into multiple similar phonetic forms, unaware of the semantic matrix that in the Aztec language meant 'bitter water'. In other cases, on the contrary, the name was generated through iconic recognitions generally assuming an aesthetic value: *tomatl* first became in Italian *pomo d'amore* (literally, 'love apple') and then *pomo d'oro* ('golden apple'), with a linguistic valorization evidently linked to the ornamental function of the product we discussed above. Lastly, there are entire series of new names that incorporated their places of origin, geographic distance or exotic alterity: the *nopalli*, for instance, became *ficodindia* ('prickly pear') in Italian and *figu moriska* ('fig of the moors') in Sardinian, while the *wueh-xōlō-tl* was named *turkey* (from Turkey) in English and *kalekut* (from Kalkota, India) in German – and so on and so forth, with an overflow of popular references in different cultural backgrounds.

Now, the interesting thing is that the third type of designation, which explicitly incorporates alterity, and thus seems to valorize it more openly, in fact betrays it more thoroughly: as much as the cross-references may be motivated in respect to the routes or to the actors of commerce, or to the confusion between India and the Indies (that is, the Americas), these names generally end up building an entirely imaginary geography, which is totally internal to the European semiosphere and reflects its conceptions of the Other. As if in a play of mirrors from which it seems impossible to escape, Europeans used the expression 'grain of Turkey' for corn, while the Turkish called it 'grain of the Rum', that is to say, of the 'Westerners', or of the 'Christians of the West'. In both cases, the indigenous Mesoamericans were excluded.

Therefore, does the real and devastating Otherness of the New World disappear over the European horizon? Not at all. In truth, the apparently functional play of loan words, with no clamour, and in a non-explicit manner, enables alterity to be translated, albeit imperfectly, within the target semiospheres. It is there that it deposits itself, leaving a trace – just like a fruit that, once opened, can be traced back to its roots, telling the story of a long journey of translation.

It should be remembered here that both designations play the 'game of glocality'. But the explicit designations render a glocality that is already internal to the European imaginary, with its already known 'Other(s)' and 'elsewhere.' The designations that, with a loan word, translate the original names, distorting them, create a new space for a previously unknown alterity – with a paradoxical effect: alterity enters the target semiosphere, but is also forgotten. It must be forgotten. It would be useful to further reflect upon this – as we will in the following paragraph – but not before noting that there is one feature that both cases share: they are always 'imperfect' translations.

Contemporary foodspheres: Which glocalization? <b>

From naturalizing purifications to unexpected translations, is the history of the Columbian exchange perhaps the history of an unconscious glocalization? Or, possibly, is it the history of a 'silent' one? Or rather that of an ambivalent one, almost as if split between the exigencies of an incorporation that tends to automatism, and to the non-reflected, and the exigencies of a memory of alterity which, if one knows how to see it and where to look for it, lingers and makes itself visible? And is such a dynamic relevant only to the Columbian exchange? Or does it concern any other form of food glocalization, or even glocalization in general? Answering to all these questions lies outside the scope of this chapter and would require further analysis of the dynamics considered in these pages. However, the elements outlined above allow us to draw some relevant conclusions, which will also help us shed new light on glocalization in contemporary foodspheres.

(Un)translatability <c>

First, a theoretical correspondence between the history of food and the history of translation can be identified. We can in fact say that translations have always occurred. Yet, setting sporadic cases or moments aside, and, for the most, confined to élite milieus, it is only in recent centuries that translation has emerged in mass consciousness as a practice and as a central concept for communication and everyday life (Lotman, 1993 [2009]; Sedda, 2015). Only in the twentieth century was translation thematized as an autonomous field of study, valorizing its social and political, in addition to its cultural, significance. Hence a question arises: Did this process of 'invisibility' of translation (and of translators) in general also weigh on the specific field of 'food translation', which is practiced yet unspoken – or, more precisely, practiced exactly because it is generally unrecognized (Stano, 2015, pp. 218–24)? As Latour said, 'the more we forbid ourselves to conceive of hybrids, the more possible the interbreeding becomes' (1991, p. 32, our translation). Such is the peculiarity and paradox of Western modernity. It has enabled the proliferation of translations – or better, of translations of translations of translations, and so on – exactly because it dismissed such a translative dynamic, or deemed it to be inexistent. The subsequent question, then, is whether the contemporary awareness of translation mechanisms, that is, its explicit and reflexive valorization, makes it, on the contrary – and in a further paradox – even more difficult and therefore less practiced. This would mean that we are all too sensitive to translation to practice it light-heartedly, to embark with carelessness upon the risks of betraying the alterities – the other's but also our own – which translation necessarily carries with itself.

