Sciences & technologies Update

EATING IN THE CITY

Socio-anthropological perspectives from Africa, Latin America and Asia

Audrey Soula, Chelsie Yount-André, Olivier Lepiller, Nicolas Bricas (editors)
Preface by Jean-Pierre Hassoun

éditions Quæ

Eating in the city

Socio-anthropological perspectives from Africa, Latin America and Asia

Audrey Soula, Chelsie Yount-André,
Olivier Lepiller, Nicolas Bricas (Editors)

Preface by Jean-Pierre Hassoun

Éditions Quæ

Sciences & Technologies Update Collection

La santé globale au prisme de l'analyse
des politiques publiques
S. Gardon, A. Gautier, G. Le Naour,
O. Faugère (préface), R. Payre (préface)
2020, 250 p.

Manger en ville
Regards socio-anthropologiques d'Afrique,
d'Amérique latine et d'Asie
A. Soula, Ch. Yount-André, O. Lepiller,
N. Bricas (dir), J.-P. Hassoun (préface)
2020, 172 p.

Sociologie des changements de pratiques
en agriculture
L'apport de l'étude des réseaux de dialogues
entre pairs
C. Compagnone
2019, ePub

La question des échelles en sciences
humaines et sociales
S. Boulay, S. Fanchette, coord.
2019, 160 p.

Agroforesterie et services écosystémiques
en zone tropicale
Recherche de compromis
entre services d'approvisionnement
et autres services écosystémiques
J. Seghieri, J.M. Harmand, coord.
2019

Systèmes agraires et changement climatique
au sud
Les chemins de l'adaptation
H. Cochet, O. Ducourtieux,
N. Garambois, coord.
2019, 282 p.

This book was translated by David Manley from the French edition, entitled *Manger en ville. Regards socio-anthropologiques d'Afrique, d'Amérique latine et d'Asie*, which was supported by the CNIEL Observatory of Eating Habits (OCHA), Danone Nutricia Research, the UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems, Montpellier SupAgro and CIRAD.

E-books licence (CC-by-ND-NC 4.0)

To cite this book
Soula A., Yount-André C., Lepiller O., Bricas N. (Eds), 2020. Eating in the city: Socio-anthropological perspectives from Africa, Latin America and Asia. Versailles, Quæ, 158 p.
DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6

Éditions Quæ
RD 10, 78026 Versailles Cedex (France)
www.quae.com – www.quae-open.com

© Éditions Quæ, 2020

ISBN print: 978-2-7592-3281-9
ISBN (ePub): 978-2-7592-3283-3
ISBN (pdf): 978-2-7592-3282-6
ISSN: 1773-7923

Acknowledgements

Except for chapters 3 and 7, this book was translated from the French by David Manley. The authors thank him for his precious collaboration and the quality of his work.

The editors of this book would like to thank all those who helped enhance the narrative of this book through their expert reviews: Amélie Aubert-Plard (Danone Nutricia Research), Damien Conaré (Montpellier SupAgro, UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems), Jesus Contreras (University of Barcelona, ODELA), Dominique Desjeux (Argonautes, ANTHROPIK, CEPED), Tristan Fournier (CNRS, IRIS), Véronique Pardo (CNIEL, OCHA), Amandine Rochedy (University of Toulouse–Jean Jaurès, CERTOP), Christophe Serra-Mallol (University of Toulouse–Jean Jaurès, CERTOP) and Sophie Thiron (CIRAD, UMR MOISA).

This translation was publicly funded through ANR (the French National Research Agency) under the *Investissements d'avenir* programme with the reference ANR-10-LABX-001-01 Labex Agro and coordinated by Agropolis Fondation.

They are also grateful to the French *Centre national interprofessionnel de l'économie laitière* (CNIEL), and particularly the CNIEL Observatory of Eating Habits (OCHA), Danone Nutricia Research, the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) and the UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems of Montpellier SupAgro and CIRAD for their financial support for the publication of this book.

Contents

Acknowledgements 3

Preface 7

Introduction – viewing food through the lens of urban eaters 11
Audrey Soula, Chelsie Yount-André, Olivier Lepiller, Nicolas Bricas

Part 1
Urban foodways at the cusp of normative injunctions

Chapter 1. Feeding children – a focus of tension in the Algerian city of Oran 19
Mohamed Mebtoul, Hamdia Belghachem, Ouassila Salemi, Malika Bouchenak, Karim Bouziane Nedjadi, Nabil Chaoui, Imad Boureghda

Chapter 2. Getting out of the kitchen! Reshaping gender relations and food practices in Casablanca 30
Hayat Zirari

Chapter 3. Can I trust this food? Trust and distrust in eating among middle-class youth in urban India 42
Shagufa Kapadia

Chapter 4. Eating out in Mexico City and Guadalajara – some conflict between health and heritage dimensions in Mexico 52
Liliana Martínez-Lomelí

Part 2
When food practices dovetail with urban landscapes

Chapter 5. Urban cuisine in Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo) 69
Yolande Berton-Ofouémé

Chapter 6. *Warung makan* – public kitchens at the epicentre of informality in Jakarta 78
Laura Arciniegas

Chapter 7. **"Home and away" – narratives of food and identity in the context of urbanization in Malaysia** 89
Anindita Dasgupta, Sivapalan Selvadurai, Logendra S. Ponniah

Chapter 8. **Sweet commercial drink adoption by urban Chinese middle-class people – between social control and new beverage consumption contexts** 97
Jingjing Ma

Part 3
When the city invents its cuisine

Chapter 9. ***Bâbenda*** **– a modernized traditional dish. Urban trajectory of a Burkinabe culinary specialty** 109
Raphaëlle Héron

Chapter 10. ***Attiéké-garba*** **– good to eat and think about. Social distinction and challenging hygiene standards in the Ivorian urban context** 121
N'da Amenan Gisèle Sédia, Amoin Georgette Konan, Francis Akindès

Chapter 11. **'Food from the pot'. Child nutrition and socialization in two Cameroonian cities** 131
Estelle Kouokam Magne

Chapter 12. **Modern culinary traditions for precarious times. Food insecurity and everyday practices among poor households in Mexico City** 142
Ayari G. Pasquier Merino

Conclusion – what insight emerges to enhance research on transformations in urban food and eating habits? 151
Audrey Soula, Chelsie Yount-André,
Olivier Lepiller, Nicolas Bricas

List of contributors 156

Preface

In one section of his book *Crowds and Power* (1966), Elias Canetti[1] postulates that everything we eat is an instrument of power, while exemplifying this through two strong figures—chief and mother.

The chief, whether it be the king, president or *pater familias* whose 'full belly' could be viewed as charismatic while also evoking the imaginary and allegedly voracious ogre figure. This omnipotent ruler must be served first and his appetite may reassure those who are less well off but also provoke jealousy, which further underscores his privileged status. The chief's carnivorous appetite is always ready to lend itself to the ceremonial ritual of potlatch and other lavish gastronomic extravaganzas. Otherwise, Canetti refers to the mother from the standpoint of the dependencies arising from the nurturing monopoly mothers have claimed from the dawn of time. From mother's milk to daily food and festive meals, the mother figure is omnipresent in fulfilling the family's orality. Maternal power is wielded through the kitchen and its control. Beyond enthralled declarations, the nurturing mother further embodies the family members' dependency on the culinary flavours she masters. This role also puts her in a position of rivalry with regard to all 'foreign' foods—those made and eaten outside the home—which she may readily belittle at any opportunity.

Beyond these two highly individualized iconic food power figures, Elias Canetti also postulates that eating is the most selfish act there is. This leads us to reflect on individuality as an intractable dimension of eating. This rather iconoclastic approach has the advantage of shifting the focus onto the individual—the eater. This is what Audrey Soula, Chelsie-Yount André, Olivier Lepiller and Nicolas Bricas have done by gathering articles from Africa, Latin America and Asia, most of which are written—based on urban surveys—by researchers from these three continents.

Reading these twelve contributions highlights the extent to which until recently—in countries of both the Global North and South—studies on food practices have overlooked the eater, who is the main stakeholder when it comes to food. There are many reasons for this neglect or omission, but it has undoubtedly been dictated by

1. Canetti E., 1966, [1984]. Crowds and power. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. ISBN 0-374-51820-3.

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/cp

the different theoretical paradigms put forward and, with hindsight, the structuralist paradigm whereby both the 'raw and the cooked' were empirical 'candy' now comes to mind. It would be futile to hunt for interview extracts in the very substantial literature that this theory has generated where eaters describe the intimate sensations that eating this or that fruit or vegetable gave them. It would be just as hard to find descriptions of situations where an eater takes a symbolic initiative to pursue novel tastes. In the same spirit, if we consider the numerous studies influenced by Marxism, here too the food issue is viewed in terms of flows, supply and demand, of hopeless dominance relations, and of an enormous food transition hurdle. In short, while these approaches generate a mass of data, the model—be it symbolic, political or economic—is still the sought-after grail. While this remark applies equally to countries of the Global North and South, the absence of 'individual eaters' is clearly even more marked in studies on countries of the South, which are generally described by Western researchers. In this regard, in addition to the question of the paradigms mentioned, the urgency of food situations also (morally) keep us from focusing too heavily on food subjectivity. In postcolonial guilt settings, the issues of malnutrition, even famine or lean seasons were of more concern to researchers than relating the history of a dish or examining changes in urban catering patterns in an African capital city, for instance. This can be readily understood and the issue does not deserve criticism.

Yet times are changing and societies are becoming even more urbanized, as this book illustrates. Although malnutrition issues are still current in Africa, Asia and Latin America (in very different ways depending on the location), a generation of young researchers from these three continents have been trained in social sciences and are approaching these subjects with broader scope and more freedom. Indeed, everywhere in the Global North and South overly cumbersome theoretical paradigms have taken a back seat, which has undoubtedly legitimized curiosity regarding food subjectivities. The fact that the researchers are from these societies, and were actually born in the cities where they conducted their investigations (which is the case for most of the contributors to this book), has enabled them to have a more immediate and open view of situations to help grasp their complexities as compared to comforting models. And this rediscovery of complexity through subjectivities is perhaps also the final stage in an emancipation process or, in other words, an intellectual stage necessary for the decolonization of knowledge.

What does the city do to food practices and *vice versa*? To address these two aspects of the same question—as illustrated in the narratives presented throughout the book—this new generation of researchers takes us from city to city, but each is driven by his/her own curiosity.

In Oran and Casablanca, Algerian and Moroccan women are taking initiatives to reduce their dependencies which the city has not alleviated. In Baroda, a city in Gujarat (India), the Indian middle classes are devising intimate strategies to transform their mistrust of industrial dishes into confidence. In Mexico City and Guadalajara, Mexicans are being subjected to the paradoxical injunction of having to give heritage value to dishes that do not meet health standards. In the restaurants of Lomé (Togo) and the streets of Brazzaville (Democratic Republic of the Congo), multicultural cuisine is being effortlessly invented while affecting urban social cate-

gories seeking distinction as well as migrants who have become city-dwellers in survival mode. In Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), we see the difficulties that may arise in turning a traditional dish (*tô*) into heritage but which for many remains a symbol of poverty. Conversely, in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), in opposition to all of the nutritional norms disseminated, people defiantly insist on eating *garba*, i.e. a piece of tuna bathing in blackish oil! In Jakarta (Indonesia), informal food outlets allow people without any nearby family resources to benefit from a mutual socialization venue, while in the cities of Malaysia, single migrants from rural communities are forced to make do and symbolically comfort themselves with the multiethnic culinary dishes of the Malaysian urban sphere. In Chinese cities, industrial sweet beverages appear to be gaining ground despite resistance underpinned by the local symbolic fabric. In Yaoundé and Douala (Cameroon), children's food socialization subtly (and freely) melds Western norms and local knowledge. Otherwise in Mexico City, families living in a food shortage situation develop symbolic survival strategies whereby they reinvent so-called 'traditional' recipes by diverting cheap industrial food products.

The picture created by these researchers is clearly far removed from a well-defined and reassuring village monograph. The normative disorder of the cities into which they immerse us cannot be reduced to any kind of normlessness. On the contrary, the eating practices they meticulously observe reveal cities that are vehicles of intertwined social injunctions. These food injunctions are often contradictory or paradoxical and the norms seem less static and codified, as well as more volatile than in the village, whereas they shape food practices. They nevertheless do not prevent city eaters—out of necessity and pleasure—from constantly breaching state or parastatal norms and, more generally, from inventing alternative ways of eating. Sydney Mintz said that one of the (unresolved) contradictions that emerges from most food research is the fact that populations are highly attached—in an almost conservative way—to their food practices, while at the same time being open to change, even to spectacular and rapid change. The narrative conveyed in this book helps make this contradiction less steadfast.

Jean-Pierre Hassoun,
Emeritus Research Director at CNRS,
Interdisciplinary Institute of Social Issues (IRIS-EHESS)

Introduction - viewing food through the lens of urban eaters

*Audrey Soula, Chelsie Yount-André,
Olivier Lepiller, Nicolas Bricas*

Feeding cities in African, Latin American and Asian countries is not a novel issue. It was the focus of geographical research in the 1970s (Vennetier, 1972), and then of multidisciplinary research in sub-Saharan Africa (Bricas *et al.*, 1985; Guyer, 1987), Latin America (Douzant-Rosenfeld and Grandjean, 1995) and Asia (Bardach, 1982). The overriding question addressed in these studies concerns how to feed fast-growing cities. How is their procurement organized? What economic impacts arise following the emergence of these new markets? These queries put the spotlight on the dependence of cities on international markets and agricultural commodity exporting countries, just at a time when globalization is accelerating with the liberalization trend resulting from the structural adjustments promoted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The influence of Marxist analysis regarding the dependency of peripheral areas on core areas still prevails, even though this interpretation framework has vanished from mainstream research. Yet the idea of the domination of the West over developing countries and of behavioural mimicry with regard to former colonial powers (Touré, 1982) continues to reign, despite the fact that these views are disparaged on the basis of socio-anthropological surveys in the food sector (Odeyé and Bricas, 1985; Requier-Desjardins, 1991) and, more broadly, in consumption and lifestyle areas (Appadurai, 1996).

Two to three decades later, the research focus has shifted from the issue of feeding cities to that of feeding oneself in cities, with urban food models now being specifically hinged on nutrition. Cities are often regarded as an ideal venue for commercial food consumption, the industrialization of food (product processing, supermarkets) and globalization (reliance on imported products and information from the global sphere). The city is often considered as a prime locus for food, nutritional and epidemiological transition—more animal products and product processing, less domestic cooking, more fat, less carbohydrates, more obesity, cardiovascular diseases and cancers, and fewer communicable diseases (Popkin, 1999). As this process arose in the West before other regions of the world, while being driven by major economic industrialization and globalization stakeholders, this transition is sometimes equated with the Westernization of diets (Pingali, 2007).

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/ci

Several phenomena that have emerged through long-term research support this view (growth in the contribution of animal products to caloric intake, the share of processed products in meals, the clout of advertising, the delegation of cooking to actors outside the household). However, food is often essentially studied from the standpoint of food consumption, i.e. what people eat, especially city dwellers. Otherwise, food supply balances and major household surveys of food consumption and expenditure could help identify differences in patterns between cities and rural areas and changes over the last few decades, while confirming major trends and convergences.

This interpretation seems inappropriate at the fine-grained analysis scales opted for in this book, namely shedding light on food practices, food perceptions and the ways people experience these changes. The qualitative socio-anthropological surveys presented here are focused not only on what city dwellers eat, but also on how they organize themselves for this activity, and what they say about it. Substantial methodological attention is also paid to the stance taken by researchers and investigators to avoid the siloing bias associated with nutritional research approaches. The aim was especially to avoid survey respondents engaging in a discourse aligned with the standards and health and nutrition dictates that are pervasive in the public arena. Observing and understanding food eaters' practices as openly as possible reveals that food is much more than just a question of feeding oneself, including among disadvantaged populations. Even in situations where people struggle to sate their appetite, they talk about pleasure, links with others and their environment, identity, moral values, etc. With whom, when and where one eats, where the food comes from and who produced it are often more important aspects than what food is actually eaten. That is the beauty and essence of sociological and anthropological approaches. The authors marshalled these approaches here not just to identify the sociocultural factors that determine food consumption and nutritional situations, but also to grasp how sociocultural relationships and cultures are shaped and nurtured, and to mainstream a notion of wellbeing that is broader than just meeting needs. Contrary to uniformity, convergence or transition, a diverse range of situations and trajectories emerge that help view these changes from a fresh perspective.

Monitoring such diversity in urban foodstyles on these finer and more comprehensive scales nevertheless does not question trends that may be observed on broader scales, where convergences emerge regarding the consumption of products from major nutrition-focused agribusiness groups, or regarding nutritional situations. There is indeed a gap between monitoring scales, each of which reveals different phenomena. The challenge is therefore to reflect on the impacts of these standpoints with regard to action, public policies, private strategies, or civil society interventions. While nutrition research may refer to health standards and strive to gain insight into how to meet them, social science research seeks to understand how social standards are constructed, including those concerning 'eating well', which goes far beyond just feeding oneself. Social science specialists thus try not to consider food solely from a normative viewpoint but instead capture the diversity of combined food functions (eating, enjoying oneself, relating to others and to the world, building and asserting one's identity, managing resources) specific to each society.

This was the focus of the method used in preparing the Eating in the City symposium[2] and this resulting book. The aim was to give priority to researchers from African, Asian and Latin American countries to present their results on the basis of issues concerning them, while not seeking to answer a prior question that had been openly put to all of them. The symposium thus brought together about a hundred people over two days, with priority given to detailed presentations while leaving time for discussion. Three main results emerged, each of which constituted an issue upon which the participants were asked to write a contribution. The chapters of this book are grouped in three parts related to these three issues.

The first part focuses on how eaters relate to standards. Cities are made up of mixed populations of diverse origins, while a wide variety of food practices and consumption patterns converge in collective, domestic, public and private spaces. Normative assemblages crystallize or dissolve there, in forms specific to urban settings. Cities are thus spaces where social interactions are constantly being renegotiated, and city dwellers are shaped by and navigate between multiple prescriptive requirements.

The chapter by Mohamed Mebtoul *et al*. shows the extent to which Algerian women in urban centres have to cope with a heavy physical and mental workload within their households, further magnified by their particularly exhausting daily culinary tasks.

Likewise, Hayat Zirari's chapter set in Morocco, another North African country with a different social, economic and political landscape, takes us beyond the issue of women's physical and mental workload. The author highlights changes among young urban Moroccan women who, while continuing to carry out their usual culinary tasks, are seeking to adjust and balance their gender roles in social relationships. They achieve this through their sociability and taking advantage of out-of-home food.

Shagufa Kapadia's work reveals how, in Indian cities, middle-class youth notions of trust and distrust mediate their eating choices.

Liliana Martínez-Lomelí examines how the heritage designation of Mexican street food has clashed with national nutritional and health standards. As such, she underscores the difficulty that eaters face in dealing simultaneously with these two opposing injunctions.

2. The 'Eating in the city: urban food styles in Africa, Latin America and Asia' symposium took place on 4 and 5 December 2017 at the *Maison du lait* in Paris and was followed on 6 December by a one-day event at the UNESCO headquarters entitled 'A sustainable distrust?' It was co-organized by the French agricultural research and international cooperation organization working for the sustainable development of tropical and Mediterranean regions (CIRAD), with the joint research unit (UMR) MOISA, while benefitting from the invaluable assistance of Sophie Thiron, the UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems at Montpellier SupAgro and CIRAD, and particularly Damien Conaré, its Secretary General, Roxane Fages, its Project Manager, and Hélène Carrau, its Financial Assistant, the CNIEL Observatory of Eating Habits (OCHA), and particularly Véronique Pardo, Head of the Strategy-Studies Department at CNIEL, Caroline Le Poultier, Director General of CNIEL, and Noëlle Paolo, Director of the Studies and Strategy Department at CNIEL; and finally Claude Fischler, CNRS Emeritus Researcher at the *Centre Edgar Morin de l'Institut interdisciplinaire d'anthropologie du contemporain* (IIAC). This symposium benefitted from the support of Danone Nutricia Research, and particularly Charlotte Sarrat, Mila Lebrun, Amélie Aubert-Plard and Nicolas Gausserès; the Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation; and *Agropolis Fondation*. We would also like to thank Toma Dutter for her animated drawings during the symposium.

These injunctions may also be underpinned by actors such as NGOs or international organizations that are highly active in many so-called developing countries. This is pointed out in Elisa Lomet's box, where it is clear that the promotion of Togolese products by development operators generally does not take all of local people's values associated with local products into account.

These early ethnographic studies shed light on the weight of normative injunctions faced by urban eaters. Yet they also provided insight into the diversity of situations and the heterogeneity of foodscapes, which differ markedly between cities. These foodscapes shape practical and normative forms of food consumption—while also being reshaped by them—in a rationale whereby the material aspect of spaces is linked with the uses and activities that take place within them. This is the focus of the second part of the book, where such links between urban landscapes and food are discussed in three chapters.

Yolande Berton-Ofouémé's work reveals how Congolese urban catering has been changing over the last 25 years. The coexistence of international dishes and 'invented' dishes from other cities, introduced by immigrants and disseminated via the food supply chain, particularly by the catering industry, questions the eternal opposition between so-called traditional and modern cuisine, while at the same time generating a new image of Brazzaville.

Laura Arciniegas reveals another aspect of urban foodscapes based on an ethnographic study in Jakarta's poor *kampung* neighbourhoods. She presents *warung makan*—stationary or mobile shops selling daily dishes cooked according to traditional and 'homemade' recipes—as extensions of the domestic sphere. Some household activities have thus shifted towards these new commercial culinary outlets, fostering relationships between eaters and vendors within social networks formed by neighbourhood, kinship, solidarity and trust relations. The 'geometry' of the city hence reshapes new food practices.

Underlying the seeming individualization of practices, as suggested by the rising popularity of out-of-home food consumption, new forms of socialization are emerging through food. In this regard, in Malaysia, Anindita Dasgupta *et al.* assessed the impact of rural-urban migration on the sense of identity among single men of rural origin who had moved to the capital city of Kuala Lumpur for work in the 1980s. The author highlights the creation of multi-ethnic urban spaces regulated through commensality.

JingJing Ma addresses the new social and family tensions that have emerged regarding the management of beverages and sugar consumed by middle-class urban Chinese. The author shows that urban life offers consumption settings where standards are eased and industrial sweetened beverages are adopted.

The surveys presented in this second part show how individuals rely on food to build their social relations with others and their social and cultural position in cosmopolitan cities.

Urban eaters are subject to various normative injunctions and the urban foodscape shapes their practices, but they are also resourceful in terms of innovation and creativity. This is the topic of the third part of the book. City dwellers reconfigure their food practices by navigating between various benchmarks and articulating multiple

forms of knowledge. Urban eaters thus seem to be reclaiming their food consumption patterns through these new food practices. They "take action"—as Anthony Giddens (1987) points out in his structuration theory regarding agency—and the final chapters of this book highlight the operational capacity of social actors and their pragmatic expertise.

The Burkinabe *bâbenda* food dish presented by Raphaëlle Héron is quite exemplary in this respect. This 'lean season dish' of the Mossi—the largest ethnic group on the central plateau of Burkina Faso—is currently undergoing a "popular modernization", in the words of those who eat *bâbenda*. This new consumption trend is actually part of a broader drive to promote so-called traditional dishes on a global scale. This trend confirms the importance of the identity function in urban food consumption, i.e. in an area where identity boundaries intersect and merge and hence where eaters occasionally need to reassert them. However, all of the studies presented here do not outline identity-related tension phenomena, but rather identification processes.

The work of N'da Amenan Gisèle Sédia and colleagues is part of a wider debate on the challenge of hygienic nutritional standards. The author shows how *garba*—a dish that nutritionists consider unhealthy—is now a menu item in popular food outlets in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and even elsewhere in Africa.

Showcasing the social functions of food thus sheds light on food practices in the face of nutritional injunctions. The discourse on the risks of new so-called plethoric nutritional diseases linked to overweight and obesity (diabetes, cardiovascular diseases) is omnipresent in the cities studied and city dwellers are subject to or coping with the tensions inherent to the challenge of socializing, building their identities and health issues. Yet the latter are not necessarily a priority for people, although they may be well aware of the risks involved.

Note that food not only has a biological function but also fulfils an important social function. Estelle Kouokam Magne reminds us of this through her study on 'stockpot food' which enables a child to be assimilated into his/her social and household group, while at the same time assimilating the food contained in the stockpot. City dwellers' diets are ultimately in a trade-off position—encompassing the receptiveness of families to new foods and the importance of food as a heritage received and passed on from generation to generation.

Ayari G. Pasquier Merino's study nevertheless reconfirms that not all eaters enjoy this diversified urban offer on equal footing. Cities are also the locus of deep social inequality and the poorest populations often experience unprecedented food insecurity. The author analyses the food situation of poor households in Mexico City and reveals the various strategies adopted by women to cope with the growing economic insecurity and meet their household food needs.

The analysis of food practices and food perceptions of city dwellers thus shows the inadequacy of considering food changes simply in terms of Westernization, transition, standardization or convergence towards an ultimately widely adopted model. Although we are aware that similar foodscape changes may be under way in different cities (industrial products, supermarkets, etc.), the socio-anthropological surveys outlined in this book reveal that city dwellers are inventing new food practices and cuisines based on a range of local and/or outside references that cannot simply be viewed as extraversion or mimicry.

The food reconfigurations presented here therefore depict processes rather than models, acts of identification rather than fixed identities. Accordingly, we are striving to steer clear of rigid definitions of new food models because food is above all a dynamic element in relationships with oneself and towards others, relationships that are intertwined and whose contours are constantly changing. Talking about food in cities is therefore tantamount to discussing ongoing construction and negotiation processes that are never temporally static. Rather than a global convergence towards a single identical way of eating in cities, the book also shows how the inhabitants of cities in Africa, Latin America and Asia are generating new original forms of food from diverse elements, some of which are shifting away from capitalist rationales and emerging as new spaces for sharing.

References

Appadurai A., 1996. *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 248 p.

Bardach J.E., 1982. Food problems of Asian cities. *GeoJournal*, 4: 3-6.

Bricas N., Courade G., Coussy J., Hugon P., Muchnik J. (Eds.), 1985. *Nourrir les villes en Afrique sub-saharienne*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 421 p.

Douzant-Rosenfeld D., Grandjean P., 1995. *Nourrir les métropoles d'Amérique latine*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 302 p.

Giddens A., 1987. (1984). *La constitution de la société*. Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 474 p.

Guyer J.I., 1987. *Feeding African Cities: Studies in Regional Social History*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, Business & Economics, 249 p.

Odeyé M., Bricas N., 1985. À propos de l'évolution des styles alimentaires à Dakar. *In: Nourrir les villes en Afrique sub-saharienne*. Bricas N., Courade G., Coussy J., Hugon P., Muchnik J. (Eds.), Paris, L'Harmattan: 179-195.

Pingali P., 2007. Westernization of Asian diets and the transformation of food systems: Implications for research and policy. *Food policy*, 32(3): 281-298.

Popkin B.M., 1999. Urbanization, lifestyle changes and the nutrition transition. *World development*, 27(11): 1905-1916.