The following paragraphs aim to shed light on such questions, also relating to crucial issues concerning the glocal contemporariness of food.

Locavorism and cultural appropriation <c>

In its initial sense, glocalism meant both an adaptation of globality to local conditions and constraints (Robertson, 1995; Robertson & White, 2004) and a 'return to the local', that is, a redress of the local on the global.[11] Emerging in the late 1980s, this latter tendency found an alimentary equivalent in ideas such as 'Slow Food', 'Farm-to-Table' (in Italy also called *chilometro zero* literally, 'Zero Kilometre') and other forms of 'locavorism' as a reaction against the dominant 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer, 1993) of the world. These ideologies, which certainly share the merit of placing several distortions of globalized food consumption under scrutiny, may still inadvertently generate a sense of refusal of food alterity. According to Massimo Leone (2016), for instance, the practical motivation – whereby the value of the exotic curiosity is not commensurate with the environmental price connected to it – and the mythical motivation – whereby that which is nearby and one's own is necessarily tastier and more genuine – may inadvertently generate a beneficial and noncritical 'localistic' closure. Furthermore, these ideologies can result in chauvinistic discourses founded on a simple rejection of alterity – whose food diversity is still one of the more evident and sensible aspects. The very demonization of transnational trade exchange also tends to underestimate the fact that, if practiced in conditions of equality, the latter can be a powerful vector of peace, diplomacy and knowledge of the other.

Even without reaching the extreme consequences prospected by Leone, these tendencies, which unite 'global awareness' and 'alimentary localism', seem to invert the modern dynamic of practicing translation processes without recognizing them. Here, food translations, resulting from a conscious act, would certainly be slower and more controlled (the ‘other’s food’, for example, would be best eaten in ‘other places’) – whereas in practice, one should privilege one’s own products (possibly in accordance with their seasonality). As one may observe, it is not a matter of prohibiting food translation, but rather of regulating it. Yet, as the semiotics of culture explains, all things whose rules are defined acquire social existence, but are deprived of dynamism. Translation therefore emerges as ‘pure’ and ‘exceptional’, a process that can be practiced almost exclusively by ‘experts’: the great chefs.

In fact, chefs have been increasingly seen as ‘cultural intermediaries’ (Ceccarini, 2011), playing a crucial role in spreading food products and practices, both at the local (Inwood et al., 2009; Jordan, 2007) and the global scale (Fung, 2007; Locher, 2003; Pilcher, 2008). And not without criticism. Let us consider, for instance, the so-called ‘Novo-Andean cuisine’ (*cocina novoandina*), that is to say, the culinary style that emerged in Peru at the end of the twentieth century with the aim to *re*-create cooking customs of the pre-Hispanic past and to *re*-discover authentic local ingredients and recipes (Perú Travel, n.d.). As the emphasis we put on the prefixes in the previous definition of such a cooking style remarks, it does not simply mean recovering a past tradition, but rather ‘re-creating’ it – or, to use a famous expression introduced by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), ‘(re-)inventing’ it. Such a re-discovery or invention is based on a process of translation both at the temporal level, with the re-interpretation of ancient elements and practices in a modern key, and at the spatial level, with ingredients, techniques and aesthetics deriving from other foodspheres (and especially from the European gastronomic universe, where most Novo-Andean chefs have trained themselves), coming into play.[12] This clearly recalls the processes described above when dealing with the Columbian exchange: the Novo-Andean cuisine re-naturalizes pre-Hispanic products, making them become ‘global’ elements that can be appropriated by a re-invented ‘locality’ that filters them through the aesthetic and gustative lens of Western haute cuisine and ‘gastromania’ (see Marrone, 2014). In fact, the movement has encountered criticism and concern from many experts and scholars (see, for instance, García, 2013), with its main representatives (such as the famous chef Gastón Acurio) being accused of infringing the intellectual property of indigenous peoples and exploiting their practices and knowledge, making them fade into the background of their own ‘culinary discoveries’.