Requier-Desjardins D., 1991. *L'alimentation en Afrique: manger ce qu'on peut produire. L'exemple de la consommation alimentaire en Côte d'Ivoire*. Paris, Karthala, 169 p.

Touré A., 1982. *La civilisation quotidienne en Côte-d'Ivoire: procès d'occidentalisation*. Paris, Karthala, 279 p.

Vennetier P. (dir.), 1972. *Dix études sur l'approvisionnement des villes*. Bordeaux, CEGET-CNRS, coll. Travaux et Documents de géographie tropicale, 7, 278 p.

Part 1

Urban foodways at the cusp of normative injunctions

Chapter 1

Feeding children – a focus of tension in the Algerian city of Oran

Mohamed Mebtoul, Hamdia Belghachem, Ouassila Salemi, Malika Bouchenak, Karim Bouziane Nedjadi, Nabil Chaoui, Imad Boureghda

Summary. We looked at the issue of feeding children in the city of Oran from a gender standpoint. The aim was to highlight the tensions that deeply underlie household culinary activities carried out by mothers for the benefit of their children and husbands. An ethnographic survey was conducted in family homes in six socially diverse neighbourhoods of Oran, with 20 mothers from different social backgrounds. The survey involved interviews, monitoring of interactions between parents and children during meals and photos to view products stored in the refrigerator and to document the different meals eaten by the children. Our results showcased women's heavy physical and mental workload during the different stages of culinary work carried out under time constraints.

⏩ Introduction

Algeria's high petroleum revenues[1] in the 2000s prompted massive food imports in a highly EU-dependent socioeconomic and political setting. The rapid changes in food consumption patterns that occurred in Algeria during this prosperous period partially involved greater sugar and fat intake to the detriment of vegetable proteins (Chikhi and Padella, 2014). They also reflect the political imperatives embedded in the joint and deeply gendered urban/domestic space that currently underpins the inequality between Algerian men and women. The massive extension of the city of Oran towards its hinterlands (Madani, 2016), as a quick and hasty response to the high social demand for housing, was accompanied by widespread haphazard installation of commercial shops in the various neighbourhoods (retail shops, mini-markets, shopping centres and informal markets), with a concomitant flood of food products

1. The per-barrel oil price reached over $100 during the 2000s. In a populist approach, the Algerian government—with the aim of achieving social stability—thus mobilized oil revenues to offer people a 'better social life' through food consumption mediation.

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/c1

into all urban areas. This sudden 'food transition' has favoured industrially processed products, often with high sugar and fat contents, which in turn has given rise to a politically-driven and socially-differentiated consumer status while eroding that of the citizen (Mebtoul, 2018)[2].

In this chapter we look closely at how gender norms in Oranese families today could shape how children are fed. Considering children's diets from this gendered angle helps shed light on the multiple pressures involved, which Steiner (2017) characterized in terms of opposing relationships linked to the divergent rationales of social actors in the dual family/urban sphere. The question of children's diets—far from being limited to their pleasure and health (Corbeau and Poulain, 2002)—also raises the issue of the socially differentiated status of Oranese mothers and women (Belghachem, 2016). Note that women are subject to double labelling in Algerian society, where there is discrimination between 'indoor' and 'outdoor' women. In ordinary language, men identify 'indoor women' as 'good mothers', i.e. who produce and reproduce the patriarchal social order by internalizing its foundations and rules (Mebtoul, 2001). It is up to these 'indoor women' to fulfil the domestic tasks (Cresson, 1995), which includes feeding the children and their husbands. The expression *el oum* (الأم)—the mother or 'the household owner'—is fraught with meaning, implying the sanctity of mothers' socially and emotionally overvalued status. Mothers' control over grey domestic areas (orderly arrangement of children's and husband's belongings, tidying the household, multiple skills in meal preparation, etc.) gives them *de facto* authority over their family members. Here the nurturing and giving mother is socially recognized to the detriment of those that men stigmatize and discredit as autonomous 'outdoor women', who would indeed have transcended gender norms by demanding more freedom in the public space, while refusing to assume their responsibilities as mothers in the household. This patriarchal vision lingers on in Algerian society. It infers the diktat of men who consider that only their 'truths' are relevant, as opposed to the viewpoints of women and children. Does this mean that we should adopt a retrograde logic by asserting that mothers, i.e. 'indoor mothers', have no possibility of escaping the dominant social order? This chapter underlines the heavy constraints that compel Oranese women—even those with a professional activity—to devote time to taking care of the household meals, thus fulfilling their status as mothers. Yet their daily activities, with all of their subtle nuances, enable them to resist, divert and transcend gender norms, but without fundamentally challenging the male domination trend. They draw on their cognitive and emotional resources and experience to help them make quick decisions on the meals to be prepared, and to plan and organize their children's meals accordingly under the tight time constraints associated with their dual professional and domestic livelihoods. The interplay between gender norms hence cannot be underestimated when it comes to understanding the complexity of women's involvement in household meal making. It is essential for mothers to be creative and versatile in preparing children's meals while being astute with their time so as to reduce the workload. Enrolling their child in a daycare rather than keeping him/her at home until school starts at

2. In our recent publication *Algérie. La citoyenneté impossible?*, we stress that citizenship is firmly linked to the public and political recognition of personal rights, which is sorely lacking for women in Algeria, while referring to the key studies of Étienne Balibar (2001).

the age of six (as is the custom in Algeria) is also a way of temporarily diverting them from their usual domestic childcare tasks, thus freeing up time for themselves, however short it may be. Their husbands' absence from the household—which is far from being linked solely to their professional commitments—is underpinned by their social perception of male roles that are at odds with domestic tasks. Men see themselves primarily as vital breadwinners, thus giving them licence to reproduce the family order.

Moreover, food of animal origin, especially meat, is stored in bulk quantities in the freezer. This particularly concerns professionally active women or those living in well-off social conditions due to the high cost of meat. The meat then just has to be quickly defrosted before preparing the meal, a task that is exclusively carried out by women. Food storage is a form of forward-planning that enables women to reduce the time spent on food shopping.

The dynamic nature of gender relations (Devreux, 2001) shapes the ways food is prepared for children. Women have leeway to object to some of their husband's demands. The notion of consent can be shifted to their advantage, depending on situation and moment (Liogier, 2018). For instance, women may justify their refusal to cook one evening by claiming fatigue or illness, and they may also refuse sex despite their husband's insistence. Some women take the pill on the sly because they do not want a pregnancy imposed by her husband and his parents. Although women's resistance may be part and parcel of gender relations, while occasionally enabling them to cope, they do not even remotely negate the male domination pattern (Mebtoul, 2010).

The daily physical and mental workload of Oranese mothers in preparing food for their children and husbands cannot be readily overlooked. The hardships and sacrifices made for the benefit of their children lead them to "forget themselves", as they put it, in order to embrace their status as mothers, which is inseparable from the logic of bonding with their children (Mebtoul and Salemi, 2017). These 'indoor women' appropriate the household, with all that this implies in terms of household over-investment. As a result of their husband's withdrawal from the household, 'indoor women' emotionally cling to their children, building intimate social bonds with their daughters and sons, often offering them pocket money without their husband's consent, and even addressing issues of marriage and sexuality in a very metaphorical way (Mebtoul, 2018).

These women are forced to juggle their time, which is regarded as an ordeal that must be mentally managed, while weaving their way through a range of chance factors: their children's varied school hours, their husband's absences, transport availability or not, and their double domestic/professional workload. Domestic activity involves ordinary, free and unnoticed tasks that are predominantly performed by women. From a social standpoint, they are seldom recognized by men and health officials, e.g. feeding, washing and dressing their children properly so that they will not catch a cold, or even staying up all night when a child is sick, etc. This is a gender-based health issue essentially handled by women (Mebtoul, 2010). It is impossible for these women to shirk their domestic work at the risk of losing face under the scrutiny of others (Goffman, 1956). Although they often complain about the heavy workload, they see themselves as responsible for feeding their children, while at the same time

they are far from being in control of all the food their children eat, due to the multiple social influences of other family members or classmates. Finally, the husband, who is often absent from the household (work, going out with his friends to a café or mosque, etc.), often lavishly buys sweets for his children. In the physical absence of the husband in the household, these sweets serve as a substitute, providing an emotional bridge between father and child (Aries, 1997).

Women's domestic work thus involves household culinary activities nested in care activities—taking care of children in all aspects of daily life (feeding, dressing and comforting them at night when they are crying, caring for them when they are ill, etc.)—while being the responsibility of mothers. The gender division of labour (Kergoat, 2000) functions under temporal pressure that is further exacerbated when the women also have a professional activity. Note that the overall female employment rate in Algeria is 17%, which is one of the lowest rates in the Arab world.

The status of women is overshadowed by that of the nurturing and giving mother, who is forced to adapt to food dynamics that are largely shaped by public authorities. Mothers have no control over the intense flow of food products, especially sweet foods, in schools, nurseries and the private households of the child's close relatives. They strive to adapt or resist but without having any real control over their children's food.

This chapter is based on an ethnographic approach, which enabled us to analyse the four daily meals of 0-7 year old children, to identify the mothers' constraints during the cooking while highlighting certain seemingly recurrent pressures. Our immersion in the 20 family households also enabled us to observe the interactions between the mothers and their children and describe the refrigerated foods. In-depth interviews were conducted by a master's student with mothers living in six socially diverse neighbourhoods in Oran. This chapter is partly based on the MSc thesis in health sociology defended by Hamdia Belghachem in 2016 on the topic of children's food practices in Oran under the supervision of Mohamed Mebtoul.

The chapter is structured around two points. We focused on the physical and mental workload of mothers during the culinary process, revealing the importance of gender norms in the preparation of children's meals. We also felt it was important to highlight mother's time constraints, which are inseparable from the types of meals prepared for their children.

⏩ The physical and mental workload of preparing a meal for one's children

"What I do today, I do again the next day": this woman's trivial statement on housework, including culinary activities, is in line with Henri Lefebvre's (1968) definition of daily life which stresses "the sum of insignificant activities" dominated by repetition, routine and the ordinariness of preparing children's meals. Meal cooking underlies women's physical exhaustion while deeply imprinting their bodies. It is demanding, difficult and thankless because of the food choices that have to be made daily, which must be managed mentally to avoid domestic conflicts. The heavy

domestic workload has adverse effects on their health and they are forced to take full responsibility for it. Husbands are generally not major contributors to meal preparation. In fact they are generally absent during this task, while otherwise being present to check that the food meets their taste expectations.

Nassima was a 39 year old woman with two boys aged 4 and 2, respectively. She was an administrative employee in a company located far from her home. Her husband was a shopkeeper. The tensions related to the meal preparation for the children were not due to her lack of knowledge of what should be 'good' for their health, but rather to her exhaustion, which forced her to prepare meals in a hurry. While she claimed she was aware that the foods she offered were not "healthy food for her child who is anaemic", she explained her culinary choices by the pressures on her:

> "I work and my job is far from home. My children are in the nursery. I'm tired, exhausted and unable to prepare dinner for them after I return from work in the evening. I'm obliged to rely on frozen food (minced meat, fish, French fries)."

The gendered aspect is ingrained in the preparation of her children's meals, forcing women to think about the foods they need to choose, given their daily responsibilities related to work, transport and their children's illnesses. Drawing on the studies of the educational philosopher Nel Noddings (2013), Vanina Mozziconacci (2017) stressed the distinction between 'natural spontaneous' care and 'ethical' care, which implies a degree of reflection. She added:

> "Nevertheless, the core of both of them is the same phenomenon as Nel Noddings referred to as 'engrossment', which could be translated as 'absorption', in the sense of 'concentration', which involves 'feeling with someone else'."

Women's physical workload that comes with feeding children (getting up very early in the morning to prepare the children's breakfast, peeling potatoes, washing lettuce, manually washing up dishes from the previous day's dinner, buying needed products, etc.), is further compounded by a heavy mental workload. This encompasses women's concerns about the quality of the food prepared, differences in children's tastes, or their refusal to eat a prepared meal when it does not suit them. Tensions can run high when it comes to children's food, forcing mothers, who are very close to them, to actively sidestep conflicts, without always succeeding. Here is what Radia had to say—she was 36 years old, unemployed, with four children, one of whom (7 years old) was diabetic:

> "My daughter's been really pampered since she's been sick. I've prohibited everyone from bothering her, telling them that she is sick, "poor thing". I realized that I was overreacting when I saw that she was taking advantage of the situation and that her brothers and sisters were suffering from it, and were being deprived of sweets because of their sick sister. To remedy this, I prepare a good varied menu, and tell her: "You're sick. So you don't get any", which makes her furious. But then I'm heartbroken when I see her like that! She lets me administer the insulin injection, but then refuses to eat, so I have to give her what she wants."

These painful negotiations between mothers and their children—underscored by their fusional relationship—are seldom to the mother's advantage (Mebtoul and Salemi, 2017).

The combined physical and mental workload (Mebtoul, 2001) was reflected in mothers' everyday language by the frequent use of three meaning-laden words. *Chga* (الشقاء) in Arabic dialect means 'drudgery and strenuous physical workload', which is exclusively reserved for women. *Ham* (الهم) means 'next day's worries and uncertainties', which cause tensions and conflicts with the children and husband over the food prepared and the slow service of a meal that is not ready on time, or that has to reheated. The men do not take the reasons for such delays into account. The children (especially boys) and husband stress the urgency of eating. Boys press their mother because they have to get to school: "Mommy hurry up, we're going to be late." The husband talks about the traffic jams on the road, which are tiring, so he just wants to eat quickly to be able to rest.

Women's culinary work was trivialized, underestimated, marginalized and devalued, and women used the word *hana* (الهناء), meaning the pursuit of tranquility, to avoid discord in the household. Regardless of whether they are physically stressed (Mebtoul *et al*., 2018), women feel that they are responsible for meeting all of their loved ones' expectations. They strive to ease their workload by prioritizing household tasks. They leave tasks that seem heavier, such as floor washing after meals, until later when they feel more rested. Mothers often breastfeed for the first 5-6 months after the birth of a newborn, after which they shift to bottle feeding with artificial milk. This is a way for them to circumvent their husbands' canonical Islam inspired demands, whereby women are considered responsible for breastfeeding for 2 years. While this religious imperative is popular among men, it is gradually being rejected by women, who increasingly resist the compulsion to wake up at night, mentioning the tiredness and breast pain generated by breastfeeding. These mothers often favour artificial milk bottle feeding despite acknowledging the benefits of breastfeeding. Kheira (41 years old) had five children and did not work outside the household. Her husband was a police constable.

> "I've suffered too much from breastfeeding with my other children. I used to get up at night to breastfeed them, but my breasts hurt. I decided to stop for the smallest one, even though my husband and mother-in-law still force me to do so because it's an Islamic obligation."

The findings of our in-depth monitoring of culinary tasks revealed that women's multiple resistance to the orders they received did not call into question their household work (Cresson, 1995), which was more subject to modulation, rearrangement and temporary relaxation when they got tired. They sometimes eased off with the husband's consent (going out with the children once a week for a meal in a pizzeria, taking them to a park to play, going to the public baths with neighbours, etc.).

⏩ Time pressure on women

Oranese women's time cannot be dissociated from their social experience, from their combined professional and domestic activities for some of them, and from the venue of these activities. Their total involvement in domestic work is noteworthy, due for instance to their husband's absence during the day when they are at work; the agonising waiting for a taxi for an indefinite period of time to get to work or to

pick up their child from the daycare centre; the solitary night-long vigil of a diabetic child; the constant mental planning (to decide on what should be bought, what meal should be prepared for the next day, etc.). The household can have a negative impact on the timelines of women living in a modest social setting: cramped housing with no modern facilities for rapid cooking, further complicated by all the risks associated with the use of butane gas stoves in particular (gas leaks, domestic accidents, etc.). Organisational confusion in public institutions also forces women to spend a lot of time and energy on repetitive trips (e.g. absence of a doctor some days at the health centre, unavailability of vaccines, or awaiting administrative papers). The timing of daily activities weighs heavily on gender relations.

Women make decisions regarding the different purchases, the meal content and schedule. Samira was a 40 year old high school teacher. Her husband was a shopkeeper in Turkey. They had four children—the three girls were 3, 5 and 7 years old, while the elder boy was 13 years old. Samira's combined domestic and professional activity did not give her enough time to prepare what she considered to be a 'real' lunch. She was forced to slap meals together, with the dishes varying according to her job schedule. Her daily activities were completely overwhelmed by having to imagine the next dish and plan how to acquire the ingredients and quickly prepare the meal. This accentuated her mental workload. Meal timing was an ordeal that needed to be managed mentally. Samira concentrated on bought dishes that could be prepared and eaten in a hurry. Lunch usually consisted of pizza or sandwiches purchased at a takeout not far from her home. She also reheated leftovers from the previous day's dinner, which was considered an essential meal preferably containing chicken or lamb. The fact that Samira was alone in managing all the meal tasks (procurement, menu choices, meal preparation, etc.) was very tough on her. Samira's combined professional and domestic workload underscored her daily exhaustion, as reflected in our notes taken at Samira's home:

> "We stayed at her place for two days. She came home from work tired, and that night she finally opted to serve her children a pizza. She felt especially guilty for not having been able to prepare a 'real' meal for her kids."

Samira readily prepared a chicken or lamb dish for dinner when she had time, especially one of the following dishes: tagine, roast chicken, lamb and eggplant *au gratin*.

Culinary time is rooted in family functioning, with meal preparation being segregated. Time for the wife, daughter, husband or son does not have the same significance. Time is not managed in the same way—it is regulated according to the different concerns and expectations. For women and their daughters, performing domestic work in their household is considered as a family duty: "I think about my children. If it's not me, who's going to cook for them, who's going to do it?" Men and boys, on the other hand, spend much of their time in public places, which they take for granted. For most of them, cafés are the favoured places for socializing, enabling them to discuss problems related to daily life (high cost of living, lack of distractions, bureaucracy, etc.) and major political events in Algeria and around the world. In our survey, men were not concerned by the culinary work appropriated by women. Our findings clearly showed that men only went into the kitchen at mealtime. Some of them were mocked by their wives, who categorically refused their support in carrying out domestic tasks (washing up, peeling potatoes, washing salad, etc.), claiming that they were too clumsy.

The time devoted to children's meals does not deviate from the gender norm when the husband and wife both have the same professional occupation. Consider, for instance, a couple of general practitioners living in a three-room apartment in Maraval district, where many inhabitants are teachers and shopkeepers. Fatima, 38 years old, had three children aged 7, 8 and 10, respectively. Very early in the morning she had to prepare her children's breakfast, including milk, coffee, bread, cheese, cakes and dates, which she sets on the kitchen table. Breakfast could be viewed as a very routine eating activity, as highlighted by Claude Javeau (2006: 229):

> "[...] the vastness of the 'living world', where repetition and banality abound, what Lefebvre calls trivialities, and yet which gives existence its intrinsic meaning, in the sense of the signs it bears and never stops producing and perpetuating."

Women view routine activities as burdensome and alienating. The repetition has a major impact on their physical bodies and social fabric. "You wouldn't know what it's like to do the same thing every day," said Malika, a 40 year old office worker. Their status is overshadowed by that of nurturing mothers.

For Fatima, lunch was also a matter of fluctuation, uncertainty and patching together: "I don't know what I'm going to cook for them today to gain time," was an everyday expression used by women. Fatima preferred to reheat leftovers from the previous day's dinner to save time, hence reconciling her combined professional/domestic activities. Yet when she was not working she would readily prepare a hearty meal for her children with plenty of animal protein—mutton, fish, potatoes *au gratin*, salad, fruit, etc., to compensate for her absence from home.

Mental time management forced women to focus on getting food supplies. In practice, they were the ones who spent most of their time purchasing essential food items. The total amount of food purchased and transported by Fatima from the market to her home was greater than that of her husband. Wives were 'naturally' considered to be the 'most able' to choose good-quality food products. Husbands considered themselves 'incompetent' in buying quality food. Under a gender rationale, Fatima—a doctor like her husband—was inclined to buy the majority of the heaviest items, while her husband often just bought desserts (a kilogram of oranges or a litre of juice, etc.):

> "I buy all the groceries: coffee, sugar, pasta, oil, vegetables, etc. I go to the market (she places her hand on her forehead). It's really tiring—my husband just buys juice, fruit or other desserts."

Women manage the food for their children and husbands in isolation and without social recognition, "this 'hard core' housework, calls for a series of varied, complex and time-consuming tasks: planning meals, buying, transporting and storing food, anticipating, preparing meals, serving, washing and tidying up, etc." (Fournier *et al.*, 2015: 27).

Women's professional work in Oran is not self-evident given the local social pressures on them. The scarcity of daycare centres and their high cost force some women to seek childcare support from their parents. Moreover, they have to contend with a social environment dominated by uncertainties and hazards due to the highly irregular transportation system and numerous traffic jams, all of which is very time consuming and hampers women from getting to work on time.

Children—especially after school and during holidays—are forced to stay at home or in the street, and are bored due to the scarcity of libraries and cinemas in Oran. Finally, religion is used by politicians as a social instrumentalization and moralization tool, which stifles women's freedom and empowerment. All of these structural features lead to tensions between gender norms and women's socioprofessional ambitions (Mebtoul, 2010).

The only way for most of these women to pursue their professional activity is to renew their dependence on their parents, especially their mother, who in turn takes over the task of feeding her grandchildren:

> "I work and leave my children at my mother's. They have lunch at her house. They eat all the meals prepared by their grandmother, such as couscous, soup and noodles with milk. In the evening they beg me to serve them the same meals that they got at their grandmother's." (Chérifa, teacher, three children)

It therefore seems important to deconstruct the often essentialized naturalistic definition of family identities and solidarity which overlooks the power relations that prevail within the family. The family is a social institution marked by gendered inequality between family members (Mebtoul *et al*., 2018).

Women's professional activity ensures their financial self-sufficiency, thus giving them a capacity to act in the consumer society. Yet in the current sociopolitical setting this does not seem to be enough to trigger a change in their women's status under an emancipation rationale. They are controlled by a 'mother's police' whereby they are considered to be fully responsible for carrying out all household activities, particularly those involving children (Garcia, 2011)[3]. This 'mother's police' is very prominent in an Algerian society strongly framed by patriarchal sociopolitical norms (Mebtoul and Salemi, 2017).

The naturalization of the gender division of labour is even more radical and heavy for non-working women. Their domestic roles are hegemonic—and this term is not excessive. "I totally forget myself" is a recurrent expression used by mothers in discussions. This means their social time is devoted primarily to their children:

> "I'm not telling you what I'm going through...I've forgotten that I exist. I don't have a moment's rest. I neglect myself completely. I have a goitre that I've been suffering from for 4 years. I don't take any treatments or have check-ups. My mind is focused totally on my daughter." (Rabia, 37, housewife, her husband is a painter)

She clings to her children not as self-sufficient beings, but rather as individuals who have to bond with her, under a fusional rationale that consists of wanting the best for them but without their input.

> "Being a good mother means wanting what is best for your child, ensuring that the child is safe and thriving while, above all, being available all the time. This is a heavy imperative." (Halpern, 2013: 116)

---

3. In her book, Sandrine Garcia discusses "a process of naturalization of the gender division of parental labour and the advent of a 'mother's police' that erodes the autonomy that women gained between 1967 and 1975 over their bodies and lives, while taking the relationships they have with their children out of the private sphere and into the household emotional economy to embody the role of the benevolent guardian of the proper functioning of the family" (Garcia, 2011: 15)

Some nurturing mothers stressed the 'excellence' of their cooking for their children. They attached importance to the judgments and views of others about the quality of their culinary activities. They described in detail to neighbours and close relatives how meals for their children were prepared, and the menus proposed on specialized TV programmes. They emphasized the skills they used to successfully prepare a good dish. Algerian society remains deeply voyeuristic (Bourqia, 1996). Mothers do not wish to lose face in their daily interactions with neighbours and family members. By overrating their status as mothers, they make up for the lack of any social and political recognition of female citizens (Mebtoul, 2018).

⏩ Conclusion

Feeding children is part of a complex process marked by tensions that are inseparable from gender norms in the city of Oran. These tensions reflect the importance of the status of mothers to the detriment of that of women, leading the former to constantly work on building a fusional relationship with their children, who seem to be their only compensation in the face of the structural forces of gender relations that brand Algerian society. Culinary activities are solely carried out by mothers for the benefit of their children and husbands—they are left with the responsibility for managing household meals, but the control and distribution of food products is largely reappropriated by men. Some mothers rely on their close family network to help them cope with the heavy physical and mental workload that comes with feeding their children. Others, particularly those who have an outside occupation, place their children in a daycare centre as soon as possible. All of these alternatives for reducing culinary activities do not seem to challenge male domination, thus revealing a gendered configuration with regard to feeding children in Oran.

⏩ References

Ariès P., 1997. *La fin des mangeurs. Les métamorphoses de la table à l'âge de la modernité alimentaire*. Paris, Desclée Brouwer, 173 p.

Balibar E., 2001. *Nous citoyens d'Europe ? Les frontières, l'État et le Peuple*. Paris, Éditions La découverte, 324 p.

Belghachem H., 2016. *Les significations attribuées par la mère aux pratiques alimentaires de l'enfant (0-7 ans) à Oran*. Health sociology master thesis, social sciences and health research unit, University Oran 2, Oran, 77 p.

Bourqia R., 1996. *Femmes et fécondité*. Casablanca, Afrique-Orient, 135 p.

Chikhi K., Padella M., 2014. L'alimentation en Algérie. Quelles formes de modernité ? *New Medit*, 3: 50-58.

Corbeau J.P., Poulain J.P., 2002. *Penser l'alimentation, entre imaginaire et rationalité*. Toulouse, Éditions Privat, 209 p.

Cresson G., 1995. *Le travail domestique de santé, analyse sociologique*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 346 p.

Devreux A.M., 2001. Les rapports sociaux de sexe : un cadre d'analyse pour les questions de santé. *In: Femmes et Hommes dans le champ de la santé, Approches sociologiques*. Aïach P., Cèbe D., Cresson G., Philoppe C. (Eds.), Rennes, Éditions ENSP, Approches sociologiques: 97-116.

Fournier T., Jarty J., Lapeyre N., Touraille P., 2015. L'alimentation, arme du genre. *Journal des Anthropologues*, 140-141:19-50.

Garcia S., 2011. *Mères sous influence, de la cause des femmes à la cause des enfants*. Paris, Éditions La découverte, 383 p.

Goffman E., 1956. *The presentation of self in everyday life* (First edition). Scotland, Doubleday, 251 p.

Halpern C., 2013. Mères à bout de nerf. *In: La parenté en question*. Bedin Y., Fournier M. (Eds.), Paris, Éditions sciences humaines: 114-120.

Javeau C., 2006. Routines quotidiennes et moments fatidiques. *Cahiers internationaux de Sociologie*, CXXI: 227-238.

Kergoat D., 2000. Division sexuelle du travail et rapports sociaux de sexe. *In: Dictionnaire critique du féminisme*. Hirata H., Laborie F., Doaré H., Le Sénotier D. (Eds.), Paris, PUF: 35-44.

Lefebvre H., 1968. *La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne*. Paris, Gallimard, 384 p.