Authenticity <c>

The tendency outlined in the previous paragraph enters in ambivalent consonance with another one. We live in a time in which food alterity is not only ‘silent’, but also positively valorized. If the large metropolises of the globe are world-cities, glocal cities (see Sedda, 2021), it is also because their landscapes are saturated with restaurants that represent every corner and people of the Earth. And, along with them, they are saturated with every flavour, or combination of flavours, the planet can offer. ‘Ethnic’ restaurants all around the world are the visible face of the presence of multiple others who have come from different places, bringing with them their culinary and eating practices. These practices emanate, with their aromas, from migrants’ kitchens[13] and enter public spaces, providing ‘locals’ with the opportunity of an exotic journey of taste right down their street,[14] not without paradoxical effects.

The search for authenticity is emblematic in this sense: consumers look for authentic Indian food, authentic Italian food, authentic Japanese food, and so on, to such an extent that the presence of incoherent elements or forms of tradition-blending are often perceived and experienced in a negative way, as a ‘betrayal’ of the authenticity that they are looking for (and which they imagine to be eating). In fact, Alan Warde (2000), included ‘authentication’ – seeking authentic replication of dishes from foreign cuisines – in his description of the four basic attitudes towards ethnic food and their diffusion:[15] when the ethnic food market grows, there is always a niche for ‘authentic’ food. In this sense, the presence—or better creation—

and circulation of ‘symbols of authenticity’ (Grazian, 2003) is very important. Authenticity, therefore, is an idealized representation of reality, that is to say, an effect of sense, a ‘network of commodified signs, social relations, and meanings’ (Grazian, 2003, p. 17). The consumer, in other words, seems to want to compensate for the impossibility of travelling to the place where authenticity manifests itself ‘naturally’. As one may observe, glocalization is actualized here in the tasting of alterity, yet not as the mingling of alterities. Nothing prevents such an operation of tasting (and testing) from acting as the trailblazer of the mingling of the new taste with familiar ones. Yet it seems in effect to push a tendency that makes the value of alterity so evident that it makes it difficult to play with, almost as though one feels anxious about betraying a presumed ‘essence’.

The example of pizza is emblematic in this sense. ‘Neapolitan’ pizzerias purporting to be ‘authentic’ proliferate in major cities all around the world, as a result of a process of heritagization and authentication that has made the so-called *pizza napoletana* become the ‘original’ version of pizza *par excellence* – despite the high number of typologies that have been produced and consumed historically throughout Italy and elsewhere and the relatively recent origin of the Neapolitan model, at least in the form that is celebrated today.[16] A number of services offering local adaptations of such a food also exist, with many bearing only a casual resemblance to the Italian ‘original’. Let us consider, for instance, the popular Hawaiian pizza, topped with tomato sauce, cheese, ham and canned pineapple: a Canadian creation, despite the geographical reference in its name, which in fact refers to the brand of pineapple used by its Canadian-born Greek inventor Sam Panopoulos. Or the incredible number of American variations, such as the well-known Chicago-style pizza, featuring a thick moist crust formed up the sides of a deep-dish pan and sauce, added atop cheese and toppings, or the California-style pizza, distinguished by the use of non-traditional toppings, such as peanut sauce, bean sprouts, shaved carrots, or chicken and barbecue sauce. But it is not just about the ingredients used: Carol Helstosky (2008) described the Americanization of pizza in terms of a distinction between 'handcrafted' and 'standardized' pizza. While the pizza originated in Naples is an artisanal product garnished with a few fresh ingredients and baked in wood-burning ovens by expert *pizzaiolos*, the variations that emerged throughout America tend to be big sliced pizzas made using industrial techniques, heavily garnished and baked in pans and a steel oven in pizza chain restaurants. A particular case, then, is that of Japanized pizza: after War World II, the first restaurants serving standardized pizza were opened in Tokyo for Americans and a few wealthy Japanese. The American-style pizza then spread more widely into the local foodsphere, becoming available to average Japanese consumers in the 1970s, when pizza chains and family restaurants arrived in Japan (Doi, 1992). This paved the way for local forms of improvisation and domestication, which further increased the process of glocalization of pizza that had taken place in the United States. The 1990s, however, marked a return to 'authenticity', making the popularity of Neapolitan pizza grow over such local adaptations: not just the ingredients, but also the practices of preparation and consumption of the typical handcrafted pizza became popular all over Japan, also resulting in a number of Japanese chefs moving to Italy to gain or improve artisanal expertise and knowledge about Italian cuisine in order to open their 'authentic' Neapolitan pizzerias on their return. However, new forms of glocalization, also including 'transabroad glocalization',[17] were round the corner (Tobin, 1992). Specific toppings such as wasabi mayonnaise or slices of *daikon* were soon introduced to meet the local taste; similarly, the dough, as well as the shape and the way of cooking were modified, leading to the creation of 'a new and solely Japanese invention' (Ceccarini, 2011, p. 36) – the 'Japanese pizza'. The so-called *mochi pizza* (餅ピザ) is emblematic in this sense: being a specific type of frying pan pizza (フライパンピザ), it generally has an oval shape, requires little to no leavening process, and can be easily cooked using a frying pan, a microwave, a toaster, a grill or even the cookware used to make traditional dishes such as *yakisoba*. As regards to the ingredients used, the differences from the Italian model are also evident: *mochi* pizza features a crust made of cakes of pounded glutinous rice instead of wheat dough, ketchup instead of tomato sauce, seaweed instead of basil and tofu instead of mozzarella. Moreover, the times and ways of its consumption are peculiar: often very small (with a diameter of less than fifteen centimetres), it is usually eaten as a snack or side dish (つまみ, *tsumami*), rather than as a main. Although resembling a Western pizza in some respects, in others, it is definitely a different food product and is in fact generally described as a case of *modoki ryori* (もどき料理), or 'pseudo cuisine' (Ceccarini, 2011), as it evidently breaks the idealized image of such a food and the collective imaginary resulting from its authentication process.

Contemporary re-naturalizations and hidden syntheses <c>

In addition to the above, it should be noted that, much like in the Columbian exchange, a process of re-naturalization and universalization has taken place in contemporary glocalized foodspheres: 'ethnic food,' for instance, is the result of a series of adaptations – from the use of produce available locally to the multiple multi-ethnic hands working in the kitchens and the domestication of foreign flavours to local taste, up to the creation of 'national' cuisines through the generalization of those which in one's home country would be only partially translatable local variations. Glocality reproduces itself subtly, inadvertently, penetratingly, thus giving birth to novel syntheses, which over time can become 'familiar' options. The case of pizza is emblematic in this sense too: it was only around the 1790s to the 1810s that tomatoes found their way to its top, as a result of the processes of incorporation and adaptation we described above; mozzarella cheese was introduced in the 1850s, and basil in the 1870s, while the pizza garnished with these ingredients acquired a specific name ('Margherita') only in 1889, paving the way for the 'ideal-typical' shape and set of ingredients that became famous everywhere as a result of a multi-layered process of contamination and adaptation, within which Italian mass migration to the United States in the 1880s to 1920s played a crucial role (see, in particular, Choate, 2008; La Cecla, 2007).

These dynamics are even more evident in the case of 'fusion cuisine', which has been increasingly practiced and praised over recent decades. If we look at its definition, we can read that it is a cooking style combining ingredients and techniques from different foodspheres in order to create 'new' and 'original' dishes, which are at the same time not ascribable to any particular one. Creating new forms through the elimination of pre-existing elements, and trying to conceal the traces of this process, fusion cuisine seems to favour uniqueness. Even though a trace is sometimes left in the denomination of plates (for example, 'Taco pizza' or 'maki acevichado') or cooking styles (for example, 'Tex-Mex' or 'Indian-Chinese' cuisine), a mechanism of lie or illusion (see Greimas & Courtés, 1979) is nevertheless usually at play. Foods are de-composed in unitary constituents, allowing the replacement of the latter with elements pertaining to other foodspheres, provided that the general structural configuration of the food remains unaltered. Thus, for instance, the final dish *seems* sushi, or *seems* pizza, but it is not. The negotiation of the sense of food between and across different foodspheres tends to be reduced to simple structural models, disregarding the essential synesthetic nature of the eating experience and the complexity of translation processes.[18] Continuity thus replaces discontinuity, and conjunction supplants disjunction, reducing the polyphonic multiplicity of the culinary traditions at the origins of the 'fusioned dish' to a hierarchized structure, where translation processes tend to be concealed under this 'lie' or 'illusion' – even though they are ostentatiously praised in the very definition of such a cooking style. This mechanism seems to recall the case of the turkey, since it plays precisely on already attested structures and categorical positions, thus allowing substitutions and innovations that make foreign foods pass directly from being an other's to be one's own.