Liogier R, 2018. *Descente au cœur du mâle*. Paris, Les liens qui libèrent, 141 p.

Madani M., 2016. L'agglomération oranaise, jeux d'acteurs et dynamique urbaine. *Les cahiers du Cread*, 115: 73-93.

Mebtoul M., 2001. Santé et société en Algérie : le travail de santé des femmes. *In: Femmes et Hommes dans le champ de la santé, Approches sociologiques*. Aïach P., Cèbe D., Cresson G., Philippe C. (Eds.), Rennes, Éditons ENSP: 281-302.

Mebtoul M., 2010. La dimension sociopolitique de la production de santé en Algérie. *In: Famille et santé*. Cresson G., Mebtoul M. (Eds.), Rennes, Presses de l'ENSP: 21-30.

Mebtoul M., 2018. *Algérie: la citoyenneté impossible ?* Alger, Éditions Koukou, 216 p.

Mebtoul M., Hachem A., Araoui K., 2018. Corps de femmes sous tension en Algérie. *Chimères*, 92: 97-106.

Mebtoul M., Salemi O., 2017. La relation fusionnelle mère-enfant diabétique. L'effacement de la femme et de l'enfant comme personne. *Naqd*, 35: 99-116.

Mozziconacci V., 2017. Les échelles du care. Du temps et de l'espace pour les relations: une approche féministe des institutions. *In: La ville : quel genre ? L'espace public à l'épreuve du genre*. Faure E., Hernandez-Gonzales E., Luxembourg C. (Eds.), Montreuil, Le temps des cerises: 115-134.

Noddings N., 2013. *Caring. A relational approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 256 p.

Steiner P., 2017. Le concept de tension dans la sociologie de Weber. *L'Année sociologique*, 67(1): 163-188.

⏩ Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Danone Nutricia Research (Algiers and Palaiseau) for their financial support for this research and for the valuable discussions with the teams on the results. We also thank the reviewers and the anonymous appraisers for their comments and suggestions, which helped substantially improve the content and form of the chapter.

Chapter 2

Getting out of the kitchen! Reshaping gender relations and food practices in Casablanca

Hayat Zirari

Summary. This chapter focuses on some findings of recent anthropological research on changes in food habits in urban areas. The field survey revealed marked transformations in women's relationship to food. Among these changes, we focused specifically on readjustment of the *hdaga* attribute, whereby women are commended for their supposed skills and excellence in carrying out their domestic roles. These changes generate tensions for women who are torn between social injunctions and their personal aspirations for wellbeing and fulfilment.

Introduction

Gender relations and how they pertain to food systems[1] in the urban Casablanca setting are discussed here in terms of changes in food practices. We opted to focus on food from a gender-sensitive[2] standpoint whereby everyday interindividual social interactions and gender relations were viewed through an ethnographic lens. The research was also conducted from a food anthropology angle (Verdier, 1979; de Garine, 1980; Goody, 1982; Fischler, 1990; Corbeau, 1992; Corbeau and Poulain, 2002)—studies in the latter field have been carried out in different frameworks over the past 40 years with food being assessed from a variety of angles, but seldom with regard to gender mainstreaming. It is only relatively recently that scientific interest has emerged at the crossroads of gender and food in the French social sciences literature (Fournier *et al*., 2015). Here we assessed and gained insight into transformations under way in Moroccan society from this novel viewpoint.

1. According to Jean-Pierre Poulain, the food system is a facet of the food social space that "corresponds to a set of technological and social structures which—from collection to the kitchen through all the stages of food production and processing—enables food to reach the consumer and be recognized as edible." (Poulain, 2017).
2. Gender refers to the attributes ascribed to men and women in a society. These distinctions tend to explain the hierarchies and differentiations of roles and status between the sexes. The sociohistorical and sociocultural contexts in the building of gendered identities are accounted for in the gender approach, in contrast to essentialist feminine vs. masculine approaches.

 DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/c2

⏩ Field survey method

An ethnographic survey was conducted on urban family rituals regarding meals and food practices in the city of Casablanca[3]. This 2017 survey[4] was based on three data collection methods: individual interviews, group interviews and participant monitoring during repeated meetings with the survey respondents. Forty interviews were conducted with women and 10 with men with children, all living in working-class neighbourhoods with average living standards.

An assessment of food and its daily rituals in urban families enabled immersion into the respondents' personal lives, facilitated by the growing interest in food and eating in urban society. Food was found to be linked to various cultural, identity and emotional dimensions, while encompassing multiple aspects: social differentiation and associated values, pleasure, fear, attachment, indifference, etc. Overall, there was strong spontaneous involvement of all respondents, especially women, throughout the interviews. Although at first glance food appeared to be somewhat trivial, it turned out to have a major, if not essential, place in the daily lives of the women and their families. Men on the other hand proved to be less talkative and were more inclined to defer or delegate to their wives the responsibility of answering questions related to cuisine. They seemed to be positioned more as recipients of culinary and food activities than as contributors[5].

Our analyses were two-pronged. First, we looked at the evolution of society and newly reshaped gender roles in the urban sphere and then investigated women's lifestyles, living standards, social and material situations, and what is required of them regarding food. Based on these analyses, we then addressed—through food and particularly cuisine—ongoing changes impacting gender roles in Moroccan society.

⏩ Reshaping roles and food patterns

Our analysis of changes in living standards in Morocco[6] revealed social and cultural changes in the respective positions and roles of men and women, together with demographic, economic and political transformations, as well as far-reaching legal and constitutional reforms[7]. New family configurations are reshaping the stereotyped

3. The city of Casablanca boasts great sociological diversity and a social blend that enabled us to assess major changes underway throughout urban Moroccan society.
4. This survey was carried out as part of a Foodstyles survey initiated within the framework of a partnership between CIRAD and Danone Nutricia Research.
5. However, among the men interviewed, we noted a clear interest for food with regard to its health, wellbeing (diet, sport, etc.), pleasure and hunger-satisfying aspects.
6. "Morocco is undergoing profound changes that will have to be taken into account [...]. Increased urbanization due to internal male and female migration is giving rise to new relational patterns between the sexes, notably marked by the substantial weakening of traditional solidarity bonds, changes in socio-cultural organization and in what this implies in terms of changes in perceptions, roles and responsibilities, as well as in occupation of the social, political and community spatial space." (Zirari, 2006: 189)
7. We are specifically referring to the reforms of the Family Code in 2004, and of the Citizenship Code and the Constitution in 2011.

features of men's and women's roles[8]. Emerging values, including greater individualism, are prompting renegotiation of the status of men and women in contemporary Moroccan society (Rachik, 2005).

In Morocco, which is now urbanized to a substantial extent, the urban space is the prime locus for these changes. It is marked by a diversity of lifestyles and social customs, while being at the forefront of societal changes. The way urban life functions is a tangible mirror of gender norms while illustrating the gender differentiation trend:

> "As an expression of gender differentiation, the city showcases the norms that govern community behaviour in this area [...]. It shows archaic patterns and trends, transitions and sustainability while serving as a lens through which often symbolic practices are highlighted." (Denèfle, 2004: 11)

The urban lifestyle has thus contributed to the emergence of new food behaviours by generating significant changes in material living conditions, meal patterns, eating venues and cuisine styles. Here we illustrate how these food changes are closely linked to—and inseparable from—changes in gender roles.

Eating differently in cities – from home cuisine to snacking

Major lifestyle changes in large urban conurbations such as Casablanca[9]—due to the frequent remoteness between home and work, women's salaried work and girls' schooling—are reflected in the changing food patterns of urban families and in the allocation of gendered roles. Remoteness from the workplace, in particular, heightens out-of-home food consumption.

New food habits may be associated with these diverse 'urbanities' within a 'new budding citizenry' (Naciri, 2018): eating food prepared elsewhere than in the family kitchen, 'eating in the street', 'eating out', as in the *mahlaba* (محلبة)[10] or buying from street vendors, etc. These are all indicators of major changes in food habits and in the organization of the accompanying social roles.

8. Gender stereotypes play an important role in reshaping community representations and the categorization of gendered identities. The gendered assumptions underlying these stereotypes attribute characteristics to women that are usually defined negatively and in reference to those of men. These assumptions are used to justify the relegation of women to domestic and subordinate roles.

9. Casablanca is a large economic metropolis characterized by social, economic and territorial disparities. More than a third of the population lives in the suburbs. It is hence an ideal crucible for monitoring the social diversity, mixing and tensions that characterize it.

10. This word literally means 'dairy'. *Mahlaba* now no longer refers only to shops where you can buy and eat fresh dairy products, they also now offer fruit juices and various snacks (cakes, pancakes, etc.). *Mahlaba* shops are located on every street corner and are open at all hours of the day and most of the night. In these shops, products may be eaten on the spot, standing or sitting. Food takeout is also offered. *Mahlaba* shops are very popular with Casablanca's youth, especially after they leave high school, nightclubs or sports activities. The findings of regular monitoring of these places for several years, in various parts of the city centre, suggest that they are increasingly frequented by employees and young executives. These shops are prime locations for monitoring changes in the food industry in Casablanca. In fact, their supply has undergone major changes compared to the original range of products offered, and has become considerably more diversified and tailored to consumers' changing tastes and habits. Moreover, these places are economically and geographically accessible, and people of various social categories frequent them.

Street food is associated with different representations depending on the location, type and nature of the food consumed, as well as the social status and lifestyle of urban food consumers. For men, frequently eating out is associated with the status of being single or, when married, with the wife's failure to fulfil her nurturing role. In the same vein, food prepared at home (*makla dial dar*) is viewed as opposed to street food (*makla dial zanka*).

Our survey of women and men revealed differences in judgement, or even disparities, in the values associated with this opposition. Men often discussed the importance of *makla dial dar,* thus suggesting their resistance to women's changing roles and family status.

Household meals are thus a vector for mooring women's roles in the domestic sphere. Food is associated with security—linked to the command of the preparation method—and the healthy quality of the food:

> "When I was thinking about getting married, I chose a woman who cooks *beldi*[11] [traditional local] food dishes. That was a deciding factor. My wife does everything at home. We eat *beldi* and homemade dishes [*makla dial dar*]: bread, tagine, barley porridge...everything." (40 year old male shopkeeper; his wife is 24)

Conversely, women often present *makla dial zenka* as a liberating opportunity, where standards or even prohibitions can be breached. Food from outside the home thus paves the way for occasional, or even more permanent, changes from the usual and expected domestic meal preparation and management activities.

"A big snack, a light supper" – *cascrot* and lighter meals

Traditionally there are four main types of daily meals in Morocco: breakfast (*ftour*); lunch (*ghda,* ألغداء); snack (*cascrot*); and dinner (*3cha,* ألعشاء). Our survey confirmed the importance of these four mealtimes that mark people's everyday lives via food sharing[12]. It also led to more unexpected findings by revealing the importance, among the four meals, of the *cascrot* (afternoon snack) for many of the respondents in certain settings. The interviews—especially when they took place in the afternoon in the respondents' homes—gave us several opportunities to experience this moment of commensality shared by children, adults and sometimes visitors or neighbours passing by:

> "For me, the afternoon snack is important. I put an assortment of dishes on the table—first the basics: tea, olive oil, jam, bread, etc.; and depending on *lwajed* [لي واجد: what's available]: a cake and pancakes prepared the day before. Sometimes pizzas, or stuffed *batbout*, large *msemen* [pancakes] stuffed with minced meat or fat and onions. I adapt whatever I have at hand and serve it according to whatever is available, my state of mind, time, resources, etc." (woman manager, 48 years old, three children)

11. *Beldi* food products are highly regarded in Morocco. *Beldi* has several meanings: local, natural, long-standing, traditional, etc., while often being opposed to *rumi* (foreign, Christian, modern, etc.). This distinction could nevertheless be questioned with regard to practices, settings and the different related functions and meanings.

12. Note that the week is characterized by two distinct timelines: the five workdays and the weekends, generally non-work days (Saturday and Sunday). Mealtimes are also organized differently during festive events such as Ramadan, weddings or the sacrificial feast (*Aïd al-Adha* or *Aïd el-Khebir*).

Several respondents stressed the freedom they took in the preparation of the *cascrot*, which they presented as a meal without the stress that usually comes with food and culinary management:

> "I can no longer do without the *cascrot*. Allah! What peace of mind not to constantly have to worry about the dinner meal! After a good afternoon snack, if someone's hungry in the evening, he/she just gets up and prepares a small snack for him/herself." (unemployed woman, 45 years old, three children)

In the survey, the *cascrot* was thus found to be a focal point for ongoing changes, such as the easing of standards regarding the preparation and organization of culinary and food activities. In the *cascrot* setting, traditional meal requirements are being overturned, thereby providing leeway for initiative, freedom of action and even innovation in terms of food preparation and consumption habits. This afternoon snack enables individual consumption while remaining commensal from a spatiotemporal standpoint. Once the table is set, those present serve themselves, thus allowing for the staggered arrival of new guests, who can then readily partake in this food sharing. It is also a time for sociability and sharing with neighbours or unexpected visitors, free of the requirements and standards that come with regular meals.

The *cascrot* is wedged midway between lunch and dinner—two meals that are more highly ritualized. As we noted, this afternoon snack can even be a substitute for dinner, as is illustrated by this sentence uttered by several respondents: "A big snack, a light supper." The *cascrot* is a kind of buffer meal that enables women to optimize (and probably also reduce) the expenses and workload associated with dinner preparation. The dinner that follows a good *cascrot* is sometimes presented as a do-it-yourself, improvised meal made with leftovers from lunch or the night before, but this is not problematic or viewed negatively. The *cascrot* is reshaping gender roles regarding food organization and management of household food-related tasks.

New urban social horizons and culinary trends

New forms of food sociability develop on weekends, with outings that are becoming commonplace even among the most disadvantaged families. Whether at takeouts located on the outskirts of the city (where families mainly go to eat grilled meat), snack bars renowned for their sandwiches, fishmongers (small restaurants specializing in fried fish) or neighbourhood pizzerias, 'eating out' is becoming a ritual for many families.

Fridays and/or weekends are also opportunities to outsource meals, such as the Friday couscous meal. Weekends are thus an occasion to meet for family meals at the mother's or mother-in-law's home. This gives working women a chance to free themselves from culinary activities, while fulfilling the necessity of family visits, yet in a friendly and sociable setting.

It is customary in most Moroccan households to eat couscous every Friday—a day that Muslims traditionally devote to community prayer—yet now this dish is increasingly eaten on Saturdays and Sundays outside the household or in the homes of relatives of either spouse. This temporal shift in the couscous meal from a holy day to non-working days might be interpreted as a sign of secularization and, more prosaically, as an adaptation to the constraints of urban life in Casablanca.

By this shift, the responsibility for couscous preparation is reassigned to the wife's mother-in-law or mother. This corresponds to an inversion of roles—in the past, the preparation of this dish was one of the culinary rites of passage for the newly arrived bride in her in-laws' household. Yet this custom lost its significance as the visits to in-laws became less and less frequent and women took on salaried work to an increased extent. However, even when the family lives in independent accommodation, the transmission of know-how still prevails—with the mother and mother-in-law being the vectors:

> "I go to my mother's on Fridays for couscous. I meet my sisters and brothers and their children there. On Saturdays we go to my mother-in-law's for lunch and stay until the afternoon snack." (employee, 38 years old, two children)

In a city like Casablanca, this weekend couscous meal is a moment of respite for many women, especially when they have a salaried job and travel daily, as confirmed by many of the interviewed women.

The outsourcing of meals enables working women to lighten the burden of housework via the contribution of mothers or mothers-in-law. Freezing food is another workaround to ease the daily chores and enable them to fulfil the expectations of the nurturing mother role. The freezer[13] is thus a woman's ally and an essential accessory. Food and meals prepared in advance can be stored in the freezer, thus facilitating daily food management while, above all, enabling women to handle unexpected visits.

The family network also represents a key resource that enables women to outsource part of the culinary work (in return for payment), but without jeopardizing the homemade aspect of the meals:

> "I no longer make bread myself, I get my sister-in-law to make it. Every week she makes me homemade wholemeal bread and *msemen* [مسمن, Moroccan pancakes] which I put in the freezer...We help each other, while I lighten my load...I can't always knead the bread and she doesn't have much money since she doesn't have a job [i.e.salaried work]." (female employee, 40 years old, two children)

The urban lifestyle has thus fostered the emergence of new eating behaviours by modifying the material living conditions, meal patterns, eating venues and culinary methods.

⏩ To be or not to be *hàdga* – the complex distancing of expectations on women

Learning to cook was once a priority for young women in their quest to find a man[14] for her future home, but this no longer seemed to have the same necessary and decisive importance for the respondents. Hence, although the majority of the

13. "Beyond the practical aspect of the technique, freezing encompasses powerful social and symbolic issues [...] the freezer is more than just a kitchen utensil. It embodied the principles of life of the families we surveyed—principles underpinned by a quest for the natural and management of timeframes." (Adamiec and Savani, 2018: 123).

14. Sexuality and food were often associated during the survey. Several of the women interviewed maintained—often laughing—that the majority of men "think with their stomachs" while being "blinded" by a dual desire for sex and good food.

women interviewed agreed that a very good cook has more chance of success on the marriage market, they were not enthusiastic about their own ability to take on this 'nurturing cook' role, which is often relegated to the past:

> "Our grandmothers' era was long ago. Wives gauged themselves by the quality of their cuisine, by their *hdaga* [حداقة] [...]. The days and seasons passed and they were constantly at the stove, cooking, cleaning, doing the laundry, taking care of the children..." (Saleswoman, 35 years old, two children)

According to the *Dictionnaire Colin d'arabe dialectal marocain*, *hdaga* refers to "finesse of mind, perspicacity, dexterity [...] ability and know-how", especially of a good housewife. The adjective *hàdga* (حادقة) refers to a person who is "ingenious (in household matters), skilful, hard-working, industrious, diligent, active, careful, competent and thrifty" (Iraqui-Sinaceur, 1993: 294). The term *hàdga* is thus used to praise women's excellence in domestic tasks—cooking, housekeeping, household management and care of the various family members, etc. Note that *hadga* was only mentioned by respondents in reference to the immediate past, perhaps because it is the past from which they wanted to distance themselves, that of their mothers or grandmothers who were subject to a strict gendered division and hierarchization of household roles. Having to assume the role of cook and nurturing wife/mother was therefore often viewed as a source of constraint rather than reward.

However, the attachment to cuisine and nurturing skills also seems to be losing ground. Some attitudes reveal the pressures that, for instance, accompany the admission of some men into this culinary sphere that was formerly reserved for women.

An increasing number of men appear to be, in the words of one respondent, "good intermittent cooks"[15]. Several of the men interviewed told us about their occasional culinary activities. The same respondent added: "There are men who make excellent food. Women must not like them too much [laughing]" (teacher, 45, two children). This latter remark illustrates the power issues that prevail around cuisine, i.e. still strongly marked by the gendered division of labour and housework, which the following respondent expressed even more clearly:

> "My wife cooks well. Her cuisine is good, but not delicious—let's just say it's edible... But when I cook, it's *idida* [delicious]...You eat it and you serve yourself another portion [broad smile]! I take my time when I cook. My wife says that I can boast as much as I want but it means nothing as long as I don't cook on a daily basis..." (employee, 44 years old, three children)

The relevance of the *hàdga* woman, gifted with *hdaga*, could also be measured through the reasons that some respondents—youth, salaried workers or those contributing to the family budget—were keen to provide to explain their requests to their husbands that they contribute to the culinary and (more broadly) domestic tasks:

> "I understand that at the beginning of a marriage you want to do things right, do everything right. Prepare good little dishes for two! But once the children are born you very quickly realize that with all the work, the weight of daily life and the tempo of your

15. This does not mean that many men cook. Most of the male respondents showed only very moderate willingness to contribute to culinary work, and when they did it was only when they felt that their lifestyles, professional constraints and habits outside the home (cafés, entertainment, etc.) left them sufficient leeway. Going to cafés is still a male activity and accounted for 1 h 54 min a day for 25% of the men surveyed, compared to 1% of the women. (HCP, 2011).

> life, they [men] can no longer sit in the living room with their legs crossed. They have to get involved in the cooking, even if it's only a bit...Unless they are inconsiderate or have no desire to spend time with their wives!" (secretary, 32 years old, two children)

Several times respondents also expressed exasperation and said they were "fed up" with their kitchen responsibilities. The help they requested from the husband could be interpreted, first, as a search for a solution marking a break with the past and the model of the *hàdga* woman, whose main concern was to maintain the wellbeing of her husband and children and, secondly, as evidence of the ever-present weight of this normative figure. This exasperation was also expressed by women benefitting from domestic help. Even in this situation, they felt that they were responsible for ensuring a balanced diet for the family and for the meal quality, which underlines the importance of the largely internalized expectations related to food and meal organization, planning and management.

While significant changes have taken place in women's relationship with culinary work, there is still heavy pressure on them to be *hàdga*. For women, this situation generates tensions between the normative expectations they face—exacerbated by the accompanying judgements—and their personal aspirations (e.g. to earn a living in a self-sufficient way, to advance in their careers and have recreational pastimes). The changes affecting gendered labour division in culinary chores and women's roles are nevertheless marked by some degree of normative inertia since cuisine is "pivotal to the social and individual identity—it provides a grid for contemplating the world and determining where one stands so as to be able to become part of it" (Fischler, 1990: 87).

⏩ Daily meal preparation – between exasperation and consentment

More than any other domestic activity, meal preparation seemed to be the one activity that generated the most mental workload for the women we interviewed:

> "There are times when I get overwhelmed, *safi*! [enough!] I don't want to hear about food, cooking or anything else...But what can you do? You still have to get up despite yourself! I tell myself that these are my kids and that I have to feed and take care of them even if I'm fed up [she used the French expression *ras-le-bol*]... I blame Satan for this state and I force myself to get up and move on! Religion helps a lot at such times—I tell myself that God will reward me, he'll reward all mothers... The good Lord doesn't forget mothers..." (unemployed, 40 years old, three children)

The mental workload in the kitchen—which involves pondering the menu, always managing, dealing with whatever is at hand or getting things done even if the fridge and pockets are empty—is a daily management routine that sometimes leads women to overload and exhaustion.

Criticism of meal preparation as a routine and mentally demanding task was a key finding of our survey. This opinion was indeed very recurrent and spontaneously emerged in our discussions with the respondents:

> "I think about the next day's programme in the evening. When I put my head on the pillow, I ask myself what I'm going to make for dinner. Then I go through what leftovers are in the fridge, what vegetables there are! I say to myself that I have leftovers of this or that, I'm going to do this or that!!! *Safi*, that's it! In the morning,

> I wake up early for the *fajr* [dawn] prayer—may God accept it—I prepare breakfast for the children and then sit down for a while and rest, and on and on….I knead the bread and set it aside, I mop the floor and clean the house, wash the dishes and then go back to the kitchen to spend the morning: lunch, afternoon snack...” (*mourchida* [religious counsellor], 44 years old, three children)

Of all household activities, our results revealed that cooking was the most criticized task since it was only women who thought about it, while also having to prepare meals for the others. Men, even those who were the most actively involved in housework, tended to focus solely on certain tasks that they considered 'acceptable'—from the standpoint of the gendered division of housework—and did not challenge their status as men[16].

Torn between their determination to safeguard their children’s wellbeing and the pressure to meet their husband’s expectations, tensions run high in women’s relationship to the kitchen—to the extent that some women have a hard time coping and thus distance themselves from these normative expectations:

> “My mother spent all her life in the kitchen, everything we ate was prepared by her. And she still makes me bread, *rghaif* [pancakes] and *briouates* [stuffed turnovers] that I put in the freezer... I couldn’t do what she did. As for my daughter, once she’s married, I’m sure the freezer and pressure cooker will be her allies [laughs].” (teacher, 36 years old, two children)

The women surveyed compared their domestic responsibilities and workloads with men’s contributions. The mere fact that they allowed themselves to make this comparison signals a departure from the conventional *hdaga* woman self-image. It also highlights the development among these women of a deep awareness of the commitment and efforts made to meet the household needs and of the asymmetry between men and women in this regard.

A food-oriented reflexivity[17] is underway while marking a departure from maternal food norms—the fact of doing things differently from one’s own mother or mother-in-law, motivated by necessity and sometimes even asserted, was stated in the following terms:

> “My mother-in-law is not happy to see her son come home and have a reheated dish that I had previously cooked and frozen, but there’s no other way, my salary is as necessary as his.” (teacher, 38 years old, two children)[18]

16. The National Time Use Survey 2011/2012—a large-scale quantitative survey to classify the activities of Moroccan men and women conducted by the High Commission for Planning – Morocco (HCP)—provides information on the distribution of household work time between men and women. Men spent barely 5 min a day on cooking, regardless of socioprofessional category. The same survey states that: “within the couple, 41% of husbands said they have never taken part in domestic chores.” And that “only 9% of married men said they shared domestic chores with their wives, and one in five of them admitted to doing so because of his wife’s work.” Finally, “half of married men confirmed that they did so only when necessary (in the event of the wife’s illness or absence).” (HCP, 2011-2012: 83).

17. This reflexivity could be seen through a process of distancing from the prevailing culinary norms, which involves both critical attitudes towards the various restrictions women face, and ways of doing things, managing and innovating in the culinary field, in order to find solutions—less costly in terms of time and mental burden—to the practical problems they encounter on a daily basis. Regarding the development of this reflexivity in the modern food context, see for example de Labarre (2001).

18. This verbatim statement also highlights the ever-present favoritism towards sons in households and the assertion of the primacy of men over women (Lacoste-Dujardin, 1985).

As for men, the change underway—giving greater legitimacy to individual aspirations—seems to be more favourably viewed when their judgements are focused on their daughters instead of their wives:

> "I would like my daughter to succeed in her education to enable her to have a good career. This would give her self-sufficiency... She could choose a good partner and have help at home..." (employee, 35 years old, two children)

Among the youngest of the respondents, this awareness was reflected in their insistence on the barriers to self-respect imposed by domestic roles. They thus felt that concern for others, as well as the commitment and demand to be permanently available, was at odds with caring for themselves, which generated openly voiced frustrations. These observations led us to examine the structural social changes underway, as clearly seen in the daily interactions taking place around food and cuisine.

This need for women to be constantly available to carry out domestic tasks, especially cooking, was experienced by many as a barrier that kept them from fulfilling their potential and achieving their individual aspirations. This individualization process, which was more prominent among youth, was also reflected in older women's opinions of previous generations:

> "We were seven children and my mother was also in charge of feeding us well with whatever food my father could bring her. He was uncompromising and my mother bent to his wishes and tastes... On top of that, everything had to be homemade! A lifetime of chores, *tamar* [تمارا]! 24 h a day." (trainer, 50 years old, three children)

Conclusion

At first glance, there seems to be marked gender division with regard to roles and housework in Moroccan households today. We nevertheless contend that discrete yet powerful dynamics prevail, which our survey revealed through a study of interactions within family households as well as the attendant narratives.

While women still manage the food and culinary activities, girls are focusing to a greater extent on their studies, which in turn reduces the amount of time they can spend on cooking and the importance of cuisine in their social lives.

Our survey revealed how the conventional model of women's socialization and the organization of family life based on gendered competence (*hdaga*) is being reshaped. The socialization of girls—which in the past was marked by the transmission of culinary skills—is undergoing profound changes. There seems to be a noticeable decline in the weight of women's domestic role in managing food and meals and, more generally, family life.

In women's discussions and practices, we did not notice any fundamental questioning of the division of gendered social roles, but rather a quest for adjustment and rebalancing. These adjustments reflect an ongoing process of change among the new generations, the effects of which will probably be more tangible in urban areas and in families where women generate income and have a paid job.

We noted some involvement of boys—sometimes even husbands—in food-related tasks. Husbands may be called upon to participate in tasks such as shopping, setting and clearing the table, washing up, reheating a dish and even cooking their own meals.

Women's need to assert their individuality in family life and the legitimacy they attached to caring for themselves—sometimes even to the detriment of their meal-making roles—are clear signs of the shifting trends. Beyond their responsibilities as mothers and wives, the women surveyed thus affirmed their personal aspirations. This was reflected in their sharp criticism of their daily lives, in their yearning for alternative couple lifestyles and relationships with men, including notions of sharing, mutual aid, understanding and empathy, and in the affirmation of greater self-concern (desire to have a career, care for their bodies and eat healthier meals).

Do these changes challenge the functioning of the prevailing structures within the family and in the relationships between spouses and between parents and children? There is still no clearcut answer to this question, but our study revealed the tensions that women experience and the trade-offs they have to make between different sources of pressure, between standards, values and social practices. Women cope with these tensions by adopting strategies that enable them to juggle their family responsibilities with their personal and professional aspirations. This is the case, for instance, with regard to the hiring of paid or unpaid kitchen help within the family circle, as well as to practical arrangements whereby meals prepared in advance are frozen for later use, purchases of takeout meals or the substitution of the *cascrot* for dinner.

At first glance, women's empowerment aspirations seem to be in stark contrast to the pressure of social injunctions that are geared towards perpetuating the role of being responsible for and guardian of family food traditions. These two dimensions are, however, not viewed as contradictory and, in practice, gender roles are clearly being reshaped, along with fine-adjustments in daily lifestyle choices.

⏩ References

Adamiec C., Savani M., 2018. Le congélateur : un dispositif “ trans ”. *Techniques & Culture*, 69: 112-125.

Corbeau J.P., 1992. Rituels alimentaires et mutations sociales. *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, 92: 101-120.

Corbeau J.-P, Poulain J.-P., 2002. *Penser l'alimentation entre imaginaire et rationalité*. Paris, Éditions Privat, 206 p.

Denèfle S. (dir.), 2004. Introduction. *In: Femmes et villes*. Tours, Presses universitaires François-Rabelais: 13-21.

Fischler C., 1990. *L'homnivore : le goût, la cuisine et le corps*. Paris, Odile Jacob, 414 p.

Fournier T. *et al.*, 2015. L'alimentation, arme du genre. *Journal des anthropologues*, 140-141(1): 19-49.

Garine I. (de), 1980. Évolution contemporaine des croyances et interdits alimentaires. *Présence Africaine*, 113: 129-146.

Goody J., 1982. Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology. Cambridge University Press, 264 p.

High Commission for Planning of Morocco (HCP), 2011-2012. *Enquête emploi du temps des hommes et des femmes au Maroc*.

Iraqui-Sinaceur Z. (dir.), 1993. *Dictionnaire Colin d'arabe dialectal marocain*. Rabat, Al Manahil, vol. 2.

Labarre M (de), 2001. Les trois dimensions de l'expérience alimentaire du mangeur : l'exemple du sud-ouest français. *Anthropology of Food*, [Online], S1.

Lacoste-Dujardin C., 1985. *Des mères contres des femmes. Maternité et patriarcat au Maghreb*. Paris, La Découverte, 268 p.

Naciri M., 2018. *Désirs de ville*. Rabat, Économie critique, 598 p.

Poulain J.-P., 2017. *The Sociology of Food: Eating and the place of food in society*. London, Bloomsbury, 312 p.

Rachik H., 2005. *Rapport de synthèse de l'enquête nationale sur les valeurs.* Cinquantenaire de l'Indépendance du Maroc, cinquante ans de développement humain et Perspectives 2025, 76 p.

Verdier Y., 1979. *Façons de dire, façons de faire. La laveuse, la couturière, la cuisinière*. Paris, Gallimard, 376 p.

Zirari H., 2006. Évolution des conditions de vie des femmes au Maroc. *Rapport du cinquantenaire de l'Indépendance du Maroc*: 70-189.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Farid Ghrich, who contributed to the field survey via interviews of men and teenage girls, for his intellectual involvement throughout this phase, as well as the student researchers Saad Jafri, Soufiane Lachhab, Kchikech Zakia, Soumia Ezzikouri and Errifaiy Amina, who facilitated contacts in the field and helped transcribe the interviews. I also thank Nicolas Bricas, Olivier Lepiller, Audrey Soula and Chelsie Yount-André of the CIRAD joint research unit (UMR) MOISA for their support and critical rereading of this chapter. This research was carried out as part of a collaboration between CIRAD and Danone Nutricia Research and benefited from fruitful discussions with teams in Morocco and France.

Chapter 3

Can I trust this food? Trust and distrust in eating among middle-class youth in urban India

Shagufa Kapadia

Summary. The chapter presents an ethnographic study in an urban Indian setting. It discusses how youth notions of trust and distrust mediate their eating choices in the context of macro level changes in food systems. Two aspects are discussed. The first examines the extensive popularity of a packaged product Maggi noodles and the sustained trust invested in it across generations. The second analyses eating out, a common practice among urban middle-class youth.

Globalization, youth and trust

Globalization and changing food systems in India

Globalization is a process that involves exchange of people, products and processes across the world (Bhagwati, 2007). For some people, these exchanges have had positive outcomes, like increased quality of life, social mobility, access to new technologies, and opportunities for economic growth. Often however, these transformations have come at the cost of more negative outcomes, like the breakdown of cultural values and traditions, increased dependence on foreign resources, and decreased predictability and control (over the economic and political context) (Marsella, 2012).

In India, many of the changes associated with 'globalization' arose as the result of economic reforms in 1991, popularly known as Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization (LPG), which facilitated the country's entry into neoliberal global capitalism. These changes favoured free trade across borders and entry of foreign investors, especially multinational corporations, in efforts to further integrate India into the global economy. These political and economic transformations contributed to substantial changes to food systems worldwide. In India, like elsewhere in the developing world, the liberalization of the market, foreign

DOI : 10.35690/978-2-7592-3091-4/c3

direct investments, and increasing incomes combined with social drivers like urban migration and the employment of women worked to reconfigure the ways people access, prepare, and eat food (FAO, 2004).

In only a few decades, the Indian food system changed from predominantly home-based food production and preservation to one increasingly based on processed and packaged foods accessible in the mushrooming supermarkets in cities and small towns. Urbanites' physical and economic access to food has also changed, along with the sorts of advertising and information regarding food quality and safety to which consumers are exposed (HLPE, 2017). India's traditional food supply chains were unable to meet the demands of its increasingly urban population and consumers' desires for ever-more diverse foods and Western imports. The retail food sector has thus transformed and modernized, centred around large supplier organizations with increasing food imports and Western fast food chains (e.g. McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Subway) (Pingali, 2007).

Transformations in food systems have reshaped dietary patterns, especially in urban middle-class households. Among these upwardly mobile families, two forms of dietary change coexist. On the one hand, scholars have observed income-induced diet diversification accompanied by a growing concern for the nutritive value of the food, among middle-class consumers who continue to consume traditional dishes on a daily basis. And on the other, the globalization and Westernization of diets, which often includes a preference for processed convenience food and drinks available at super markets and fast-food outlets is also common among members of this social class (Pingali and Khwaja, 2004). Rising incomes have simultaneously urged a movement toward more variety and foods of higher nutritional value and a willingness to pay for convenience in terms of shorter cooking time, especially in case of women in urban contexts, who work outside the home. Age and life stage also play a role in diet patterns. Whereas food habits of older generations have remained largely stable during this time, younger generations have been more influenced by new foods, especially those presented through aggressive advertising campaigns targeted at youth (Pingali and Khwaja, 2004).

Trust in the globalizing context

Issues of trust occupy centre stage in contemporary eating practices in India, where the food system is in flux. Food is caught in a vortex of mixed and often conflicting messages, compelling eaters to continually deal with questions of what foods they should trust. Several factors create misgivings regarding the safety of food, and distrust as its corollary. Food borne illnesses linked to poor environmental sanitation, lack of access to safe water and poor disease surveillance, although underreported, are a common occurrence. Food adulteration, intentional or incidental, is another aspect that is of concern as it renders the food unsafe, sub-standard, misbranded or containing extraneous matter, resulting in serious health issues (Paul *et al*., 2015). With the advancement and proliferation of communication technology and easy access to media, especially electronic, there is growing awareness of such matters.

Profiling the urban Indian middle class

Neoliberal economic reforms raised the economic growth rate in India, widening opportunities for social mobility. The era witnessed the growth of a 'New' Middle Class (NMC) whose disposable incomes made it possible for them to participate actively in the market economy as consumers. Unlike older bureaucratic middle classes, whose status was contingent on education and their stable jobs in the public sector, for newer, entrepreneurial middle classes, status is increasingly defined through consumption practices from clothes to music to travel and to food. As such, in scholarly analysis and the perspective of Indians alike, this middle class is often conceived of as a bearer of new values and lifestyles. For members of the middle class, secure salaried jobs provide adequate income to spend on everyday needs of eating and drinking as well as on entertainment, and health care. Many accumulate assets, have at least two vehicles, and own large houses with amenities (e.g. washing machines and microwave ovens), where they live with their children in smaller mostly nuclear families (Banerji and Duflo, 2008). Notwithstanding the heterogeneity within this population, key features of the new middle class are upward mobility, consumerism, education, access to new media and communication technologies (Varma, 2007). Consumption as a defining character is particularly notable among middle-class youth who are the favoured targets of the market.

Youth in urban middle class

With a youth population of 365 million, India is on the brink of becoming the youngest nation in the world by 2020 with an average age of 29 years (UNFPA India, nd). Globalization has brought about considerable change in the living conditions of youth, especially in well-off middle-class households. The youth of today have ample opportunities to get to know multiple cultures, whether first hand or through the Internet and TV (Jensen and Arnett, 2012). Youth, who are more likely than adults to experiment with diverse practices in clothing styles, music, movies, and food are particularly receptive to the influences of globalization. Indian youth today have developed a bicultural identity encompassing local and global cultures (Arnett, 2002). Jensen (2011) highlights influence of globalization on youth's language practices, media consumption and diets, each of which are integrally embedded in their development of (cultural) identity. With regard to dietary aspects, she emphasizes features such as the changes in local cuisines and increase in the availability of Western fast food in the developing world.

Eating out is a social activity favoured by middle-class families and youth in particular, who are especially drawn to fast food outlets. Over half of urban middle-class Indians eat out at least once a month while 30% eat out at least twice a month (Bamzai and Dangor, 2005). The practice is especially pronounced in cities. As Appadurai (1988) observed decades ago, restaurant eating has become increasingly common in Indian cities as wealthy families began to socialize outside and working men and women found it easier to eat out than to bring food from home. New cuisine has been flourishing, not only in middle-class homes, but also public arenas, favouring thereby

institutional large scale public food consumption. There is greater diversity in what middle-class people eat as evinced in the growing inclination to eat foods from other regions and cultures. This scenario is amply evident in today's city life.

For youth, eating out fulfils multiple needs: introducing variety in their diets and allowing them to socialize with friends. Youth are particularly drawn to *larris* or food carts, which mostly serve *chatpata* (spicy and tangy) food, a foundational flavour in the Indian palate. A recent study on fast food consumption among college students in and around Delhi revealed that although most claimed that homemade food is 'better', youth regularly frequent fast food restaurants for fun and a change from home food. Taste and nutritional quality, followed by ambience and hygiene emerged as the primary factors that drew individuals to these places (Goyal and Singh, 2007). Another study in North India (Chandigarh) revealed that convenience and price were the common reasons for visiting fast food outlets (Aloia *et al*., 2013).

The activity of eating out and the overall proliferation of food choices compel urban youth to make judgments regarding the benefits and risks of various foods, relative to the quality and economic value of the eating establishment and type of food it offers. Questions of trust hence come to the fore.

Notwithstanding the increasing practice of eating out, homemade food is considered as most *shuddha* (pure). The value of homemade is in consonance with core cultural and religious beliefs associated with *ayurvedic* principles (e.g. *satvic* food equals vegetarian and fresh). Further, the food is prepared in the family, the heart of the Indian society and a space that symbolizes unquestionable trust.

The ethnographic study discussed in this chapter addresses how youth's notions of trust and distrust mediate their food choices in the context of macro level changes in food systems such as industrialization of food and the upsurge of restaurants in the city. Two aspects are discussed. One is related to the industrialization of food and the other is related to the growing phenomenon of youth eating out. The first case examines the extensive popularity of Maggi noodles, demonstrating a strengthening of trust in a packaged Western product, over generations. The second case examines the phenomenon of eating out, a common practice among urban middle-class youth.

Methodology

Five focus group discussions were conducted with groups of 8-10 young men and women aged 18 to 21 years. All were college students from educated urban middle-class families in Baroda, a mid-sized fast growing city in Gujarat state in the Western region of India. All individuals lived at home with their parents. The discussions focused on notions of trust in general, as well as the concept of trust and risk specifically as related to food (types of foods trusted, reasons, etc.). Focus group discussions additionally examined Indian cultural ways of eating, purchase of food/groceries/brands, everyday eating habits, and eating out. The focus groups were conducted in the local language Gujarati and translated into English. Following each focus group, the interview guide was refined to include questions that would further explore aspects that had emerged in the prior focus groups. The data were analysed using open coding and a thematic approach to elicit the salient themes.

⏩ Trust and distrust: a perpetual balancing act

The curious case of Maggi noodles: trust betrayed, trust restored

Anju shares enthusiastically:

> "I love Maggi noodles! I can make it myself, and the taste compared to other noodles is better. Moreover, we have eaten it since childhood."

Nestlé, the world's largest food and beverage company, is a household name in India. Its flagship product Maggi 2-minute Noodles has long become a favourite packaged snack in Indian homes across urban and rural regions and socioeconomic groups. The company has built consumer trust over three decades since the product was launched in 1983.

Noodles, a food item imported from Europe and perceived in India as Western, gained popularity in India essentially thanks to the brief cooking time, which stands in stark contrast with longstanding preparation methods in India which require slow cooking. Its appeal among urban middle-class women was particularly strong, in that it liberated these 'Maggi Moms'—a term coined by Nestlé, from the long hours spent in the kitchen, giving them time to manage work outside the home and other domestic responsibilities. Over time, Nestlé has made concerted efforts to transform the product to suit the Indian palate, featuring at least some spices, for example, Maggi Masala (Spicy Maggi).

The Maggi story represents a successful phenomenon of an organization establishing trust in a foreign product in Indian households. Noodles (or any form of pasta) are associated with the West, a desirable symbol of modernity and the economic mobility it promises, enhancing the appeal of this food, particularly among an urban middle class with aspirations of Western modernity. Youth especially have embraced the product as it offers variety and change from traditional Indian food, is symbolic of social mobility, and can be cooked in only 2 minutes, a quick form of food preparation that is more manageable and empowering for youth than the slow cooking that traditional Indian dishes entail. Many of youth in the study grew up eating these noodles, likely raised by so-called 'Maggi Moms' which fostered their favourable attitudes toward the product. Aspects such as familiarity, emotional connection (images of the caring and loving 'Maggi Mom' who can meet the child's or family's need for hunger in just 2 minutes), positive and reliable past experiences with the product and the brand, and its versatile and flexible character (the noodles can be mixed with other vegetables and Indian dishes) have played a key role in enhancing trust in the product and overcoming an episode of distrust. Functionality is also at play in the ease and quickness in reaching the goal of preparing a dish that is widely liked by all family members. In this way, the woman is freed from long hours in the kitchen while simultaneously enabling her to preserve her traditional social role and image of *Annapurna* (Goddess of Food)[1].

In June 2015, this familiar household food triggered one of the worst food scares in India in a decade. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) found

1. The term *Annapurna* is derived from Sanskrit and means the giver of food and nourishment. *Anna* means 'food' or 'grains' and *purna* means 'full, complete and perfect'.

hazardous amounts of lead in the noodles[2]. The company was compelled to take its product off the Indian shelves pushing their sales from 80% share of the noodles market to zero in one month. The product returned to the Indian market in June 2016.

Despite the Maggi Noodles crisis, the product continues to be a favourite among Indian families, particularly children and youth. Some youth in our study went so far as to defend the brand, expressing uncertainty regarding accusations of high levels of lead, and suggesting that the crisis may have been a conspiracy driven by business rivalry. Yagya explains:

> "In the Maggi case there was supposed to be high lead content. But, see, all processed foods have preservatives. People have been eating Maggi since years, especially young children love it and have been eating it a lot. So then, why was it not a problem earlier? I don't think the demand for Maggi has reduced because of this incident. In our home, we eat Maggi since several years. Like if there is nothing, there is Maggi at least."

In general, the participants reported placing their trust in food experts and consumer organizations, expressing high distrust of media and news channels, politicians and the food processing industry, as all of these bodies were seen to have vested interests. Yet Maggi noodles seem to have escaped this generalized mistrust of food corporations, emerging from the lead crisis relatively unscathed in the opinions of middle-class youth who questioned, instead, the motivations of those who spread the information regarding the product's lead content. Sonal shared:

> "I would trust Food Experts. Media does not show everything. Big companies are powerful and so they too do not tell all. See, Nestlé had acquired a big name, so then the competitors created the problem so that they could sell their products."

Such a defense of the product is a testament to the trust that the brand has been able to establish among young urban middle-class consumers.

Eating out: a (mostly) trustworthy activity for Indian youth

The everyday context of eating for contemporary Indian youth needs to be understood in relation to their life style. College students are busy, juggling their time between classes, homework, and leisure. A large part of their day is spent outside the house. Very few bring lunch from home, preferring to eat in the college cafeteria, which mostly sells fast foods, both Indian (vada pau, samosa, etc.) and Western (pizzas, burgers, etc.), or at fast food restaurants and *larris* (handcarts or food stalls) near their campus.

While some individuals reported eating out because they like the taste of these foods, others say that they have no option, given that their mothers are unable to prepare lunch for them, especially if these latter work outside the home. As Ajay puts it: "We have to eat. So whatever is available close by, we eat; we do not think that much". Street food sold at hand carts (*larris*) is particularly popular among youth as it is *chatpata* (spicy snacks like *pani puri, pau bhaji*). Among foods bought from the cafeteria or food stands, *vada pav* (bread with patties) and Chinese foods (prepared

2. http://www.businesstoday.in/current/corporate/maggi-noodle-crisis-how-it-all-began/story/220287.html (accessed November 15, 2017).

with Indian spices), especially noodles, are favourite items that youth qualify as "affordable and filling at the same time". Maggi noodles are a special favourite and even Nescafe coffee kiosks on university campuses sell this 'quick snack'.

Larris or handcarts have been an integral facet of the urban Indian landscape. This, despite the fact that the foods they sell are generally perceived to be of questionable quality and hygiene. The *larri* foods are also cheap and readily available at all hours of the day and night and their appeal spans socioeconomic class and age. For urban middle-class youth, *larris* not only meet their hunger needs but also function as hangout places to socialize with friends. Although concerns about cleanliness of *larri* food abound among middle-class youth, they remain popular. In defense of *larri* food, Rohan shares:

> "If there is [a] time constraint and the schedule is busy, you eat whatever is quickly available. And these days they keep the *larris* clean. If nothing (bad) happens after eating at a certain place or a certain food item, then it is good; when we are hungry we eat anything from outside, especially when we are with friends."

In the same vein, Arti shares:

> "Street foods are good, [they] are tasty and *chatpata* (spicy), [they] offer variety, are cheaper and hence fit within our budget."

He added that because street vendors prepare foods in front of their customers, there is a certain transparency in the preparation, and furthermore, *larris* quickly use their ingredients, "so the ingredients have to be fresh," he reasoned. "Of course, the surroundings may not be very clean," he conceded, "but the food makes up for it". The attitude toward street food is also related to the type of food, that is, whether it is vegetarian or non-vegetarian. The latter tends to evoke more distrust as the quality of the meat may be largely dubious. The outlook also varies with changing seasons. Mayuri opines:

> "Whether to trust a food or not also depends on the time of the year. For instance, we do not eat *panipuri* during rainy season… we are afraid of the quality of water during this season as there is likely to be contamination. Milk products are also risky at this time… so one needs to be careful as one may get ill."

Middle-class youth symbolize an image of a 'pragmatic eater' who is inclined to eat at home as well as outside. Although the 'pragmatic eater' firmly trusts and prefers homemade food, she displays flexibility and practicality in eating out. The absolute trust in homemade food emerges from the Indian-Hindu cultural mentality that homemade food is fresh, clean and pure – basic principles of a healthy diet as per *Ayurveda.* Relational elements come into play as in most instances the food is cooked by the mother, who is a naturally trustworthy figure, close to the individual; and, there is strong familiarity as well as an emotional connect in this relationship.

The familiarity that is experienced with food prepared at home extends to street food that offers an increasingly familiar informal setting which not only fulfils the need to satisfy hunger, but satiates as well the desire for *chatpata* (spicy) taste that is inherent to the Indian palate. It also offers the variety that home food may not always have. Street food places often become 'hang outs' for youth, who develop, in turn, an emotional connection with these foods. Certain street food vendors become more popular and students soon develop an informal relationship with vendors, who youth often address

by name, using suffixes that index Indian kinship terms, like "*bhai*" (brother), "*kaka*" (uncle) or "*masi*" (maternal aunt). Uses of such addresses increases familiarity and in turn trust. A few individuals also have 'accounts' at a particular *larri* (food cart) with an informal agreement to settle payments at the end of every week or month. Further, regular patrons are given discounts. The process of trust judgment thus initially evolves from experiential evidence of gains and losses as well as sociocultural and relational factors, and in due course, it becomes a default and habitual judgment.

⏩ Conclusion

The findings discussed above reveal the counter-intuitive character of the young urban eater and suggest that trust and distrust in food manifests along a flexible dynamic continuum.

Homemade food evokes complete trust. Packaged and branded foods cooked at home also largely inspire trust as these are regarded as meeting basic food processing and safety standards. Eating out occupies an ambivalent position in the trust-distrust continuum.

Urbanization, industrialization and entry of multinational food chains present a macro context, which plays a significant role in reconfiguring the relationship between trust and food. Changing socioeconomic contexts, specifically the increasing industrialization of food, and youth desire for modernity, social mobility and variety in a familiar interpersonal environment, mediate individual decisions regarding trust and distrust in food. Overall there has been a tremendous increase in the availability and purchase of processed and packaged foods, across all expenditure classes except the lowest classes that consist 20% of the population (Vepa, 2004). Employed urban middle-class women commonly buy readymade packaged food products that shorten the time spent in cooking, like Maggi noodles. The widespread acceptance of Maggi noodles initially came into being as an instrumental necessity and gradually transformed into an accepted practice in families as it afforded them convenience, variety and change from everyday traditional foods. Moreover, factors such as growing familiarity, emotional connect, ease and versatility in preparation, in terms of adaptability to suit one's taste have rendered it a character that parallels homemade food.

Although homemade food is the epitome of trust, eating out is a common practice among urban youth. The activity is an integral part of their daily routine and shared habit with friends. Young people are aware that outside food is not widely associated with purity like homemade food, and hence are aware that it cannot be completely trusted. Nevertheless, they display a flexible and pragmatic attitude toward eating out. Restaurant and café food is attributed somewhat greater trust than street food, yet street food is more popular among students due to economic constraints and the diverse offering available. First-hand experience plays a role in determining trust on street foods. Young individuals weigh the pros and cons of eating out and generally the absence of any overt negative health consequence is an important factor, which reinforces and strengthens trust. At the same time, the degree of trust fluctuates according to the season in that it wanes toward distrust during the monsoon as the food carts (*larris*) may not adhere to the basic minimum standards of hygiene and sanitation augmenting thereby the risk of waterborne illnesses.

The two examples of Maggi noodles and eating out discussed above reveal a dynamic relationship between trust and distrust in food that fluctuates as per the transformations in the economic-political contexts and everyday interpersonal interactions. Youth engage in continuous trade-offs to derive a working balance that is adaptive to the context. In general, they seem to be more focused on aspects they can trust rather than distrust. Little thought is given to the risk factors such as quality of the raw ingredients used (e.g., oil, flour, spices etc.) or the manner in which the dishware at the *larris*/food carts is washed and any health consequences thereof. Overall, youth orientation to trust-distrust in eating represents trade-offs surrounding their busy routines and the necessity of eating, as well as potential risk versus its *chatpata* taste and value for money. Factors such as 'live' cooking which mitigates an unclean environment and the desire for variety also play a role.

The parameters of trust in food among urban Indian youth reflect cultural principles as well as contemporary influences to create an adaptable dynamic fit with the changing context. Young individuals' notion of trust is flexible to incorporate elements that fall short of the ideal that they know is accessible only in homemade food.

⏩ References

Aloia C.R., Gasevic D., Yusuf S., Teo K., Chocklingam A., Patro B.K., Kumar R., Lear S.A., 2013. Differences in perceptions and fast food eating behaviours between Indians living in high-and low-income neighbourhoods of Chandigarh, India. *Nutrition Journal*, 12(4): 1-8.

Appadurai A., 1988. How to make a national cuisine: Cookbooks in contemporary India. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30(1): 3-24.

Arnett J.J., 2002. The psychology of globalization. *American Psychologist*, 57(10): 774-783.

Bamzai K., Dangor K., 2005. Much to chew upon. *India Today*, July 11.

Banerjee A.V., Duflo E., 2008. What is middle class about the middle classes around the world? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 22(2): 3-28.

Bhagwati J.N., 2007. *In defense of globalization*. Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 344 p.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2004. *Globalization of food systems in developing countries: impact on food security and nutrition*. FAO Food and Nutrition Paper 83, Rome, 107 p.

Goyal A., Singh N.P., 2007. Consumer perception about fast food in India: an exploratory study. *British Food Journal*, 109(2): 182-195.

High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), 2017. *Nutrition and food systems*. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome, 152 p.

Jensen L.A., 2011. Navigating local and global worlds: Opportunities and risks for adolescent cultural identity development. *Psychological Studies*, 56(1): 62-70.

Jensen L.A., Arnett J.J., 2012. Going global: New pathways for adolescents and emerging adults in a changing world. *Journal of Social Issues*, 68(3): 473-492.

Marsella A., 2012. Psychology and globalization: understanding a complex relationship. *Journal of Social Issues*, 68(3), special issue: 454-472.

Paul B., Patel P., Malik J.S., Gera V., 2015. Food safety: The Indian perspective. *National Journal of Community Medicine*, 6(2): 153-155.

Pingali P., 2007. Westernization of Asian diets and the transformation of food systems: Implications for research and policy. *Food Policy*, 32(3): 281-298.