Moreover, it should be remembered that traditions themselves (in the food domain as well as in general terms) cannot and should not be conceived as permanent essential qualities of specific physical places or people, but should rather be understood as historical and cultural outcomes of complex continuous processes of hybridization with other cultures (and tastes), that is to say, of an unceasing and multilayered process of translation involving various identities and alterities. Such a process tends to remain unperceived – or at least, tends to fade into the background – especially in the food universe: as La Cecla (1997) and other scholars remind us, food represents an easily crossable frontier, a space where the incommensurability of cultures gives way to a partial encounter and comparison, allowing alterity to assume the form of a 'palatable' and easily incorporable experience.

A concluding remark <b>

The considerations presented in this chapter point to a particular and highly relevant consequence of glocalization. The emergence of glocal solutions acts not only on the target foodsphere, but also on that of origin, producing knock-on effects in the definition of the culinary canon of a given community and on the image of one's self that the latter projects within and at the same time outside of its world. Even what is presented as 'authentic' and 'local' is in fact the result of an internal look somehow imitating the external look whose 'taste' it has to match. And what is this, if not evident confirmation that globality and locality mutually condition and give meaning to each other, in a relational view of space and scales, which unceasingly translates the one into the other, and vice versa? Or, even more radically, evidence that both the 'global' and the 'local' are effects of sense that stand out from – and to some extent against – a net of glocal relations?

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Notes

[1] See, in particular, Montanari, 2006.

[2] In this regard, it is particularly interesting to recall the ideas of 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer, 1993) – the process of standardization and homogenization of various aspects of cultures, including food but not only, as a result of globalization – , and of 'grobalization' – a term deriving from 'growth' and 'globalization', also introduced by Ritzer (2003; see also Ritzer, 2004) as a counterpart of glocalization, namely 'the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas' (Ritzer, 2004, p. 73).

[3] For our general point of view on glocalization, see Sedda, 2004, 2014.

[4] The term 'foodsphere', introduced in 2015 by Stano, is used here to reference the concept of the 'alimentary semiosphere', stressing the inherently cultural and semiotic nature of the food system, along the lines of Lotman's theory (1984 [2005]).

[5] On the dynamics and the role of semio-cultural translation, see Lotman, 1984 [2005]. We developed our point of view on the matter in Sedda, 2012.

[6] This exercise will better assist us in focusing on the implication of the relation, past and present, between food and glocalization.

[7] Despite a few attempts to introduce it in the diet of that time (for instance, as one of the ingredients of salads), it was not conceived as a proper food in the collective perception and practice, sometimes even being considered poisonous.

[8] On the distinction between *salsa di pomodoro* ('tomato sauce') and *sugo di pomodoro* ('tomato gravy'), see Camporesi, 1970, p. XXXVII.

[9] On the European resistance to the introduction of the potato, especially in relation to bread and bread-making, see in particular Poulain, 2002.

[10] In Artusi's work, these multiple languages are: scientific discourse, bourgeois ideology,

culinary texts and practical experiments in regional cuisines. The list is non-exhaustive and may be expanded to become even more heterogeneous.

[11] See Mander & Goldsmith (1996). On the relation between globalization, agriculture and the resistance movement, see, for example, McMichael (2007).

[12] For further details, see Stano, forthcoming.

[13] Responding to their new experiences in foreign countries, migrants generate all sorts of personal adaptations of food codes, which may result in modifications of the codes themselves (Greco, 2016): New ingredients are introduced, while others are eliminated or concealed; when substitutions are not deemed possible, new species can be inserted in the agriculture and/or livestock of the foodsphere where migrants find themselves; and new practices can be combined with traditional ones, innovating both the preparation and the consumption of food.

[14] A parallel yet distinct discourse should be developed in relation to food as presented by TV programmes and, more generally, mass media and new media. As a result of contemporary 'gastromania' (Marrone, 2014), media discourses have become increasingly important in the food universe, investing substances and practices with multiple meanings and values that in turn have an impact on our experience of them.

[15] The scholar's analysis, which focuses on England, also includes three aspects that are relevant to the points discussed above: 'preservation', that is, the rejection of anything that is not traditional and the revalorization of local food; 'naturalization', that is, the adjustment of recipes in a way that unknown tastes are made familiar; and 'improvisation', that is, the 'restyling' of others' foodways and systems.

[16] For further details on the history of the Neapolitan pizza, see in particular Capatti, 2001.

[17] Ceccarini (2011) introduced the expression to stress the fact that the process of domestication starts abroad, thanks to the transnational flow of people between the sending

and the receiving country.

[18] For a detailed analysis of specific case studies and further reflections on this topic, see Stano, 2016.