Pingali P., Khwaja Y., 2004. Globalisation of Indian diets and the transformation of food supply systems. *ESA Working Paper*, FAO, 04-05: 1-33.

UNFPA India, sans date. *Ninth Country Programme Highlights. India Country Office at a Glance*. https://india.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA%20Profile_combined.pdf (accessed on 03/12/2019).

Vepa S.S., 2004. Impact of globalization on the food consumption of urban India. *In: Globalization of food systems in developing countries: Impact on food security and nutrition*. FAO Food and Nutrition Paper 83, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome: 215-230.

⏩ Acknowledgements

The author would like to sincerely acknowledge Ms. Urvi Shah, formerly a researcher at the Population Research Center, The M.S. University of Baroda, for her continuous constructive inputs in reviewing multiple drafts of the chapter. I also appreciate the student participants for their candid and generous sharing of their everyday food habits, and the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions to improve this paper.

Chapter 4

Eating out in Mexico City and Guadalajara – some conflict between health and heritage dimensions in Mexico

Liliana Martínez-Lomelí

Summary. This chapter focuses on out-of-home food consumption in Mexico, where eating out is a daily feature of city dwellers' lifestyles. An ethnographic survey (interviews and participant observation) was conducted in Guadalajara and Mexico City. The findings revealed that dimensions related to health and nutritional standards, as well as to the Mexican food heritage, are experienced and perceived by the actors as two competing yet mutually complementary categories.

Introduction

In November 2010, the Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO inscribed "traditional Mexican cuisine – ancestral, ongoing community culture, the Michoacán paradigm."[1] on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Humanity. It was inscribed in the same year as "the gastronomic meal of the French"[2], which rekindled a lively discussion on the development of heritage, territories and culinary traditions.

Alongside this heritage designation, the Mexican government had recently raised awareness on the high prevalence of obesity among adults and children—Mexico has the second highest adult obesity rate worldwide (32.4%), after the United States

1. Michoacán is a Mexican State. 'The Michoacán paradigm' is a model that has been submitted to UNESCO which is described as "a comprehensive cultural model comprising farming, ritual practices, age-old skills, culinary techniques and ancestral community customs and manners." Source: https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/traditional-mexican-cuisine-ancestral-ongoing-community-culture-the-michoacan-paradigm-00400?RL=00400 (accessed 30/11/2019).
2. Later, in 2013, the Mediterranean diet and *washoku*, i.e. traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, were also inscribed on the list.

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/c4

(38.2%) (OECD, 2017). These two factors, i.e. the inscription on the Intangible Cultural Heritage List and the high obesity rates, drew the attention of Mexicans to their food. Some people view this food as one of the main contributors to the public health problem, while others see it as a vector for the development of the domestic tourism and economic sectors.

This chapter illustrates how out-of-home food consumption in two Mexican cities generates contradictions that city dwellers have to cope with. First, we will see how eating out is an everyday feature in urban people's lives. Then we will explore two specific imaginary dimensions of eating out—a medicalized health dimension and a food heritage dimension. Each of these aspects will be addressed with regard to how they are present in the discourse and practices of urban food consumers. Finally, we will see how these dimensions are in discord relative to hygiene standards and the food heritage concept from the users' standpoint, as opposed to the institutional concept.

The data and analyses presented are the result of PhD thesis research on out-of-home food consumption patterns in two Mexican urban settings—Guadalajara and Mexico City.

Metropolitan Guadalajara is located in western Mexico. It is the second most populated city in the country, with around 4.4 million inhabitants. Mexico City is the national capital, with an estimated 8.9 million inhabitants and about 15 million people living at the outskirts and travelling around Mexico City on a daily basis (Inegi, 2010).

Participatory monitoring was conducted at a variety of commercial catering sites, ranging from street food stalls to high-end restaurants. A total of 61 semi-structured interviews of consumers, owners and employees of catering outlets were carried out. The respondents were diversified in terms of gender (36 women, 25 men), socioeconomic status (SES) and age (youths aged 18-29, adults aged 30-59, seniors aged 60 and over).

⏩ Eating out in the city – reconciling need and pleasure

Eating out[3] in the city was a daily routine for most of the respondents. Due to the work pace, the long distances covered every day and the urban infrastructure, out-of-home food consumption is a need that is satisfied "when we feel the first pangs of hunger", as Naty—a 61-year-old woman living in a working-class neighbourhood north of Mexico City—told us. Since the homes where she worked as a housekeeper were all located in the south of the city, she spent about 6 h a day on the transport system. "I'm not going to be picky with food, we eat whatever's there", she explained. Like Naty, a majority of the respondents reported having eaten away from home the day before the interview.

3. Here the expression 'eating out' is used in reference to all food consumption that involves a transaction in a commercial catering outlet. Although eating away from home may give rise to various occasions such as eating at someone else's home, or eating food outside the household a food that was brought and/or prepared at home, these occasions are not discussed in the remainder of the text.

Eating out is also a leisure activity that fosters social relationships. Since these are large cities, family circles or groups of friends are not always nearby. Isaac explained how meeting in restaurants is an integral part of city life:

> "You rarely go to a friend's house to eat, because, you know, there's a complication—Mexico City is too big to get around, so it's really hard to get together with all your friends at someone's house. We actually meet at places that are more central for everyone, which is perfect, it's more convenient that way." (Isaac, Mexico City, 29 years old, architect, average SES)

Isaac added details about how the logic of the city changed the way he ate every day:

> "There are representations of home everywhere. You can see, for example, people living under bridges, using parks as living rooms or the subway as a dining room because you can't stay at home that long, so the city has to fulfil those functions and offer its inhabitants such options."

Appropriation of the public space is especially evident in the case of street food, where shopkeepers and the people who eat there attribute new meanings to these spaces. For example, a flowerpot in the street can become the dining place for a group of youths. The public space is constantly being reappropriated according to users' daily practices.

Beyond these uses, eating out takes on different meanings according to the setting, as Warde and Martens (2000) pointed out. In their discussions, eating out essentially referred to four dimensions: sociability, affective, heritage and hygiene/sanitary dimensions. The last two are explored in this chapter.

⏩ The heritage dimension – between 'Mexicanness', exoticism and pre-Hispanic heritage

Food heritage encompasses "all tangible and intangible elements constituting food cultures and defined by the community as a shared heritage" (Bessière and Tibère, 2011). Food heritage is therefore linked to products and dishes, as well as culinary knowledge and know-how, symbols and techniques. This heritage also relates to table manners, social codes and forms of sociability, and even the outlets where certain foods are sold, all of which contribute to territorial differentiation.

When respondents tried to explain 'eating out', what is available and their food preferences, they referred to *mexicanidad* (Mexicanness), which distinguished them from others. Several facets of eating out could summed up by the phrase: "We eat like this because we're Mexicans." This implies not only the foods, dishes and preferences long associated with Mexican culture, but spatiotemporal management strategies and standards[4]: "We've always done it this way because we're Mexicans."

Out-of-home food consumption is thus viewed as an integral part of the heritage, of what it means to be Mexican. However, within Mexican cuisine itself, the respondents made a sharp distinction between Mexican homemade food and Mexican takeaway food, i.e. street food. Both are popular and not portrayed as

4. These standards are set in a sociocultural way (Fischler, 1990).

opposites but rather as complementary. In this respect, Clara's case speaks for itself. Born in Guadalajara, daughter of a French father and an English mother, she admitted that her relationship with food of different origins had led her to have complex food tastes:

> "I know it's a cultural situation. I don't like Mexican home-cooking, like meat with chilli, and all that kind of stuff—I just don't like it. In my opinion, Mexican cuisine is either homemade or *tacos*. I like *tacos* [I eat them] but I always get them on the street, they're not made at home." (Clara, 45 years old, high SES, entrepreneur, Guadalajara)

Products that you can get in the markets are also Mexican—they are promoted for their quality while also sometimes being rejected for their sanitary quality. Clara expressed a feeling that was shared by other people we interviewed: eating in the street has "something unexplainable, something that can only be understood by doing it." Moreover, according to the respondents, authentic elements—closely linked to taste, technique and ingredients—are more present in street foods than in restaurant dishes:

> "Well there are a lot of flavours I like. *Tortas*, for example, obviously I think that *torterías*, not restaurants, are the best places to eat them—right? I would never ask for a *torta* in a restaurant... but in a *tortería*, yes. And, for example, Oaxaca market is the best place in the world to eat." (Rebeca, 41 years old, average/high SES, lawyer, Guadalajara)

> "Yes the *tacos* are the same, but if you go to a *taquería* in a nice neighbourhood, it's very different from one you'll find in a cheaper area in terms of the space, type of food, flavours and sauces. Regarding *tacos*, it's the quality of the meat for example—in my experience, expensive *tacos* have less taste because the meat quality is better, it's fresher. *Tacos* are universal." (Rodrigo, 41 years old, average SES, Mexico City)

Rodrigo pointed out that *tacos* are universal in a somewhat surprising way, which does not mean that *tacos* are an essential food for everyone, but only for those who eat like him. He used a reference that transcends the national boundaries of Mexico to illustrate the region-wide importance of *tacos*.

Most people consider that the food sold in markets or on the street is more authentic than that found in restaurants, but they seldom boast about this food to strangers. Foreign visitors are instead taken to well-established restaurants, even though it is considered that this means compromising the taste of authenticity. Norma explained how she kind of staged things for her foreign guests:

> "For me, according to my taste, in my neighbourhood there's a street food outlet where they prepare tastier meat than in restaurants—it's cheap and they sell a lot of it. You only go to a restaurant when you want to invite someone to eat, especially if it's a foreigner, or someone from another part of Mexico—it's easier to bring them to an establishment. It may be a status issue, but not long ago my niece's Spanish boyfriend came over and we decided to have *taco* dinner, but we weren't going to take him out to a street stall. We took him to Carnes Garibaldi's. It wouldn't feel right to take a foreigner to a street food outlet. We took him to a nicer, more picturesque place to give him a good impression. He made a big thing about not wanting to eat *tacos* with his hands." (Norma, young housewife, 27 years old, average/low SES, Guadalajara)

Food heritage showcasing is one of the most controversial issues when decisions on strategies for heritage conservation are made through institutions (Suremain and Matta, 2013). Popular cuisine fairs, the official names of traditional cuisines, and tourist conventions are several examples that illustrate how food heritage showcasing does not always correspond to users day-to-day practices. Mexican out-of-home cuisine is highly varied. Each region has its own specialties and this diversity is often put forward as a Mexican gastronomy asset. Meanwhile, city dwellers feel a sense of 'strangeness' towards these distant cuisines. The unknown and exotic features are prevalent when it comes to eating out in the city.

This culinary exoticism illustrates that the boundaries of a cuisine considered distinctive transcend territorial or geopolitical divisions. The exotic can also be found in so-called Mexican cuisine. Historical efforts to unify and exalt nationalism in Mexico have embraced a sole Mexican cuisine (Pilcher, 1998). Mexican cuisine has been one of the most visible and sustainable signs of national identity. However, as Bak Geller-Corona (2016) demonstrates, these cuisines are linked to the indigenous past and largely due to the nationalist project that emerged in the 19th century via Mexican cookbooks that vindicated pre-Hispanic cuisine. Hence, there is not just one Mexican cuisine. The assumed cultural homogeneity is actually not apparent in the culinary offerings throughout Mexico's vast territory. As Murcott (1983) noted, the nation-state is totally swamped by its cuisines. Pre-Hispanic cuisine is frequently associated with the ancestral myth that it was sacrificed by foreign influences. Juan bears witness to this:

> "My mother used to go to the market, buy cheese, crackling, soft drinks, avocados, herring *tamales*[5], *acociles*[6], which are pre-Hispanic foods. What more can you ask for when you have this diversity?" (Juan, shoe-shine boy, 53 years old, low SES, Guadalajara)

Mexicanness also concerns table manners. Eating a *taco* with your hands is a sign of cultural belonging, as is talking while you are eating:

> "Everybody talks while eating—that's Mexicans. A friend of a cousin visited us from Germany. While my mother was talking she kept eating, and the friend was asked if she was uncomfortable with that, and she said she wasn't used to eating and talking at once. Meal time is eating time and that's it. I think we're talkative, that's part of what makes us unique." (Diana, 25 years old, average SES, Guadalajara)

Mexican fine-dining restaurants have gained international visibility as some of them are now ranked among the best restaurants in the world. Yet this is not part of the discourse of most food consumers. Middle/upper SES youths were the only ones who talked about Mexican haute cuisine, without considering it as being representative of the authenticity of Mexican cuisine:

> "There is, for instance, a traditional place called El Cardenal in the centre of the city, it's a beautiful well preserved old building where you can get very rich traditional Mexican food which is more expensive—much more expensive—but it's very good and the service is excellent. It's not the Dulce Patria restaurant, which is ranked

5. A *tamal* is a preparation that dates back to pre-Hispanic times. It is made from a cornflour dough with a filling (savory or sweet), which is put on spathes, corn or banana leaves, and steamed.
6. An *acocil* is a crayfish whose name derives from the Náhuatl language. It is also known as a river lobster.

as one of the best, but the food dishes are deconstructed[7], that's another thing. El Cardenal is traditional but with better quality, presentation and preparation." (José, 35 years old, executive, average/high SES, Mexico City)

For previous generations of people of all socioeconomic levels, Mexican haute cuisine is viewed as pretentious. For high SES youth, Mexican haute cuisine restaurants[8] are not among their first options when it comes to eating out. Traditional high-end Mexican restaurants[9] or restaurants offering European cuisine (especially Italian, Spanish and French) are preferred because of the high availability of Mexican dishes at lower prices.

Heritage designation is therefore based on identity-based notions of what it means to be Mexican and to eat Mexican food, as well as table manners, venues and opportunities to eat this traditional food.

⏩ The health dimension – reappropriating the medical discourse

The health dimension of eating out has two main elements related to the notion of risk. Firstly, eating out is seen to imply long-term risks related to the adverse health impacts of high out-of-home food intake. This belief is linked to medical discourses concerning weight, obesity and their health impacts. Secondly, eating out poses more immediate risks associated with consuming items whose origin and hygienic conditions are unknown.

Among the average/high and high SES respondents, we noted what seemed like a reappropriation of the medical discourse with regard to food. Weight was not the main issue. Respondents were instead more concerned about diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. In this case, the medical discourse was related to public health strategies focused on describing disease as an external entity that 'upsets the body', but which could be easily circumvented by diet monitoring. This approach led some people to manage their illnesses in their own way. José, who had been suffering from diabetes for 10 years, talked about how he ate out during the working day:

> "For instance, when I go to work at people's homes, there's a man who passes by and sells bread. I hear that he sells sweet bread containing a lot of sugar, but I just shake the bread to remove the sugar, and that's it—I'm diabetic and have to control myself." (José, car washer, 53 years old, low SES, Mexico City)

7. José used the word 'deconstructed' to describe the way Mexican haute cuisine chefs present dishes in a way that differs from the ways some more widely known dishes are presented.
8. Fine-dining restaurants in Mexico have internationally renowned chefs who incorporate innovative— in terms of techniques and presentation— and often aesthetic elements into so-called traditional Mexican dishes.
9. High-end restaurants serving Mexican cuisine offer relatively standardized dishes comparable to what might be served at home, without really incorporating any innovative elements. They offer Mexican cuisine presented and processed in a traditional way.

Naty had heart problems, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. She realized that drinking more water helped her manage her disease:

> "So, yeah, I take care of myself a little bit. I'm not going to say no, otherwise I'd already be dead [laughter]. I'm aware that I could have a heart attack. I'm not a doctor, but I've noticed that. So I'm trying to...I don't like drinking water, for example, but now I drink a lot of water for cholesterol reasons. I like soft drinks more. We're masochists." (Naty, housekeeper, 61 years old, low SES, Mexico City)

The medical discourses were interpreted very differently depending on the respondents' socioeconomic status. These different interpretations were rather ambivalent in themselves, but they were also ambivalent when they were out of line with the discourses on the heritage dimensions of food.

In the identified medical discourse—which was crosscutting at all socioeconomic levels—we noticed the notion of the aging body, which serves but is not eternal and must be preserved via our diet. Sara told me:

> "I've always thought—as long as I can remember—that we just have one physical body. If you don't take care of it, no one's going to do it for you. I know that you can have accidents and get sick even if you take care of yourself, but the odds are lower. I think it would be irrational to go to a *taquería*." (Sara, primary school teacher, 36 years old, average/low SES, Mexico City)

The relationship with body maintenance generates various dynamics regarding eating out. We noted that these dynamics were most striking among women with a high socioeconomic status and for whom body maintenance is a weight issue. Social control was clearcut on these occasions:

> "I participated in several meals with groups of women of different ages, with average to high SES. The 'ladies who lunch' trend[10], as is popular in the United States, is reserved for women of higher SES. These groups have a lot of control over the amount of food that's ordered in the restaurant. The idea is that you're at a restaurant to see and be seen, to meet friends, but eating is the last priority. Ana ordered a flan for dessert at a women's meal in the Polanco neighbourhood in Mexico City (one of the most expensive in the city). Then Elena (in her 40s) blamed her friend because she hadn't asked her other friends which dessert would be the right one for all of them. Ana said she had ordered the flan because she wanted it and she intended to eat the whole portion. Then all the others scolded her, and even pointed out that she had to watch her weight, because "we're no longer young"." (excerpt from the field notebook, 11 June 2016)

Control over the body is very gendered and linked with the socioeconomic status. Men with high SES, too, exert this type of control over women in the public space.

> "I went to a pizza parlour in Las Lomas, a millionaire's neighbourhood north of Mexico City. There I met Simon, the son of one of Mexico's most prominent architects. He told me what happens when he invites girls out. When I asked him if he brings girls to have dinner or a meal with him at a restaurant, he told me that he does, but normally he's the only one eating. I asked him if the girls request something

10. 'Ladies who lunch' has been an idiom in the United States since the 1960s for well-dressed, married, unemployed women who gather in upscale restaurants for lunch and sometimes shopping. It is a cultural achievement that some say has its origins in a critical article in The New Yorker magazine.

> to eat. He explained to me that the girls don't ask for anything to eat because it would be social suicide—they're at the restaurant to be seen, not to eat. They have to be thin, and "when they eat, they have to do it at home"." (excerpt from the field notebook, September 2016, Mexico City)

All of the high SES women interviewed mentioned the importance of having an ideal weight, or an ideal thinness, in relation to eating out. The public space wields a form of control that goes beyond sociability standards, as Karla told us:

> "Sometimes I go to a restaurant, I get there and, really, I've just gone there to accompany my husband while he eats. I sit down with just a glass of water or something like that, maybe a salad, because no, I just can't eat." (Karla, married, housewife, 25 years old, high SES, Guadalajara)

In this case, the medical discourse concerning weight, slimness and dieting is reaffirmed as an aesthetic standard but also as a form of social control—to exhibit oneself in the public space as a woman, with slim physical features that reflect a certain socioeconomic status. The restaurant is a place to show oneself and thus to signal one's social status and the body becomes instrumentalized for this purpose—the body is viewed as a vehicle for showcasing a slimness-based femininity construct.

Conflict between heritage and health dimensions

Institutional narratives on Mexican food heritage often stress diversity, techniques, meanings and heritage. Regarding Mexico's heritage, emphasis is often placed on the endemic produce that the country has 'offered' the world: tomatoes, avocados, chilli, corn, various herbs, etc. However, from an imaginary standpoint, Mexican cuisine is essentially shaped by home-prepared foods[11] and *tacos*.

Institutions that foster heritage conservation focus on strategies regarding regional techniques, or specific ceremonial dishes of a Mexican community. Moreover, chefs who participate in community heritage conservation initiatives are supported in a process of reappropriation of popular cuisines and dishes that are portrayed as a progressive value that can be showcased to the rest of the world. However, alongside this strategy promoted by the Ministry of Tourism and Economy, there is a Ministry of Health strategy whereby Mexicans are caricaturized via an image of a big belly topped with tacos, while asking: "How many (*tacos*) are you going to eat?".

These pressures concerning government strategies and policies were also apparent in the respondents' statements. Rodrigo explained his view of what it means to have Mexican taste:

> "I think we like junk food, snacks. Generally, from what I've seen, we prefer to eat *tacos* rather than salad. That's why we're obese, don't you think? Fatter than in other countries. And as Jalisco[12] has a lot of very famous typical dishes, and we regularly eat *pozole*[13], *flautas*[14], *tacos* and all that, we'd rather eat that than

11. Homemade Mexican dishes include *tacos*, beans, stewed meats, stuffed chilli peppers, meat broths, etc.
12. Jalisco is a Mexican State in which Guadalajara is the capital.
13. *Pozole* is a preparation that dates back to pre-Hispanic times, and in modern times it is a broth with corn kernels and meat, mainly pork.
14. *Flautas* are *tortillas* stuffed with beef, chicken, beans or potatoes and then fried.

> fish, right? Well maybe grilled fish then—it's because we have the dishes, we're used to eating them and we like them." (Rodrigo, administrative manager, 33 years old, average SES, Guadalajara)

Eating according to the taste 'of Mexicans in general' implies obesity according to Rodrigo. Simplistic talk about the causes of obesity leads people to assume a cause-and-effect relationship with regard to what we eat. So because Mexican food is 'unique' and there is a high prevalence of obesity, people see an obvious relationship.

Formal and informal[15] catering is increasingly adapting via options that are marketed as being healthier, or by including 'light' menus. However, there is a dichotomy in this latter term relative to so-called Mexican cuisine, as Alvaro, the owner of a small restaurant in a working-class neighbourhood in Guadalajara, explained:

> "In restaurants everything was prepared in the *comal*[16], nothing was fried. But if you say 'light', it's a barrier for a lot of people, so it was referred to as pre-Hispanic style so as to avoid the term light. Moreover, a so-called light Mexican restaurant would make people laugh—could you imagine a light *mole*? Light Mexican... the word light is also very northern sounding." (Álvaro, caterer, 42 years old, average SES, Guadalajara)

So there is also an opposition between 'light' cuisine (the English word is used) and Mexican cuisine. For Alvaro, light cuisine has English origins.

This contrast between Mexican and light cuisine is also perceived as an obstacle to dieting, as Elisa mentioned. She explained the difficulties she had in dieting which were related to the content of the dishes but also to the Mexican way of life:

> "Sometimes I think I'm really reckless and carefree because I prefer to enjoy things and I don't play by the rules. I've already talked about this with my nutritionist, and he's tried to help me with that. He says, "well if you go to eat tacos, you have to eat them this way or that." I try to do it, but for me dinner is something that... I don't know, my dad always used to take us to dinner, he would reward us by taking us out to eat on the street. Aye! Yes, it's very, very hard to go on a diet in Mexico [laughs]. I don't know if it happens like this in any other country, but here everybody gives you something, everywhere, people give you things—a little glass of water, a soft drink…you drink something and they give you food, at least that's how it is in my social circle and with my family." (Elisa, graphic designer, 33 years old, medium/high SES, Guadalajara)

Actors have to manage all of these aspects when they eat out. They are exposed to the logic of the city and the way social and family relationships are structured whereby eating out is an everyday ritual.

The expression 'eating out' is two-faceted—fulfilling hunger needs and the quest for pleasure, depending on where, when and with whom you are eating. You might imagine that when an entertainment-fulfilling occasion arises then the heritage dimension would prevail, and conversely, when there is a hunger-fulfilling need then the health dimension would take precedence. These hypotheses are, however, not

15. By informal, here we mainly refer to street food or establishments that do not pay taxes, even though there is a government regulation for street vending outlets.
16. A *comal* is a steel, aluminium or clay plate that is used to cook tortillas over a fire.

always entirely valid. For instance, if we consider Elisa's case, she claimed that not eating a pleasurable dish like a typical Mexican *menudo*[17] could have health impacts:

> "I say to myself, once a week you can eat *menudo*, *birria*, but without *tortillas*, because your body also needs saturated fats. But you can't always do it like that or you'll get depressed or whatever. That's more or less how I do it." (Elisa, graphic designer, 33 years old, medium/high SES, Guadalajara)

Otherwise, Naty explained why she would not be able to work if she were to strictly adhere to a diet tailored for her disease:

> "To care for my disease, I should stay home, not drink soft drinks or eat *tacos* and flour, but obviously I'm not going to go to work and tell my bosses, "no, I can't eat that". You eat what's there, period." (Naty, housekeeper, 61 years old, low SES, Mexico City)

These pressures clearly reflect how self-identification is a dynamic and changing process (Giménez, 2010): "I'm diabetic", "I'm Mexican", "I'm thin with a high SES", or "I'm obese". Eating out provides attributes and symbols related to the different dimensions that may prevail depending on the occasion and actors involved. The dimensions that we explored represent heavy pressures in terms of what actors should prioritize in relation to their food.

We can see how actors have to deal with these two juxtaposed dimensions on a daily basis. Neither can be disregarded, but the occasion will very clearly determine which dimension to prioritize. People never overlook the health dimensions when speaking about heritage designation.

Through its National Gastronomy Promotion Policy (2014-2018)[18], the Mexican government has sought to implement strategies involving several stakeholders to foster so-called national cuisine. This policy strives to associate different sectors of society. It is striking that this strategy fosters a 'national gastronomy' that is defined in terms of heritage. Poulain (2002) explains that in France 'gastronomization' is a hierarchical reversal following the linkage of two diametrically opposed food environments, i.e. local culinary culture and designated gastronomic spheres.

This makes sense in Mexico given that the political strategies regarding the out-of-home catering sphere promote 'authentic' cuisine based on "dovetailing of the gastronomic food sector with knowledge and innovation in order to tailor the gastronomic food offer to food consumers' needs" (*Secretaría de Turismo*, *Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público*, 2014; UNESCO, 2010). Yet this dimension is problematic. Indeed, users perceive this so-called Mexican cuisine as being less authentic when it is taken over by haute cuisine chefs who offer new ways of presenting dishes that are considered traditional. The innovation and adaptation aspects promoted by the political sector are therefore oriented towards consumers who do not perceive any loss of authenticity in the haute cuisine dishes.

The institutional heritage discourse is out of line with what people consider to be Mexican. This contradiction is particularly evident in the variety and regionalism regarding food ingredients, dishes and eating habits. Certain food consumption trends

---

17. A typical tripe soup.
18. This policy is part of a strategic plan published by the Mexican government in close collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Taxation.

are considered exotic by some people, despite institutional name homogenization strategies, such as the official designation of 'traditional cooks'[19] as distinct heritage representatives. In France, with the creation of the *terroir* concept, as well as similar initiatives in Peru and Japan, food dishes are not questioned in terms of their health impacts. In Mexico, food dishes have a completely different significance depending on whether or not compliance with the medical standards is taken into account.

Conclusion

We have shown through our study of 'eating out' patterns in two Mexican cities that the representations lead to different dimensions that may be both juxtaposed and contradictory. In tangible terms, the health and heritage dimensions are constantly opposed in the actors' discourse. Consumers generally favour one dimension or the other in their daily urban eating habits. These contradictions are the result of the proliferation of rhetoric on food-related issues, combined with the lack of public policy linkage while drawing on contradictory orders.

It would be relevant to investigate whether, in other settings, heritage designation processes mainstream an implicit health dimension or, conversely, whether the health aspects of food heritage are not questioned. In France, for example, *foie gras* consumption seldom seems to be questioned with regard to its harmful effects on health.

Health and heritage management strategies currently have major economic impacts in Mexico. From the health perspective, the high prevalence of chronic degenerative diseases (obesity, diabetes, hypertension) has become an economic issue due to the high associated treatment cost to the public health system.

Otherwise the institutionalization of the food heritage and its promotion is a pivotal strategy to promote tourism in Mexico. Tourism is the activity that contributes the most to the GDP. The promotion of Mexican cuisine and its heritage designation is in line with the overall thrust of the tourism sector. These aspects of food consumption have therefore become crucial for the national economy.

References

Bak Geller-Corona S., 2016. Culinary Myths of the Mexican Nation. *In: Cooking Cultures, convergent histories of food and feeling*. Banerjee-Dube S. (Ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 255 p.

Bessière J., Tibère L., 2001. Innovation et patrimoine alimentaire en Midi-Pyrénées. *Anthropology of Food*, 8.

Fischler C., 1990. *L'Homnivore*. Paris, Odile Jacob, 414 p.

Giménez G., 2010. La cultura como identidad y la identidad como cultura. *In: Cultura, Identidad y procesos de individualización*. UNAM Instituto de Investigación en Ciencias Sociales, http://conceptos.sociales.unam.mx/conceptos_final/625trabajo.pdf (accessed on 10/09/2017).

19. 'Traditional cooks' is an official State designation granted to cooks from different Mexican regions who have traditional culinary knowledge learned in their communities, while also possessing skills that are considered ancestral.

Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (Inegi), 2010. *Censo nacional de poblaciòn y vivienda 2010*. www.inegi.org.mx (accessed on 10/05/2014).

Murcott A., 1983. *The sociology of food and eating. Essays on the sociological significance of food*. Indiana, Gower, 195 p.

Pilcher J., 1998. *Que vivan los tamales! Food and the making of Mexican identity*. New Mexico, UNM Press, 248 p.

Poulain J.-P., 2002. *Sociologies de l'alimentation*. Paris, PUF, 286 p.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE), 2017. *OECD Obesity Update 2017.* https://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/Obesity-Update-2017.pdf (accessed on 08/02/2017).

Secretaría de Turismo, Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público, 2014. *Política de Fomento a la Gastronomía Nacional 2014-2018*. https://patrimonioculturalyturismo.cultura.gob.mx/documentos/pdf/Politica_de_fomento_a_la_gastronomia_nacional.pdf (accessed on 14/08/2017).

Suremain C.A. (de), Matta R., 2013. “ Manger tradition ” ou la fabrication d'un patrimoine alimentaire inégal (Lima, Pérou). *Trace*, 64: 44-54.

Unesco, 2010. *Dossier de candidature No. 00400 pour l'inscription sur la liste représentative du patrimoine culturel immatériel en 2010*. Comité intergouvernemental de sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel, https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/07530-FR.pdf (accessed on 14/08/2017).

Warde A., Martens L., 2000. *Eating out: social differentiation, consumption and pleasure.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 246 p.

⏩ Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Claudia Giacoman for her contribution to the survey analyses, as well as the entire editorial committee of this book, and particularly Chelsie Yount-André and Audrey Soula for their painstaking revision of this chapter. She also thanks Danone Nutricia Research, OCHA and CIRAD for their involvement in organizing the Eating in the City symposium in Paris, as well as the UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems, and especially Nicolas Bricas and Damien Conaré for their initiatives and support.

Box: Promoting local products – representations among food consumers in Lomé (Togo)

Élisa Lomet

Food styles are shifting in Togo as the country continues to urbanize at a rapid pace. The share of local products sold on the Loméan food market reached 68% in 2011, yet the growing middle class points to a potential increase in the volume of imported products on the market (Bricas *et al.*, 2016). The NGO OADEL—backed by the government and international financial partners—seeks to boost the competitiveness of Togolese products by specifically supporting Togolese SMEs and encouraging consumers to eat local products. The thrust is to give these products a competitive edge over imported industrial commodities by promoting their sale in processed and packaged form. This NGO is thus helping to turn urban market growth into a lever for the development of local food production via job-creating SMEs. A survey was conducted between April and July 2017 among a diversified sample of households in Lomé involving 30 semi-structured interviews to confirm the relevance of this approach (Lomet and Bricas, 2017). It aimed to gain insight into conceptual representations of local products, including their positive and negative features, and ways of promoting them to food consumers.

1. Local products – an ambiguous definition

Development operators define local products as goods that are processed and packaged by Togolese SMEs, underpinned by an economic and political aim to reduce the country's food dependency. Yet this notion does not make sense to food consumers. For the majority of the respondents, the expression refers to all food commodities produced in Togo, regardless of the extent to which they are processed, while also boasting chemical-free agricultural production techniques to attract upper middle-class and wealthy consumers. For a minority of the grass-roots class, local products represent all food commodities sold within the area, regardless of their origin. The respondents stressed the need to create added value by promoting these products with regard to their geographical ("products from our area", etc.), territorial (Bassar yam, Kovié rice, etc.), qualitative ("authentic products", "natural products", etc.), historical ("products of our grandmothers", etc.) and sociocultural ("know-how with human and ethical values", "products nested in local food habits", "support for local entrepreneurship", etc.) features.

2. Competitiveness of local products

There are still barriers to the promotion of these local products while their dissemination is channelled to specialized grocery stores. Their cost and presentation are also not attractive enough compared to the imported industrial products that the NGO is striving to emulate. Moreover, although competing local handmade products sold on the markets are subject to suspicion regarding their sanitary quality, such fears are generally allayed through the interpersonal trust relationships that develop between housekeepers and saleswomen. In the case of SMEs, the identity of the managers, their honesty and commitment to respecting traditional manufacturing rules are displayed through brands, written statements, underpinned by packaging designed to embody industrial values (slogan, photo, pictogram, etc.), but these elements are harder to showcase. The results of this study actually revealed that the promotion of Togolese products must necessarily take trust and trust-building aspects into account: transparency, geographical

proximity, relational and organizational features, which should ultimately be based on control over the management of local companies, product processing, composition and marketing, as well as the appearance of the end products, their labelling and certification.

3. Food for thought for action strategies

The survey prompted questions on the mechanisms for broader dissemination of local products and their ripple effects. Are these products likely to rival imported industrial products thanks to their supposedly much higher value because of their local origins? Could they be disseminated beyond specialized stores to reach market outlets, neighbourhood grocery stores and even emerging supermarkets? Would their market entry encourage improvements in the quality of handmade products so as to ensure their competitive edge? Should other ways of organizing SMEs be pursued, such as combining processing and packaging operations?

References

Bricas N., Tchamda C., Mouton F. (ed.), 2016. *L'Afrique à la conquête de son marché alimentaire intérieur. Enseignements de dix ans d'enquêtes auprès des ménages d'Afrique de l'Ouest, du Cameroun et du Tchad*. Paris, AFD, collection Études de l'AFD, n° 12, 132 p.

Lomet E., Bricas N., 2017. *Étude des styles alimentaires à Lomé pour identifier les moyens de relancer la consommation de produits locaux*. Synthesis report, Montpellier, 29 p., www.inter-reseaux.org/ressources/article/etude-des-styles-alimentaires-a?lang=fr (accessed on 02/11/2019).

Acknowledgements

This study was carried out as part of the Project for Supporting Family Farming Through Institutional Purchasing in Togo, implemented by Acting For Life (Estelle Dandoy) with the Togolese NGO OADEL (Tata Ametoenyenou) and financed by the *Fondation de France*, CFSI and AFD (Pafao Programme). The author warmly thanks Nicolas Bricas (CIRAD) for scientific supervision of this study and his advice during the drafting of this text, as well as Ami Ezin for conducting, transcribing and translating the interviews in Lomé. Finally, the author expresses her gratitude to the coordinators of this book, the proofreaders and appraisers for their invaluable advice, corrections and suggestions for improvement.

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/ce

Part 2

When food practices dovetail with urban landscapes

Chapter 5

Urban cuisine in Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo)

Yolande Berton-Ofouémé

Summary. This chapter highlights the results of a baseline survey conducted in Brazzaville in 1992-1993 and a follow-up survey in 2018 on changes in food consumption patterns based on meal monitoring and interviews with food consumers, caterers and food processing companies. Trends regarding meals created by city dwellers, meals from other African cities disseminated by immigrants and by the catering industry are also analysed. Urban catering has undergone major changes over the past 25 years, and Congolese city dwellers now have ready access to international meals as well as new locally invented dishes.

Introduction

Cities with cosmopolitan populations are shaped by changes in cuisine and the emergence of new meals. Food budgets and the availability of imported products (cereals and by-products, meat, etc.) in urban African markets are signs of a food globalization trend. However, an in-depth analysis of the meals eaten revealed a contrasted situation where imported and local products, foreign and domestic cuisines blend to create original, varied and mixed urban cuisines. Large Congolese cities have not been immune to these shifts in cuisine and food consumption patterns. In the current setting whereby societies are impacted by the rapid changes under way (urban growth, trade liberalization, budget restrictions linked to structural adjustments, etc.), this chapter provides a comparative analysis of urban cuisine in Brazzaville in 1992-1993 and 2018 and the changes noted are assessed. A review of the literature on urban cuisine in terms of the meals consumed revealed the paucity of documentary references on this topic in the Republic of the Congo.

The few studies that have been carried out on food in the Republic of the Congo were focused on analysing of the consumption of different products, not of meals or dishes[1].

1. See for instance the PhD dissertation of J.F.S. Souka (1991) and the study of *SEP-Développement* (1987).

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/c5

In contrast, the present study looked closely at meals[2] and dishes[3], with the aim of gaining insight into how urban dwellers invent their cuisines using food products sourced locally and from various other origins, but also into how they adopt new meals from elsewhere—introduced directly or indirectly through migrant-run catering.

Rapid urban growth was under way over the cuisine monitoring period between 1992 and 2018, which generated constraints but also resources: budgetary restrictions due to the economic recession, the presence of foreign food products in markets procured via intercontinental commercial trade, the gradual influx of African, as well as Asian, European and American migrants. The West African community has been particularly instrumental in the distribution of foreign meals in both middle-level restaurants and in so-called 'popular' and street food outlets. The results of our studies carried out in 1992-1993 and again in 2018 enabled us to assess changes in urban cuisine in Brazzaville and the contribution of immigrants to this trend (domestic and out-of-home). Based on this assessment, we show how Congolese city dwellers invent their cuisines by combining local and imported products, and adopt foreign practices as a result of the intermingling of populations and culinary cultures. We also show how the availability of foreign products or meals (from other African cities and continents), the culinary contributions of immigrants and the development of the supply chain by the restaurant industry are changing. This chapter presents the new meals invented by city dwellers, as well as meals from other African cities disseminated by immigrants and restaurants. The food change pattern observed in Brazzaville over the last 25 years ultimately highlights that culinary cosmopolitanism is thriving despite the economic volatility, while also demonstrating the efforts made by city dwellers to cope with the prolonged economic crisis.

⏩ Methods

1992-1993 baseline survey

The baseline survey was conducted in Brazzaville from February 1992 to January 1993 among 300 Congolese households (Berton-Ofouémé, 1993, 1996, 2017; Berton-Ofouémé and Trèche, 1995). This questionnaire survey using a meal response card was supplemented by a study of daily food products consumed and food expenditures. We were thus able to collect information on the number of meals eaten per day, the number of people (classified by age) who partook in the meal, meal times and commensal groups, out-of-home catering, the composition of the meals consumed, and associated food expenditures.

Thirty non-Congolese African households were also surveyed. They were randomly recruited from the neighbourhoods of Moungali, Poto-Poto and Ouenzé, which are chiefly inhabited by people from West Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

---

2. According to the Larousse French dictionary, a meal (*mets* in French) is any prepared food that is served at mealtime. We use it to refer not only to the sauce (part of a dish composed of animal and vegetable products and fats), but also to processed foods that have been prepared, elaborated and transformed (cooking, fermentation, etc.).
3. A dish (*plat* in French) consists of a base (cereals, roots, tubers, etc.) and a sauce, or a base and a processed food.

Alongside the household survey, a census of 406 restaurants was conducted, including upper-class, middle-class and popular restaurants and street-food outlets. Thirty restaurants were each also surveyed and monitored one week a month for 4 months.

2018 follow-up survey

With the aim of updating data on food consumption patterns, we conducted a questionnaire survey of 450 households recruited in all districts of Brazzaville in July and August 2018. The 2007 population and housing census served as the sampling frame. The sample encompassed all socioprofessional categories of the population.

Finally, the fact that we were living in Brazzaville enabled us to conduct continuous informal participatory monitoring between the two surveys. During this period, we regularly observed changes in the meals and products consumed by talking with food processors, housekeepers, and consumers in their homes or by observing these different actors at eateries.

⏩ New food practices invented by city dwellers

New food practices invented by city dwellers have changed domestic and street food cuisine in Brazzaville. Two meals are presented here—raw vegetable salad and grilled pork skin—to illustrate these practical inventions.

Eating raw food is not common practice in the Congolese culinary tradition. In 1992-1993, raw foods were mainly eaten by Westerners and West African immigrants.

As a result of the economic crisis, budget restrictions are now curtailing the movement of housekeepers to sales outlets, thus encouraging sellers to reach out to consumers by street vending. Raw vegetable salads have been on sale in Brazzaville streets for less than 5 years. Itinerant caterers carry cutlery and ingredients (lemon, vinegar, oil, salt, avocado, cucumber, green salad, tomato, bread, hard-boiled eggs) and offer them to consumers. They go from alley to alley, shouting “avocado, cucumber, tomato” to inform consumers that they can procure a salad to eat at home or in a beverage outlet. This consumption of raw vegetables by Congolese people is a novel development—promoted by the street food trend—in the food habits of people accustomed almost exclusively to eating cooked food, apart from fruit.

Braised pork skin is another iconic urban food invention that is widely consumed in Brazzaville. In the Congo, pork traditionally symbolizes the food of the Bembé ethnic subgroup. It is notably eaten in *gargotes* (cheap food outlets) where caterers cook a pork and plantain dish called *ngulu mu mako* according to rural culinary techniques (Berton-Ofouémé, 2017). *Ngulu mu mako* is often not affordable for poor urban dwellers because it sometimes costs more than the consumer’s daily budget.

In recent years, Brazzavillians have been relishing braised pork skin, or so-called ‘red carpet’. This imported dish is sold at an affordable price and is accessible to everyone. Grill chefs adapt to city dwellers’ economic potential by selling this item at any price (starting at CFAF50, or €0.08). ‘Red carpet’ is served with finely sliced raw onions and sprinkled with a mixture of salt and dried chilli pepper. This new

and typically urban meal epitomizes city dwellers' adaptations to the lengthy food crisis. This dish—which was not part of city dwellers' diet 25 years ago—was found to be eaten by 98% of the 450 households surveyed in 2018, across all socioeconomic categories. A taxi driver explained:

> "I can't stop eating red carpet in the morning. It's a meat dish that tastes good, especially the fat. The kids at home love it. They could eat it at every meal. You can make a meal for 4-6 people just by buying a kilo of red carpet for FCFA1,000 and pieces of cassava for FCFA300. Otherwise, it would be impossible to buy any other meat products for FCFA1,300 to make a dish for that many people."

⏩ Foreign cuisine on Brazzavillians' plates

Foreign urban meals are often introduced by migrants via catering, thereby providing an opportunity for different communities to discover novel tasty dishes.

Meals introduced by migrants

Brazzaville's population is growing as a result of simultaneous rural domestic migration and immigration, particularly from West Africa. West Africans (Malians, Guineans, Beninese, Mauritanians, Senegalese) have been present in the Congo since colonial times. They are considered as 'kings of trade'. These flows of migrants continued after independence, and the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002 triggered the outmigration of shopkeepers to Brazzaville.

The presence of these communities in Brazzaville has led to the introduction of a variety of food commodities on the markets. Here we will focus on *kwaou* beans, *dèguè* yoghurt and *aloko*—three meals that have been mainstreamed in the diet of Brazzavillians for about 10 years now.

Kwaou is a cowpea (or black-eyed pea) variety that is grown in Senegal, Niger, Cameroon and Benin. In the street or in front of houses, adults and children can buy boiled *kwaou* seasoned with onions and mayonnaise. West African women primarily sold this meal at the outset. In 2018, 20% of the vendors surveyed were Congolese women married to West Africans or converted to Islam. They learned about *kwaou* preparation from their West African friends, who have extensive experience regarding how to source and prepare this product. In the morning, the women vendors set up their stalls with cutlery in fixed locations at crossroads or in front of houses to offer housekeepers, workers and students *kwaou* meals alone or mixed with spaghetti. *Kwaou* consumed in Brazzaville is original because it is served with *chikwangue* (cassava 'bread') and combined with spaghetti. Elsewhere, in West African cities where it is popular, *kwaou* is eaten alone, without garnish, or just with wheat flour fritters.

Thick *dèguè* yoghurt containing millet, tapioca or chickpeas is another food product introduced by migrants from West Africa. *Dèguè* is made in Senegal, where it is called *thiakry*, as well as in Mali, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Togo, where it is known as *dèguè*. Depending on the country, *dèguè* is made from yoghurt or curdled milk with coarse-grained millet or couscous.

Dègué has undergone transformations in Brazzaville. Tapioca or couscous is generally used owing to the scarcity of millet flour—the small quantities of millet that reach Brazzaville from West Africa and which circulate via family networks are insufficient for commercial *dègué* preparations.

Kwaou and *dègué* are consumed 90% of the time on the street between 8 and 11 a.m. These products cut hunger and enable consumers or low-income people to skip lunch. They are referred to as *kanga journée* (literally 'day fasteners') and are served for breakfast at home and eaten between meals away from home. The following words of a welder shed light on what has led Brazzavillians to adopt these dishes:

> "Bread currently does not enable the eaters to fill up. Twenty-five years ago, bread was heavier than today's bread, which has no crumb. [...] This bread looks big but it's super light. It's better to eat filling products or meals like *kwaou* and *dègué*."

Kwaou and *dègué* yoghurt are widely consumed at breakfast because they are filling and inexpensive—city dwellers are forced to make food choices due to their limited household budgets.

New meals recently introduced via catering

In Brazzaville, new meals are often introduced into urban cuisine by migrants of different nationalities via catering. City dwellers may now enjoy Senegalese *ceebu jën* (fatty rice with fish and vegetables) and *yassa* chicken (marinated in lemon juice and cooked with onions), Ivorian *kedjenou* chicken, *attiéké* (cassava couscous), or braised carp accompanied by *aloko* (fried plantain), and Cameroonian *ndolé* (kind of local spinach) and *poulet DG* (grilled chicken) dishes. Downtown European restaurants serve beef bourguignon or grilled steak with fries, while Asian restaurants serve egg rolls, spring rolls and Cantonese rice, *tandoori* chicken from Pakistan and India, *bun cha* from Vietnam, etc. This type of catering is oriented towards middle- and high-income consumers. Middle Eastern and North African cuisines are also present in Brazzaville, including *shawarma* or *kebab* and North African *tagine*.

Over the 1992 to 2018 period, in addition to the introduction of these foods with specific culinary identities, a new cuisine 'without borders' was emerging, including foods that are consumed to such an extent worldwide that their origins are blurred, e.g. pizzas and hamburgers. Pizza sales gradually increased over the same period. Initially, pizzas were sold in European and Asian restaurants in downtown areas, but then with time pizzerias opened downtown and suburban areas. This geographical distribution is in line with the city's demographic and spatial dynamics, and enables caterers to gain access to new consumers, i.e. youths and adults from middle- and upper-class families living in these neighbourhoods. Takeaway pizzas are bought by people from wealthy social backgrounds in Brazzaville, mainly for celebrations (birthdays, weddings and various youth gatherings), or impromptu receptions. Over the last 5 years, a few restaurants have been developing home delivery, but this type of consumer service is still only affordable for people from wealthy families.

Hamburger, like pizza, is a foreign food item. Hamburger outlets are spreading in downtown and suburban areas. In 1992-1993, there was only one hamburger outlet in the downtown area, but since 2013 'Parisian-style' snack bars have sprung up,

offering young people not only pizzas and grilled meats, but also hamburgers to eat on the spot or take away. It is common for restaurants specializing in Congolese or African cuisine to add 'burger king' to their sign or to switch to specializing in hamburgers and fries. In snack bars, which mainly cater to youths from well-to-do families, different types of sandwiches made with local and imported ingredients are also served.

Youths generally go to snack bars to eat on the spot, which gives them an opportunity to get together and talk with classmates and friends, while also confirming their social status with regard to those excluded from these places. For Brazzavillians, going to restaurants run by foreigners signifies a journey to other people's countries. Consumers thus set off to discover the culinary cultures of other peoples. The Congolese love to eat West African dishes, which are considered hearty, especially if they are well seasoned and served with rice. Asian dishes also arouse the curiosity of Brazzavillian consumers.

Overall, however, the new meals introduced via upper- and middle-class restaurants are not accessible to low-income consumers. They remain exclusively reserved for consumers from middle and wealthy social classes. Low-income families generally gravitate towards popular restaurants and street-food outlets. In Brazzaville, migrant women from the Democratic Republic of the Congo—who are well represented in the *malewas*[4]—have introduced *saka-saka* (local kind of spinach) with beans and palm oil, with the variant adapted by the Congolese called *tsaka madesu*. This meal is usually accompanied by cassava bread and may also be served with cassava flour paste or cassava and maize flour paste in the form of a small dough ball. This filling dish is very popular with workers (masons, heavy goods carriers, etc.).

The cuisine offered by women in street-food outlets has also undergone changes. Standard local meals are on the menu (fried fish, with the most popular composed of horse mackerel, *trois pièces*[5], giblet broth, etc.), but also urban cuisine meals invented by city dwellers and made with local and imported foodstuffs. This includes: *totapen* broth[6] (light sauce) composed of local products (smoked or semi-smoked fish, *koko*[7], okra and chilli) and *simba malembé*[8] salted fish imported from Europe; wild broth[9], composed of smoked or semi-smoked fish, fresh or canned button mushrooms, *koko*, smoked shrimps. Food processors may also decide to add African eggplant (*Solanum aethiopicum*), cherry tomatoes or tomato concentrate, and imported meat in seed sauce[10].

---

4. *Maléwas* are places where home cooked dishes are sold on the roadside. Catering is done in the open air or under a rough shelter made of tarpaulins, banners or fabrics. They are mainly popular with low-income consumers.
5. The *trois piece* meal is composed of three products: meat, vegetables and peanut butter. Traditional *trois piece* is made with smoked or salted fish, *koko* (*Gnetum*), leaves from a forest vine and peanut butter.
6. *Totapen* is the name of an antibiotic. Consumers may imagine that *totapen* meals can cure people who have drunk too much the night before. It is actually a spicy dish that is eaten hot which helps people who have drunk a lot of alcohol.
7. *Koko* is a tropical forest plant from the Congo Basin that belongs to the *Gnetum* genus.
8. In Lingala, *simba malembé* literally means 'hold it gently' because of its fragility.
9. Wild broth is called 'wild' because it is largely made with natural plant and fish resources (*koko*, smoked fish and smoked freshwater shrimp).
10. Seed sauce is palm seed juice.

Gargotes (*nganda*[11], *malewa* and *typhoïde*[12]) are cheap food outlets where people can get local meals, but in the last 25 years they have shifted focus and now offer consumers cheap urban cuisine meals. They are the main places where food is bought and consumed by workers unable to go home at midday because of a lack of transport, by single people and low-income consumers.

Street catering has undergone a spatiotemporal change. It was initially geared towards the sale of wheat flour fritters, maize porridge and *maboké* (steamed freshwater fish) sold by the women at home, or even so-called ‘televised chickens’ grilled in an electric oven with transparent walls and then distributed by men. The sale of grilled local and especially imported meat products has gradually developed throughout the city.

In 1992, West Africans ran several outlets selling grilled meat products (chicken legs, whole chickens, roast goat, mutton and beef). The most reputable sales outlets were concentrated in Poto-Poto[13] and appealed to people from all parts of the city. West Africans from countries with an agropastoral tradition commanded the goat, sheep and beef sectors, running sales outlets for butcher’s meat, live small livestock and especially species destined for rotisseries, like in their home countries. Some caterers were only responsible for cooking and selling, while others had some tables and chairs where people could sit to eat at the sales outlet. This rise in meat grilling was also favourable for sales of cassava rolls, or so-called *mingouélé de Brazzaville* and *fabriqués* (crescent-shaped cassava breads), close to where the meat was sold. For festive events, Brazzavillians could order a whole barbecued goat or sheep with couscous from the West African grill chefs.

Between 1992 and 2018, grilled meat sales outlets spread to other parts of the city. Butcher’s meat and farm-raised chicken grill chefs now face strong competition from vendors of *coupés-coupés*[14] made from imported meat products: tails, ribs, pig’s feet, legs, necks and wings, which are called ‘spare parts’; poultry legs; imported beef cooked over a fire or a charcoal barbecue. Congolese from Kinshasa and Brazzaville, Rwandans, Chadians, etc., have joined West Africans in the distribution of grilled meat. The sale of cooked food products is traditionally reserved for women, but men have now taken over the grilled meat sector and manage grills that use large cut and welded drums for meat grilling, while women manage small outlets using small or medium-sized barbecues.

Financial problems facing most Brazzaville households, due to the economic recession, have contributed to the spatial expansion of street food. This sector is booming for two major reasons, i.e. the quest for an income-generating activity by unemployed and jobless people, women living alone with children, etc. and the strategy of eating

11. In northern Congo, *nganda* refers to fishermen’s bivouacs. In an urban setting, it refers to bars that offer cooked meals to consumers. *Nganda* are frequented by all segments of the population.

12. *Typhoïdes* are popular restaurants that cater to consumers with a low to medium socioeconomic status. The food is generally exposed to flies, i.e. vectors of typhoid fever, etc.

13. Poto-Poto is the name of one of the two villages from which the city of Brazzaville developed. Poto-Poto is now a downtown neighbourhood and crossed by the Avenue de la Paix (formerly the Avenue de la France Libre) and a hub of wholesale and retail trade. People of all socioeconomic categories of the population live there.

14. Grilled meat sold in pieces.

cheaply adopted by disadvantaged families. The extreme fragmentation of grilled meats, served with sliced raw onions, mayonnaise and chilli salt, is an indicator of the transformations under way regarding street food. The high popularity of street food is also illustrated by the proliferation of sales outlets. In 2018, there were 73,362, or 225 outlets per km^2, 40% of which had opened less than 10 years earlier[15].

In Brazzaville, three main social classes emerge on the basis of socioeconomic inequality: high, middle and low income. An in-depth analysis of catering revealed the distribution of these three classes among consumers: consumers from high-income families who eat in upper- and middle-class restaurants; middle-income consumers who also eat on the premises in middle-class and 'popular' restaurants; and consumers who buy takeaway dishes or grills for consumption at home. In the latter case, these are meals consumed individually or by all family members. Grilled meats were generally purchased and consumed at home by three-quarters of the families in the 2018 study, compared to one-third of the households surveyed in 1992-93. Street cooking, particularly that invented by city dwellers or that which comes from elsewhere, enables poor families and consumers to eat cheaply by providing them access to meals at affordable prices.

In the upper- and middle-class catering sector, food is usually eaten at the point of sale, but a few consumers (less than 30% of respondents) sometimes buy take-away meals (egg rolls, *shawarma*, Cantonese rice, fried chicken and potato chips, pizzas, etc.).

⏩ Conclusion

Urban cuisine in Brazzaville has undergone profound changes over the last 25 years. Brazzaville's inhabitants—many of whom are migrants—are innovating in their cuisines by making meals based on so-called local and foreign products and practices. Our analysis of food consumption patterns in terms of cuisine was essential to gain insight into urban food and culinary trends. It highlighted the combination of different foods used to prepare original urban meals from products of various geographical origins, as well as the importance of immigrants in the transfer of their national cuisines. Brazzavillians—through the presence of cuisines from all continents (African, European, Asian, American)—have the world on their plates.

Observed changes in food consumption habits also question the usual opposition between traditional and modern cuisine. In cities, the divide between these two types of cuisine is barely perceptible due to the diversity of meals and the mix between so-called 'local' products or meals—which actually are mostly not local—and products or meals of foreign origin.

In 25 years, Brazzaville's urban cuisine has been marked by the mainstreaming of foreign meals introduced by international migrants. The cuisine offered in Western or European-style out-of-home food outlets, which originally served mainly sandwiches, has evolved towards more elaborate and complex 'ready-to-eat' dishes. Eating hamburgers, sandwiches or steak and chips in snack bars, burgers, bakeries or cafeterias is synonymous with high social class and empowerment for youth.

15. Results of a follow-up study conducted in 2018.

Going to a snack bar dressed in jeans and sneakers of major brands, equipped with all the latest technological gadgets, eating hamburgers, sandwiches and drinking Coca-Cola, is a sign of changes in the food habits of urban youth. For housekeepers, making raw vegetable salads, preparing a pizza or Cantonese rice is a source of pride and a sign of social distinction. These meals are meant to surprise guests and above all to confirm the socioeconomic status of the households, because eating European food is quite expensive for poor families.

The growth of out-of-home cuisine has several social implications depending on the socioeconomic category of families. Flows of migrants to Brazzaville have increased socioeconomic inequality between households. On the one hand, popular street-food catering is a way for poor inhabitants to cheaply obtain meals which they eat at home. Their financial resources hamper access to high-end foreign cuisine. On the other hand, out-of-home catering allows better-off city dwellers to readily enjoy meals from elsewhere and quality street-food meals, to reduce the constraints of urban life, to discover different cuisines of the world, to have fun or to ‘change air’, to use the expression used by the respondents. Overall, in the current setting of economic crisis and growing socioeconomic inequality, street-food catering is a dynamic sector of activity that offers opportunities for Brazzavillians on the economic margins to earn a living, and this trend would deserve more attention.

⏩ References

Berton-Ofouémé Y., 1993. Identification des comportements alimentaires des ménages congolais de Brazzaville: stratégies autour des plats. *In: Alimentation, techniques et innovations dans les régions tropicales*. Muchnik J. (Ed.), Paris, L’Harmattan: 167-175.

Berton-Ofouémé Y., 1996. *L’approvisionnement des villes en Afrique noire. Produire, vendre et consommer les légumes à Brazzaville*. Doctoral thesis in geography, University Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux III, CEGET, Bordeaux, 434 p.

Berton-Ofouémé Y., 2017. *L’accès à l’alimentation dans les grandes villes (Asie, Afrique, Caraïbes)*. Paris, L’Harmattan, 269 p.

Berton-Ofouémé Y., Trèche S., 1995. Place des dérivés des racines de manioc dans l’alimentation des Brazzavillois. *In: Transformation alimentaire du manioc*. Agbor Egbe T., Brauman A., Griffon D., Trèche S. (Eds.), Paris, Orstom: 243-253.

SEP-Développement, 1987. *Étude de marché des légumes à Brazzaville*. 161 p.

Souka J.F.S., 1991. *Urbanisation, approvisionnement et consommation alimentaire en Afrique Noire: le cas de Brazzaville*. Doctoral thesis, University of Bordeaux, 2 volumes, 744 p.

⏩ Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Agrisud International, and especially Yannick Huet for his support for the research presented in this chapter, as well as Alain Leplaideur, CIRAD, IRD and AFD for providing crucial scientific and financial support. She would also like to thank Simplice Dossou-Gbété (University of Pau, France) for data processing training, as well as the appraisers for their enhancements of this chapter.

Chapter 6

Warung makan – public kitchens at the epicentre of informality in Jakarta

Laura Arciniegas

Summary. In Jakarta's *kampung* (slum neighbourhoods), *warung makan* are food outlets that offer traditional 'homemade' dishes (*masakan rumah*) on a daily basis. Eaters who frequent these commercial food outlets every day regard them as extensions of their households. Moreover, domestic activities are shifting towards *warung makan*, which are propitious to interactions between eaters and vendors within social networks bound by ties of neighbourliness, kinship, solidarity and trust.

Introduction

In Jakarta, *kampung* (literally 'urban villages') are enclaves of informality and poverty that are actually villages within the city. From a social standpoint, *kampungs* function as closed community platforms that facilitate access and circulation of material and social resources for the poorest city dwellers (Jellinek, 2005). They are neighbourhoods where living spaces evolve at the initiative of their inhabitants, thus fostering a sense of cohesion and social belonging (Jellinek, 1991; Simone, 2014). Rural outmigration to the city has gradually increased the density of these neighbourhoods, which accommodate migrants seeking employment, following relatives or acquaintances (Ezeh *et al.*, 2017). Social ties are reshaped according to the neighbourhood and kinship setting and concomitant interactions. These areas have been marginalized and overlooked by urban development policies since colonial times, thereby exacerbating deficiencies in infrastructure and primary services. Under-investment and overcrowding have jointly perpetuated the image of *kampungs* as social relegation zones and they now, by extension, encompass all low-lying, squalid, dense and unplanned neighbourhoods. Their social morphology is characterized by spatial integration of most spheres of life: religion, work, education, public and private life (Nijman, 2010). *Kampungs* are hence prime spaces for the multidimensional socialization of its inhabitants. These districts are confined because traffic and access is very limited, thus contributing to the economic exclusion and isolation of community residents (Jellinek, 2005; Sihombing, 2002).

 DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/c6

Informality is reflected by the integration of economic activities, consumption practices and social networks (Roy, 2005). Poor people in cities of the Global South are more likely to access various resources, goods and services, including employment, housing and food, via informal rather than formal networks (Mosse, 2010; Te Lintelo, 2017). Food is no exception to these phenomena, and informal street food outlets represent the main source of both prepared food and informal employment. This trend is paced by changes in the spatial geography and develops with urbanization, particularly in the slums of major Asian, African and Latin American cities. Studies conducted in different poor urban areas in the Global South have shown that the smaller and poorer the families, the greater the share of the food budget allocated to street food (Alves da Silva *et al.*, 2014; Malvy *et al.*, 1998; Mensah *et al.*, 2013; Te Lintelo, 2017; Tinker, 1999; Van Riet *et al.*, 2003).

Culinary spaces in Jakarta's informality

More or less itinerant food vending outlets have been part of everyday food practices for centuries in Indonesian rural and urban areas alike. In the past, these outlets traditionally offered snacks and portions of sweet or savoury foods to be eaten outside of the main mealtimes (Koentjaraningrat, 2007; Protschky, 2008), but they have now emerged as a food security solution for the poorest people (Kolopaking *et al.*, 2011; Steyn *et al.*, 2014; Yulia *et al.*, 2016). However, with contemporary changes in food habits, street food in *kampungs* has also given rise to so-called 'obesogenic' environments that facilitate calorie-dense food consumption (Anggraini *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, street foods may be vectors of food poisoning due to the unsafe food handling practices of some vendors (Andarwulan *et al.*, 2009; Brata, 2010; Vollaard *et al.*, 2004).

In *kampung* districts, street food is offered in various forms through a wide variety of more or less itinerant vending outlets, more or less equipped for on-the-spot consumption, and with more or less fixed routines and routes (Corbeau, 2013; Suryadarma *et al.*, 2010; Yatmo, 2008). Scenarios within each of these culinary spaces virtually prefigure the forms of food acquisition and consumption according to the geographical, symbolic, technical and social dimensions that could be considered to outline the boundaries of the 'social space' of this food model (Poulain, 2002). Among them, *warung makan*[1] or *warung nasi*[2] are stationary or semi-stationary vending outlets that offer traditional homemade-type dishes (*masakan rumah*[3]) on a daily basis.

The *cocina pública*[4] concept outlined by Meredith Abarca (2007) distinguishes between professional restaurants and out-of-home domestic food vending spaces. The latter are spaces where domestic culinary practices are transferred to the commercial sphere without any loss of the associated family and symbolic values, such as care, mutual aid and cooperation (Marte, 2007; Pérez and Abarca, 2007; Salazar, 2012). Following Abarca's perspective we studied the socioeconomic organization of

1. *Warung*: shop, small business or stand; *makan*: to eat.
2. *Nasi*: white rice; key component of a traditional dish and of the food model overall.
3. *Masakan*: cooked food; *rumah*: home.
4. From the Spanish term meaning 'public kitchen'.

food within an informal district by transcending the dichotomy between in-home and out-of-home through the prism of the *warung makan* and developing three lines of analysis: 1) the reconfiguration of food spaces; 2) the relocation of certain activities from the domestic to the commercial sphere; and 3) the interplay between commercial trade and social ties. The analyses presented are based on qualitative data collected during an ethnographic survey conducted in a Jakarta *kampung* in 2014, in collaboration with the Faculty of Public Health of the Universitas Indonesia, which combined non-participating ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews.

⏩ *Warung makan* – a culinary space at the interface between domestic and commercial spheres

The first part of this piece aims to position *warung makan* within the social morphology of the *kampung* district by highlighting its hybrid character between commercial and domestic spheres. Geographically, the *kampung* space is encompassed within built boundaries (two large avenues) and a natural boundary, i.e. Ciliwung River which flows through the city. The doors and windows of residences within these boundaries are constantly open and overlook narrow winding streets that are used almost exclusively by neighbours of the *kampung*. Activities, domestic chores (cooking, laundry) or personal items may spill onto these narrow laneways. Moreover, poverty is generally associated with this appropriation of public space, often driven by the collectivization of available resources (Nijman, 2010; Sharma and Konwar, 2014). Kitchens as well as toilets are sometimes shared between several households in the *kampung*. This sharing favours the extension of privacy into spaces outside the household, thus boosting the flow of information about everyone's lives. Measures to prevent and provide protection against lifestyle vulnerabilities (lack of infrastructure, access to water, sanitation, etc.) are also shared and contribute to the sense of belonging and solidarity.

Socially, migration movements are often started by a trailblazing migrant who settles in the city and is then followed by other close, and then extended, family members; these distant relatives settle in the vicinity of the close family network once their economic situation has stabilized (Ezeh *et al.*, 2017). Neighbours from the village of origin may also join the flow and settle in the same *kampung*, thus recreating the original social network and reconfiguring support and interdependence. The network of vendors and buyers—in addition to neighbourhood ties—is structured by bonds formed throughout the history of the families and communities. In addition to existing kinship relationships and households are constituted between neighbouring families, hence strengthening the sense of belonging to one large family.

> "What's important is that we help them and they help us. They don't chase us away, so we don't do that either. We're all nearby and connected—family and friends. Anyway, since people here marry other people from here, we're all brothers and sisters. Later, they may marry another neighbour. So everyone becomes part of one big family. Marrying between relatives is not a problem, that's how families are formed. A wife meets a husband here and subsequently the children get together. Then everyone gets together and they all make a family." (Pak Sukardi, 65 years old)

Neighbourhood social cohesion—beyond the spatial proximity—is founded on bonds of trust, solidarity and identification. A *kampung* is therefore not only one big family as Pak Sukardi says, it is also one big house. *Warung makan* are central culinary spaces within this big house. There are mainly two types: stationary restaurants set up in buildings, in spaces that initially served as a kitchen just for residents of the building; or stalls with semi-fixed or completely dismountable equipment that is set up in the same place every day (Yatmo, 2008). Within the neighbourhood, no *warung makan* has a space reserved for on-site consumption, apart from adjacent window sills or parapet walls when the outlet is installed in permanent buildings.

Eaters refer to these food outlets as selling 'cooked food' (*masakan*[5]), which implies the use of traditional techniques and recipes, while more specifically referring to traditional dishes. *Nasi* is the core element of such dishes, accompanied by side dishes based on green vegetables (*sayur-sayuran*) and meat (*lauk-pauk*)—mainly fish or chicken—and a portion of *sambal*[6]. Moreover, so-called 'real food' (*makanan*) contains unmixed white rice. *Warung makan* are the main food providers in *kampung*.

Bu Sukini hosts one of the most active *warung* in a space of roughly 4 m^2 located on the ground floor of a primarily residential building (Figure 6.1). An open window and door provide a separation between the street and the main room where pots, trays and pans with the day's food dishes are set out along the walls. The first pot—in the direction of movement of the eaters as they serve themselves—contains white rice (*nasi*), which is always served first. Next are the vegetable dishes, followed by *tahu* and *tempeh*[7] based dishes, and then fish or chicken dishes (beef or lamb preparations are very uncommon as they are too expensive). A bowl of *sambal* is added to the plate after the other foods, which caps off the meal. Individuals hence eat their entire meal on one plate. At the back of the *warung*, behind a door, is the

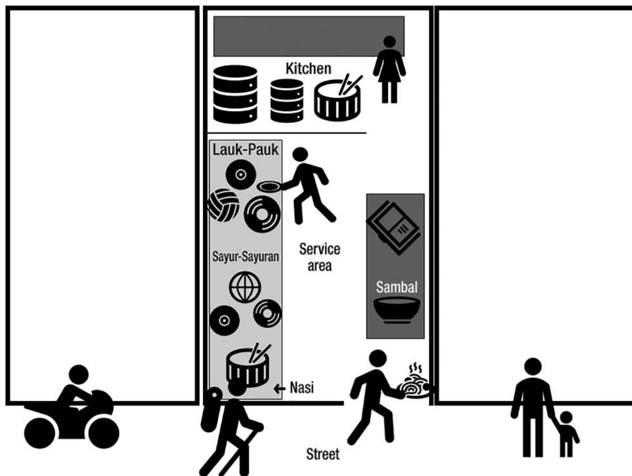

Figure 6.1: A diagram of Bu Sukini's *warung makan* (L. Arciniegas)

5. *Masakan*: cuisine, or 'that which is cooked'.
6. *Sambal*: mortar-pounded chilli paste that is served with all dishes. In Indonesia, there are about 300 varieties with different cultural and regional attributes.
7. *Tahu* (tofu) and *tempeh* (fermented soybean patties) are often sold together.

kitchen from which Bu Sukini only goes out from time to time to fill or change the empty trays. She actually does not sell her food dishes directly—eaters come in with their dishes, help themselves and then mark down their choices in a notebook. Meal payments are collected in the afternoon, after the lunch service.

Eaters move around in these spaces to serve themselves and they eat the food afterwards in their residences or *teras*—furnished areas adjoining the fronts of houses, with neighbours, other family members or alone, which is often the case. Food, eaters and dishes circulate daily to and from the *warung makan*. They also serve as a coordination unit for the midday meal and organize the relationships between neighbours who interact in this culinary space. The social synchronization of food consumption (Herpin, 1988) between neighbours living in adjacent streets is based on rice cooking in particular, since it has to be eaten freshly prepared. *Nasi* is the mainstay of Indonesian food in its nutritional and symbolic dimensions (Hartini *et al*., 2005; Weichart, 2008). It is traditionally associated with femininity and the domestic world (Janowski and Kerlogue, 2007). In addition to the geographical proximity, the location of this preparation in the *warung makan* thus places it in the domestic sphere.

⏩ *Warung makan* – a gateway for household cuisine

Street food is traditionally part of the Indonesian food model in both urban and rural settings (Koentjaraningrat, 2007; Protschky, 2008), but it is even more prominent in informal districts, where it is the main source of prepared food for households (Steyn *et al*., 2014). *Warung makan* provide traditional domestic dishes on a daily basis for most *Melayu kampung* inhabitants[8], but this is also likely the case in other Jakartan *kampung*. In this second part, we discuss the specificities of these “shifts in certain activities between domestic and commercial spheres” (Poulain, 2002: 35) in the *kampung*.

Living standards largely explain these shifts because private residential spaces are shrinking and their use is intensifying in response to material realities. In the most resource-poor households, the residential space consists of a single living room whose uses change successively during the day, i.e. resting, eating, carrying out domestic tasks, praying, personal care, etc. The inside space for storing and preparing food is often limited, or is used for a variety of activities. Due to the living standards in slums—where sanitation infrastructures are deficient and the risk of intoxication is high (Ezeh *et al*., 2017)—foodstuffs are vulnerable and their storage is a critical factor in the food chain (Desjeux, 2006). Meanwhile, public spaces (alleyways and their intersections) are taken over for private activities and, conversely, other spaces (particularly toilets and kitchens) are being communalized. Under these conditions, home food preparation involves several activities that broadly go beyond the cooking in the strict sense. First, water must be managed as it is not readily accessible for everyone and requires purification treatment prior to use. Secondly, various facilities are required for cooking. When there is no fixed space in the home for this activity, the necessary temporary rearrangements require

8. Results of a quantitative study (n = 400) representative of the adult population of the Melayu *kampung* (Jatinegara sub-district, East Jakarta region), carried out in 2014 as part of this research project in collaboration with the Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Indonesia.

a lot of time and physical effort. These tangible aspects were often mentioned in women's interviews to justify their decisions to buy ready-to-eat food.

This reasoning is also based on rationales that promote this practical option by equating it with a more 'modern' lifestyle. Bu Mimin admits to "having the desire to cook", but other elements come into play and her decision is generally geared towards commercial options.

> "For daily meals, I sometimes cook, but I often buy already cooked food. If I feel like cooking, I cook. But if I'm too lazy, I just buy cooked food. Next door [to the house] there's a food stand with lots of side dishes. I often buy more than I cook. If I'm taking care of the children, I'm usually too busy to cook. Not often, maybe once a week I cook, but only if I want to." (Bu Mimin, 48 years old)

The underlying rationales are based on a dual interplay between new convenience-oriented values and traditional nurturing roles. First, the physical and mental workload of women managing meals is lightened by these clearly more practical modes of food procurement. In addition to the relief gained by the technical and logistical solution to the problem of food storage and preparation, the fact that this food option is quick, convenient and 'right there' is also a strong incentive. This convenience—which in the words of Alan Warde (1999) is a response to configuration issues between contemporary social spaces and times—is offered by the street food network and embodies the modernity associated with city life.

Secondly, gastronomic requirements from the standpoint of techniques and know-how, which are now less mastered, are challenged by the need to cater to all tastes, which is why the majority of people now rely on ready-to-eat food. Women—who manage their households with regard to the budget and the food for the whole family (Koning, 2000; Papanek and Schwede, 1988; Williams, 1991)—define their nurturing role in terms of fulfilling everyone's food pleasures. *Lauk-pauk* and *sayur-sayuran* preparations—which are traditionally highly varied—require a great deal of culinary knowledge and skill. *Warung makan* offer several choices and diversify them throughout the week. Beyond quantity or nutrition, taste—in the sense of palatability and gustatory pleasure—is the prime factor in food choices, and this taste (*rasa*) is achieved by preparing dishes in the right way. *Warung makan* chefs not only prepare *nasi*—the symbolic and nutritional dietary mainstay—but also ensure the variety and flavours of side dishes. They are hence strong social references and garner respect from the community members, i.e. advocates of 'good food' and guardians of culinary traditions.

These shifts from domestic activities to *warung makan* promote a *kampung*-scale culinary labour division that gives street vendors a status in relationships between food consumers and vendors, but also in the social networks formed by neighbourly, kinship, solidarity and trust bonds.

⏩ Food exchanges and the nurtured-nurturer relationship

Daily meals are organized via established relationships between eaters and vendors according to the sociospatial provisions of proximity and neighbourliness, as well as to the amalgam constituted by bonds of solidarity, kinship and friendship that prevail within the community. The *cocina pública* concept developed by Meredith Abarca is based on the domestic configuration of these culinary spaces, as well

as on the economic relationships established there, in the words of Abarca "the public kitchen moves culinary practices from the sphere of domestic reproduction to commercial production without losing the familial ethical and moral values of caring, collaboration, and mutual benefit" (Abarca, 2007). From the vendors' standpoint, nurtured-nurturer interactions are based on relationships that, in addition to commercial trade, take the social and cultural aspects of their entrepreneurial role into account. These stances diverge from the utilitarian thrust of professional kitchens and are more in line with a donor logic based on the threefold obligation to give, receive and give back, as outlined in *The gift* (Mauss, 1954). Florence Weber (2000) suggests that economic ethnographic research should be mindful of the service conditions by distinguishing two cases. First, services regulated by a normative or material framework within which there is no ambiguity with regard to the counterpart services; and secondly, services in which "the different partners in a given transaction have several rationales at their disposal and juggle this ambiguity to implement their action at several levels" (Weber and Dufy, 2006: 25). We propose to study these relationships through the portrait of Pak Hambali and his business.

Pak Hambali runs a *warung makan* he inherited from his wife's uncle in 2000. He sells the daily *nasi* dish and other side dishes that are eaten at main meals. His day begins with *Subuh*, the morning prayer, at 4:30 a.m. He prepares a variety of fried foods such as *bakwan* (vegetable fritters) and *uli* (fried dumplings made with sticky rice cooked in coconut milk) which several neighbours eat for lunch and street vendors buy to sell elsewhere in the city. These vendors do not pay immediately for what they take—the tally is made at the end of the day when they bring any unsold dishes back to Pak Hambali, who bears the brunt of any economic losses. His wife takes care of getting supplies at the market and preliminary preparations for the next morning's service, while he manages the final preparation, distribution and sale of the dishes. After the first breakfast round, he rests until 10:00 a.m. Then they start cooking the *nasi* and various side dishes before *Dhurur*, the noon prayer. Thereafter the flow of customers intensifies and the day ends in the afternoon once everything has been sold. The daily life of Pak Hambali and his wife revolves around their *warung makan*. They eat the same dishes they serve every day, and usually also any unsold goods.

This *warung* plays a key role in supplying their neighbours' daily meals, which has earned them the respect of the community. Pak Hambali is now one of the moral authorities of his *rukun warga*[9]. He does not intend to expand his business or change or extend his range of dishes, he leaves that to others; he believes that nobody should desire more than what he/she already has. He sells on credit to anyone who asks, as long as he knows them. Transactions are of many sorts, depending on the time and the nature of the exchange of services. In some cases, payment must be made immediately, in others it may be much more temporally deferred. Exchanges may or not be monetized. In some cases, the price or amount is fixed, in others it may be negotiated. These negotiations depend on mutual knowledge and existing chains of trust. Neighbours without a regular income often help out in the *warung makan*, especially in washing up, bringing water and peeling vegetables. This work can be

9. *Rukun warga*, or 'harmonious hamlet', is the 5th subdivision in the Indonesian territorial administration's division system after 'district'. *Rukun warga* has a population of about 200 people. It is further subdivided into *rukun tettanga* ('harmonious neighbourhood') encompassing a few blocks of houses.

remunerated in cash or food and is generally viewed as a way to contribute beyond contractual exchanges. Many of these people are loyal paying customers who come to Pak Hambali's *warung* on a daily basis. He believes that refusal of this payment flexibility would jeopardize the flow of resources and foster aggressive competition.

The quantitative survey revealed that one out of four inhabitants in the *kampung* sells ready-to-eat preparations, which means that food transactions are particularly formative in the daily social life of the neighbourhood. Nurtured-nurturer relationships are based on several types of exchanges framed by the focus on community well-being and non-competition. Commercial transactions are regulated on the basis of mutual knowledge and enable access to and circulation of resources.

Conclusion

Here the *warung makan* serves as a prime unit for monitoring the organization of social and economic life in *kampung* and helps to roughly determine the scope of domestic food trends in this setting. These spaces are like households where eaters serve themselves and where the times and nature of commercial transactions are characterised by flexibility and adaptation. Moreover, private and public spaces in which food circulates are connected by their geographical proximity, thus endowing *kampung* with family and domestic attributes. The overlap in the routines of food vendors and consumers, and in private and public life, streamlines the social space. Regarding culinary techniques, the preparation of *nasi*, a staple food, further enhances this streamlined aspect and places *warung makan* in an even more pivotal position in the daily meal framework of *kampung* inhabitants. The culinary practices that are less present in households because of the living standards and convenience values are taken care of by these exchanges, which also ensure the perpetuation of tastes and the preservation of traditional know-how.

This social morphology is embedded in the economic exchange patterns and shapes eaters' food acquisition practices. The types of exchange in these public kitchens—where eaters serve themselves freely and where payment is often deferred—bridges the gap between the domestic and commercial spheres, especially since values linked to kinship, neighbourhood ties and mutual wellbeing justify, adjust or maintain people's food behaviour.

Changes in urban foodscapes imply the ongoing emergence of food catering and distribution structures. In a setting of informality, *warung makan* structures are shifting away from capitalistic rationales and morphing into spaces for the communalization of food, where the interface between public and private spheres is becoming blurred.

References

Abarca M.E., 2007. Charlas Culinarias: Mexican Women Speak from Their Public Kitchens. *Food and Foodways*, 15(3-4): 183-212.

Alves da Silva S., Cardoso R. de C.V., Góes J.Â.W., Santos J.N., Ramos F.P., Bispo de Jesus R. *et al.*, 2014. Street food on the coast of Salvador, Bahia, Brazil: A study from the socioeconomic and food safety perspectives. *Food Control*, 40: 78-84.

Andarwulan N., Madanijah S., Zulaikhah, 2009. *Safety of school children foods in Indonesia. Current issues and challenges in food security*. Bogor, Southeast Asian Food Science and Technology Center, Bogor Agricultural University.

Anggraini R., Februhartanty J., Bardosono S., Khusun H., Worsley A., 2016. Food store choice among urban slum women is associated with consumption of energy-dense food. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health*, 28(5): 458-468.

Brata A.G., 2010. Vulnerability of urban informal sector: street vendors in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. *Theoretical & Empirical Researches in Urban Management*, 5(14): 47.

Corbeau J.P., 2013. Regard sociologique sur les mangeurs et les cuisines de rue. *In: Voyage au cœur de la cuisine de rue.* Bouisson M., Meadows F. (dir.), Paris, Gallimard: 34-46.

Desjeux D., 2006. *La consommation*. Paris, PUF, 127 p.

Ezeh A., Oyebode O., Satterthwaite D., Chen Y.-F., Ndugwa R., Sartori J. *et al*., 2017. The history, geography, and sociology of slums and the health problems of people who live in slums. *The Lancet*, 389(10068): 547-558.

Hartini T.N.S., Padmawati R.S., Lindholm L., Surjono A., Winkvist A., 2005. The importance of eating rice: changing food habits among pregnant Indonesian women during the economic crisis. *Social Science & Medicine*, 61(1): 199-210.

Herpin N., 1988. Le repas comme institution: Compte rendu d'une enquête exploratoire. *Revue française de sociologie*, 29(3): 503-521.

Janowski M., Kerlogue F., 2007. *Kinship and Food in South East Asia*. New York, NIAS Press, 305 p.

Jellinek L., 1991. *The Wheel of Fortune: The History of a Poor Community in Jakarta*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 214 p.

Jellinek L., 2005. Jakarta, Indonesia. Kampung culture or consumer culture? *In: Consuming Cities: The Urban Environment in the Global Economy after the Rio Declaration*. Elander I., Gleeson B., Lidskog R., Low N. (dir.), London, NYC, Routledge: 271-286.

Koentjaraningrat, 2007. *Villages in Indonesia*. Jakarta, Equinox Pub, 445 p.

Kolopaking R., Bardosono S., Fahmida U., 2011. Maternal self-efficacy in the home food environment: a qualitative study among low-income mothers of nutritionally at-risk children in an urban area of Jakarta, Indonesia. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 43(3): 180-188.

Koning J., 2000. *Women and households in Indonesia: cultural notions and social practices*. New York, Psychology Press, 354 p.

Malvy D., Chauliac M., Bendech M.A., 1998. Alimentation de rue, mutations urbaines et différenciations sociales à Bamako (Mali). *Sciences sociales et santé*, 16(2): 33-59.

Marte L., 2007. Foodmaps: Tracing boundaries of 'home' through food relations. *Food and Foodways*, 15(3-4): 261-289.

Mauss M., 1954 (2002). *The gift. The form and reason for exchange in archaic societ*ies. London, Routledge, 199 p.

Mensah J., Aidoo R., Teye A., 2013. Analysis of street food consumption across various income groups in the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana. *International Review of Management and Business Research*, 1(4): 951-961.

Mosse D., 2010. A relational approach to durable poverty, inequality and power. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 46(7): 1156-1178.

Nijman J., 2010. A study of space in Mumbai's slums. *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, 101(1): 4-17.

Papanek H., Schwede L., 1988. Women are good with money: earning and managing in an indonesian city. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 23(44): WS73-WS84.

Pérez R.L., Abarca M.E., 2007. Cocinas Públicas: Food and Border Consciousness in Greater Mexico. *Food and Foodways*, 15(3-4): 137-151.

Poulain J.P., 2002. *Sociologies de l'alimentation*. Paris, PUF, 286 p. English version: Poulain, J.P., 2017. *The Sociology of Food. Eating and the Place of Food in Society*. London, Bloomsburry Academic, 312 p.

Protschky S., 2008. The colonial table: food, culture and Dutch identity in colonial Indonesia. *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 54(3): 346-357.

Roy A., 2005. Urban informality: toward an epistemology of planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2): 147-158.

Salazar J.T., 2012. Eating out: Reconstituting the Philippines' public kitchens. *Thesis Eleven*, 112(1): 133.

Sharma A., Konwar D., 2014. Struggles for spaces: everday life of a woman street vendor in Delhi. *The Delhi University Journal of Humanities and The Social Sciences*, 1: 48-59.

Sihombing A., 2002. Living in the Kampungs: a firsthand account of experiences in Jakarta's Kampungs. *International Journal of Studies on Architecture, Planning and Landscape*, 7: 15-22.

Simone A., 2014. 'We are here alone': the ironic potentials and vulnerabilities of mixed (up) districts in central Jakarta: debates and developments. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38(4): 1509-1524.

Steyn N.P., Mchiza Z., Hill J., Davids Y.D., Venter I., Hinrichsen E. *et al*., 2014. Nutritional contribution of street foods to the diet of people in developing countries: a systematic review. *Public Health Nutrition*, 17(6): 1363.

Suryadarma D., Poesoro A., Akhmadi, Budiyati S., Rosfadhila M., Suryahadi A., 2010. Traditional food traders in developing countries and competition from supermarkets: Evidence from Indonesia. *Food Policy*, 35(1): 79-86.

Te Lintelo D.J.H., 2017. Enrolling a goddess for Delhi's street vendors: The micro-politics of policy implementation shaping urban (in)formality. *Geoforum*, 84: 77-87.

Tinker I., 1999. Street foods into the 21st century. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 16(3): 327-333.

Van Riet H., Den Hartog A.P., Hooftman D.A.P., Foeken D.W.J., Van Staveren W.A., 2003. Determinants of non-home-prepared food consumption in two low-income areas in Nairobi. *Nutrition*, 19(11-12): 1006-1012.

Vollaard A.M., Ali S., Van Asten H.A.G.H., Suhariah Ismid I., Widjaja S., Visser L.G. *et al*., 2004. Risk factors for transmission of foodborne illness in restaurants and street vendors in Jakarta, Indonesia. *Epidemiology and Infection*, 132(5): 863-872.

Warde A., 1999. Convenience food: space and timing. *British Food Journal*, 101(7): 518-527.

Weber F., 2000. Transactions marchandes, échanges rituels, relations personnelles. Une ethnographie économique après le Grand Partage. *Genèses*, 41(1): 85-107.

Weber F., Dufy C., 2006. *L'ethnographie économique*. Paris, La Découverte, 128 p.

Weichart G., 2008. Makan dan minum bersama: feasting commensality in Minahasa, Indonesia. *Anthropology of Food*, S3.

Williams W.L., 1991. *Javanese lives: women and men in modern Indonesian society*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 238 p.

Yatmo Y.A., 2008. Street vendors as 'out of place' urban elements. *Journal of Urban Design*, 13(3): 387-402.

Yulia, Khusun H., Fahmida U., 2016. Dietary patterns of obese and normal-weight women of reproductive age in urban slum areas in Central Jakarta. *British Journal of Nutrition*, 116(S1): S49-S56.

⏩ Acknowledgements

The author would first like to thank the families of Kampung Melayu for the wealth of exchanges that laid the foundations for this research. The field investigation was greatly facilitated by the team of the Department of Health Education and Behavioural Sciences, Universitas Indonesia, Dr Evi Martha, Tiara Amelia and Andham Dewi. This research was cofunded by Agropolis Fondation in the framework of

Labex Agro, Danone Nutricia Research and CIRAD, and was carried out under the scientific guidance of Jean-Pierre Poulain (University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès) and Nicolas Bricas (CIRAD). Finally, she would like to thank the reviewers of this chapter for their corrections, comments and criticisms, which greatly helped to structure and clarify the narrative.

Chapter 7

"Home and away" – narratives of food and identity in the context of urbanization in Malaysia

Anindita Dasgupta, Sivapalan Selvadurai, Logendra S. Ponniah

Summary. In this study, we use food as a lens to explore the impact of the rural-urban migration on the sense of identity among single, male Malaysians who migrated to the capital city of Kuala Lumpur for work in the 1980s. Following Tibère (2015), we explore the ways the increasing contact between diverse ethnic groups in the cities has contributed to the emergence of innovative ways of regulating multicultural co-habitation through commensality. We conclude that the longing for local and 'authentic' foods coexist with the desire among urban residents for hybrid national cultures and transcultural foodscapes.

> Rahimah: Aunty, maybe I will stop making *chakoi*[1] and just sell *nasi lemak* and Malay *kuih*[2] instead. Then we can sell a truly Malaysian breakfast on this road.
>
> Lan Jie: OK. No need to fight. You serious or not? I can give you a recipe... Very nice, my mother's recipe… Guarantee hit.
>
> Rahimah: Yes, we are truly Malaysian. Not like those illegal immigrants there. Truly Malaysian like Malaysian Airlines.
>
> (Kow, Shih-Li. *Deep Fried Devils* 2008, p. 57)

⏩ Introduction

In 2017, Malaysians were taken by surprise when, the national beauty pageant winner Samantha Katie James unveiled the designer gown that she planned wear to the national costume round at the upcoming Miss Universe pageant in Las Vegas: a sequined ball-gown depicting the country's favourite breakfast dish, *nasi lemak*.

1. *Chako*i, a fried breadstick, is a long golden-brown deep-fried strip of dough eaten in China and in other East and Southeast Asian cuisines.
2. *Kuih*s are bite-sized snacks or sweets made of flour, rice flour, coconut milk etc. originating in Southeast Asia.

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/cp7

Nasi lemak, which literally means 'fatty rice' in the national Malay language, is rice cooked in rich coconut-milk and served with fried or boiled eggs, sliced cucumbers, fried anchovies, peanuts, and a dollop of *sambal,* or local red chilli paste. Traditionally wrapped in a triangular piece of banana leaf, it is a popular meal in this multicultural society divided among a number of ethnicities: numerically dominant Muslim Malays, Chinese, Indians, and a host of smaller groups, each with its own food traditions and religious taboos.

Facebook, blogs and twitter were instantly filled with mixed reactions to this unusual choice for the design of the 'national costume'. But many, including the designer himself argued that, *nasi lemak* was a symbol of unity in this multicultural society and thus it deserved a place of pride on the international stage. Originating in pre-colonial times in Malay villages in the west coast, this frugal dish with its simple recipe and easy-to-find ingredients, has travelled widely in the rapidly urbanizing Southeast Asian country (Ahmed 2014). Often described by Malaysians as the 'national' dish, today, *nasi lemak* is available almost everywhere—from the roadside stalls in the villages to classy restaurants in elite hotels in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. In the words of one middle aged Malaysian, "The different condiments in the *nasi lemak* represent the different sections of Malaysian society, and show how the different cultures can come together to create a unique taste. So, *nasi lemak* truly represents Malaysia".

In this study, we use food as a lens to explore the impact of the rural-urban migration on the sense of identity among single, male Malaysians who migrated to the capital city of Kuala Lumpur for work in the 1980s. In the past 40 years, Malaysia has experienced an exponential rise in urbanization. Today, almost 80% of its population lives in big cities like Kuala Lumpur or economic hubs like Penang and Johor Baru. Urban migration has brought together Malaysians from diverse backgrounds whose identities are often expressed through outward symbols of community, especially food (Happel, 2012; Perry, 2017) which is governed by ethnic, religious and cultural norms and practices. Then, following Tibère (2015), we explore the ways this increasing contact between ethnic groups in Malaysia's cities has contributed to the emergence of innovative ways of regulating multicultural co-habitation through commensality. With this, we attempt to understand how urbanization leads to identity re-negotiation due to changing socio-economic environments on the one hand, and increased social interaction between communities, on the other.

This chapter presents the findings of a qualitative study conducted in Kuala Lumpur from 2017 to 2019, based on participant observation and in-depth interviews with Malay, Chinese and Indian migrant men who moved to the city in the 1980s. These first generation urbanites arrived in the city as young and single males, most having left their ancestral village homes for the first time in their lives. Through their narratives, we tried to understand the complex processes through which innovative food consumption patterns evolved among Kuala Lumpur's multiethnic people and how it impacted individuals' sense of ethnic identity.

The following section uses migrants' narratives to understand how changes in food consumption associated with the 'loss of the village home' impacted individuals' sense of identity as they grappled with moving to the capital. Then, we try to understand how these men adjusted to the changes by reconstructing 'authentic' foods from the past, to grapple with the unfamiliar urban environment (Jones and Taylor, 2001;

Autio *and al* 2013). Finally, we demonstrate how Malaysian ethnic groups navigate urban spaces by forging a collective supra-ethnic national identity that allows them to cook and eat 'Malaysian' cuisine in public spaces where cultures converge and congregate in the city.

⏩ Narratives of food: Leaving the home and the hearth

In Malaysia, food is not only viewed as an expression of the country's rich multiculturalism, but also as testimony to the nation's unique history, shaped by large scale migration during colonial and postcolonial years. The Malayan peninsula evolved into a complex multi-ethnic space in the twentieth century, through the British colonizers' policy of encouraging migration from China and India. In 1957, the British left behind a largely rural- society divided along ethnic, cultural and religious lines (McCulloch, 2014). While the Malay communities predominantly Muslim, the Chinese and Indian communities were divided by languages, dialects, and religions. Religious taboos on food were prevalent, like the requirements of halal preparation for Muslims (Fischler, 2008) and avoidance of beef for Hindus.

During the colonial period, the three groups had limited opportunities to meet and socialize, and lived largely within their own ethnic communities. Yet, these communities were not monolithic, but were composed of many smaller intra-ethnic groups, like the Punjabi Sikh, Malayali, and the Ceylonese communities who fit broadly under the umbrella of 'Indian' although each has a cultural identity of its own. According to a Malaysian in his late fifties, "Growing up in the village, we had very few opportunities to interact with other ethnic groups. My home was fenced, and as kids we were not adventurous enough to go to the open fields to play with others." A Malayali (a Malaysian Indian sub-ethnic group) informant who was the son of an affluent rubber estate manager, said "We were not encouraged to eat in other people's houses except during festivals." He went on to describe how food mediated his interactions with members of other cultures who lived around the plantation: "[Malays] would sell different types of fish," and provided "niche products like buffalo milk … that's how we got to interact with them." The Chinese ran shops near his boyhood home. He bought cakes, buns and prawn crackers from them outside the gates of his school. At the school canteen, Chinese vendors sold noodle-based dishes and Malays sold *nasi lemak.* He noted that, in his village, beyond the canteen, he 'rarely ate out'. Other informants shared similar accounts, agreeing unanimously that in their childhood, "Eating out was extremely rare," and "We all grew up eating our own traditional food in the village".

With the onset of rapid urbanization in the 1980s, however, urban migrants suddenly found themselves in far greater proximity to diverse groups. Intercultural contact that was previously inconceivable led to new, complex ways of perceiving self-identity.

Our informants perceived food to take on unique symbolic value in Malaysian cities. Eating became a more salient marker of identity as large numbers of people migrated from villages of less than a thousand inhabitants, to crowded urban settlements. What was eaten, or not, in the city was a powerful reminder of the physical displacement which distanced these young men from their village communities.

This distance from home brought with it a sense of identity erosion, as if they were "just another face in the crowd". Many men described eating unfamiliar foods that were commercially produced, to have provoked a sense of anxiety associated with the loss of their village. Feelings of loss, in turn, increased their longing for the taste of local dishes and the culinary traditions of the ethnic group or region they came from. Indeed, beyond an individual sense of loss, many asserted that urbanization had brought a loss of culinary traditions on a national scale, asserting that a considerable amount of traditional food ingredients, cooking methods, utensils, and knowledge had been lost in a single generation, due to urbanization. One informant claimed that, just as "a certain number of languages are dying every hour or so, there is an entire complex cuisine that is dying almost every day because urbanization gives you a new type of variety but it also takes you away from the food variety of your past."

While there is a palpable sense of loss and nostalgia, the following section will show how our informants were returning to their kitchens, as well to specialty restaurants, to recreate the 'lost' food by restoring the tradition into the urbanscape.

⏩ 'Authentic' food: Coping with nostalgia and loss in moving to the city

The men in this study who migrated to Kuala Lumpur in their early twenties recalled that arriving in the city brought the new experience of eating out in restaurants. In their villages, food was generally prepared by women and most of these young men had not learnt to cook. Nor did they find the time to do so in the city as they struggled to keep up with their fast-paced work lives, leaving no option but to eat unfamiliar foods in restaurants. "We ate whatever was available or whatever our co-workers ate," one man explained. The number of restaurants in the early 1980s was limited, and provided little choice for people of diverse ethnicities who thus settled for anything that "did not violate our religious taboos".

In the early 1980s, restaurants served only a few 'standardized' dishes that were easy to mass-produce to an ethnically diverse group of urban workers. *Nasi lemak* was one of the few dishes that that Malaysians of diverse backgrounds had grown up eating in their villages, which quickly made it one of the more common and appealing meals for urban workers.

> "Most of us had grown up eating *nasi lemak* in the school canteen when we were young. The banana leaf package, inside which it was served, was easy to carry".
>
> "You could eat *nasi lemak* at any time of the day, and whether Malay, Chinese or Indian, we were familiar with at least some of the ingredients that were used to cook *nasi lemak*"

Nasi lemak became a comfort dish in the city, to which many migrants turned for its ease and familiarity. "*Nasi lemak* belonged to all of us," one man explained, regardless of one's ethnic group, "our childhood memories were tied to the taste of *nasi lemak*'. To many informants, "…eating *nasi lemak* felt like home."

Although *nasi lemak* provided many migrants a taste of home in the city, their sense of a 'loss' of home was persistent and many continued searching for the 'authentic'

ethnic foods they missed, even as they grew older, became more at home in the city, and started their own families there.

Hashim, a Muslim Malay, who grew up in a Malay-majority village in the south, where "we ate our famous *assam-pedas* (sour-spicy) style of food". But in Kuala Lumpur, he was forced to eat food that was 'very different from what my mother used to cook', like *roti canai* (layered Indian fried bread) at the popular *mamak* restaurants that served *halal* food, or fast food at Kentucky Fried Chicken or McDonald's. Years later, when Hashim married a Malay co-worker, he did not enjoy the Perak-style Malay food she cooked and so he "sent her to [his] mother's house to learn how to cook *assam-pedas*". He described his sense of identity as an *Orang Melaka* (a person of Melaka origin) as having been partly restored thanks to his wife's recreation of his mother's *assam-pedas* recipes in his own home, providing him the confidence necessary to finally embrace Western dishes and the foods of other Malaysian cultures.

Similarly, Hari Singh, a Punjabi Sikh who migrated to Kuala Lumpur in 1984 described being hesitant at first to try foods of other ethnic groups, having never eaten Malay food in his village except for the occasional *nasi lemak*. Indian food was unattainable when he first migrated, because "the few north Indian restaurants… made you pay through your nose, and my salary was small". When Hari met his wife, he took pains to teach how to cook 'pure *Punjabi* food' at home, like he had grown up eating in his village. While at work, he would eat South Indian or Malay dishes with his Muslim Malay colleagues. Eating in the city, he explained, "became a balancing act between who I was at home, and how I was expected to behave outside the home". Thus, over time and with their wives' support, many of these urban migrants were able to recreate their 'mother's recipes' in their city-homes, which they said gave them the confidence to embrace unfamiliar foods and the cosmopolitanism of the city.

Our interlocutors in Kuala Lumpur described 'authentic' foods as those they remembered eating in their childhoods. Authenticity, for them, was closely tied to a sense of nostalgia for the left-behind village life and the search to recreate their "mother's (or grandmother's) recipe". These narratives demonstrate how migrants' sense of identity is bound up with an idealised concept of 'home', or the village, lost in the unfamiliar city, but which they fragmentarily reconstituted by lamenting the loss of their traditional cuisines and striving to reconstruct them in the city. Yet, these practices illustrate how urban migrants' identities and eating practices remain forever caught in-between the village and the city.

The home was the primary space where informants described attempting to reproduce 'authentic' village foods. But places of worship and, more recently, ethnic restaurants are spaces outside the home where our informants described searching out "authentic" foods in Kuala Lumpur. In Kuala Lumpur, traditional ethnic food is commonly served in places of worship or during religious occasions. One middle-aged migrant said that when he missed his mother's cooking he "would go to the *Gurdwara* (Sikh temple) … to eat authentic, home cooked Punjabi food like *parathas, chholay* (chick-pea curry), *saag* (green vegetables) and *kheer* (dessert)". Similarly, in Malaysian places of worship, elaborate traditional dishes are served on special occasions like weddings and religious festivals. And in recent years,

high-end restaurants that claim to serve 'traditional' Chinese, Indonesian, Indian or Sri Lankan foods have emerged in Kuala Lumpur. Thus, some 'lost' delicacies are finding their way to dinner tables with greater ease, but at a premium price. One Indian man said that dishes like *pal appam* (Indian rice crepes served with coconut milk topping) at these new Indian restaurants reminded him of his grandmother's cooking, to which he no longer had access, since "My wife does not know how to make it, and my mother has already passed away". Similarly, Chinese informants shared that 'authentic' Chinese food served at fine dining restaurants in the city gave them access to dishes that many Malaysian-Chinese families have lost the ability to prepare over the years.

⏩ The New World: Commensality in the city

Alongside our informants' accounts of the complex and diverse food consumption patterns among Malaysians of various ethnic groups, they also highlighted the emergence of inter-ethnic spaces of commensality in Kuala Lumpur over the last thirty years. Our informants described spaces in this city that allowed its three major ethnic groups—each with its own traditions, taboos and preferences—to create a sense of community and sharing. Naipaul's (1968) musings on food adaptations in Trinidad provide interesting insights as he writes "It was not easy just how communication occurred, but we were steadily adopting the food style of others…everything we adopted became our own".

As the majority population of Malay Muslims only eat food prepared according to the Islamic principles of *halal*, spaces of inter-ethnic commensality necessarily serve *halal* food. There are many *halal* spaces in Kuala Lumpur that bring people of diverse backgrounds together, notably, the popular *mamak* (a common term to denote Indian Muslims) restaurants, which serve a variety of Indian dishes perceived to have become 'mainstream' in a sense that Malaysians of all races eat them. Mamak range from inexpensive to high-end, and are open twenty-four hours for business. They are busiest at night after most other restaurants have closed, and also over weekends, when many spend long hours in the open-air annexes. Mamak restaurants serve a variety of Indian, Chinese-style and Malay foods (Olmedo and Shamsul 2015). Some of their best-selling dishes are *Nasi Kandar* (rice served with a variety of curries and vegetables), fish head curry, *roti canai* and *thosai*, which are served with an array of local drinks like *teh tarik* (pulled-tea), *sirap* Bandung (Bandung syrup), and hot and cold Milo (malt drink). Many *goreng* or fried dishes are freshly cooked and served hot. Families, young couples and groups of young people of various ethnic groups throng the mamak restaurants. Besides family and inter-ethnic gatherings, there are formal work organizations and social groups that meet in these spaces of inter-ethnic commensality.

While typical Chinese restaurants do not allow for inter-ethnic commensality due to the presence of pork-based dishes, recently, some halal restaurants serving Chinese cuisine have started catering to the Muslims. Although some urban Chinese contest the 'authenticity' of those foods due to the lack of pork, one Chinese interviewee proudly explained that, "Muslims can go to these restaurants in order to eat Chinese dishes that are cooked in the halal way", which he framed as evidence of the

popularity of his ethnic cuisine and Chinese restaurants' willingness to accommodate other ethnic groups. In a society that is divided by religious food taboos, halal versions of Indian and Chinese food have allowed inter-ethnic commensality to take place in the cities.

Western fast food chains like Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds, which serve *halal* food in Malaysia, have also opened up spaces of inter-ethnic commensality. Inter-ethnic commensality can also be observed at *halal* seafood restaurants where Chinese style seafood dishes are consumed by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. These spaces are particularly convenient for all Malaysian ethnic groups to converge, in that they respect not only Muslim food taboos but also those of Indian Hindus and Sikhs who respect religious taboos on eating beef. Indeed, Hindus and Sikhs characterized halal Chinese seafood restaurants as the most desirable spaces for inter-ethnic commensality.

With growing awareness of nutritional recommendations, some middle- and upper-class Malaysians prefer to eat versions of *halal* food they perceive as healthier in new (and more expensive) Malaysian restaurant chains like Papparich, Old Town White coffee, and Ipoh White Coffee that are also *halal* certified by the local authorities. These local chains provide affluent urbanites hybridized and supra-ethnic 'Malaysian' cuisine that appeals to the three main ethnic groups by including dishes reminiscent of each group's cuisine.

Though food brings people together, it can also divide. The challenge, however is to ask what role food can play in sustaining the unity of a multicultural society, like that of Malaysia. Such a phenomenon is already in motion in the urban areas where the different cultures have been co-habiting and devising creative ways of cultural exchanges.

⏩ Conclusion

Food shapes social identities in diverse ways and has consequences on social ties and unity. Although rural to urban migrants experienced a loss of foods they perceived as traditional and longed for 'authentic' foods, they were able to adapt to modern Western cuisines and hybrid urban foodscapes. Beyond this, they recreated authentic foods in new formats such as fine dining and niche restaurants as well as through home cooking in urban households.

Urban migrants living in Kuala Lumpur framed their eating practices relative to a longing for and a sense of loss of home and the traditional foods they associated with the rural village foodscape. They also framed the urban context as a host culture where a dynamic hybrid national culture has emerged. *Nasi lemak,* one of the first inter-ethnic dishes available in Malaysia, provided a comfort food for early male labour migrants, many of whom had eaten the dish back in their native villages. Over the years, a multiplicity of other ethnic cuisines have emerged in urban eating spaces, proposing new hybrid and multi-ethnic cuisines.

Over the past 40 years, as migrants have become habituated to the ethnic diversity of the city, the families they built have contributed to the creation of new hybrid cuisines. The sort of foods cooked and sold in the city have also developed and city dwellers

increasingly embrace a national food culture characterized by multiplicity. Urban residents' experience a desire to eat out, consuming both standardized national cuisines and at western food outlets, they embrace the hybridized food outlets that make up the diverse modern foodscape. Beyond national and Western cuisines, urbanites continue to long for traditional foods. Wives' adaptations of their home cooking have allowed many male migrants to cope with their longing for 'home' and 'authentic' regional foods, so too have emerging retail restaurants that attempt to mimic the 'authenticity' of homecooked food. There has also been a simultaneous movement towards multicultural foodscapes in the retail infrastructure that is attracting urban consumers who seek convenient spaces for inter-ethnic commensality. Thus the longing for local (Dilley, 2009) and 'authentic' foods coexist with the desire among urban residents for hybrid national cultures and transcultural foodscapes.

⏩ References

Ahmad A., 2014. Nasi lemak - once a farmer's meal, now Malaysia's favourite. *The Star*, 19 November, https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/food/news/2014/11/19/nasi-lemak-once-a-farmers-meal-now-malaysias-favourite/#QjZ4A9FpI577TfbO.99 (accessed on 07/11/2019).

Autio M., Collins R., Wahlen S., Anttila M., 2013. Consuming nostalgia. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 37: 564-568.

Dilley L., 2009. *Consumption, Identity and the Case of Local Food*. Centre for Rural Economy, Discussion Paper Series No. 23, Newcastle, Centre for Rural Economy, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 21 p., https://www.ncl.ac.uk/media/wwwnclacuk/centreforruraleconomy/files/discussion-paper-23.pdf (accessed on 07/11/2019).

Fischer J., 2008. *Proper Islamic Consumption: Shopping among the Malays in Modern Malaysia*. Copenhagen, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 272 p.

Happel C.C., 2012.You are what you eat: Food as expression of social identity and intergroup relations in the colonial Andes. *Cincinnati Romance Review*, 33(1): 175-193.

Jones S., Taylor B., 2001. Food writing and food cultures: The case of Elizabeth David and Jane Grigson. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4(2): 171-188.

McCulloch A., 2014. Consociational settlements in deeply divided societies: the liberal-corporate distinction. *Democratization*, 21(3): 501-518.

Naipaul V.S, 1968. *An area of darkness*. Penguin Books, New Delhi, 267 p.

Olmedo E., Shamsul A.B., 2015. 'Mamakization': Food and Social Cohesion in Multiethnic Malaysia. Conference on Food Project 4, September 2015, Mansfield College, Oxford University, United Kingdom. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286256149_'Mamakization'_Food_and_Social_Cohesion_in_Multiethnic_Malaysia (accessed on 02/07/2018).

Perry M.S., 2017. Feasting on Culture and Identity: Food Functions in a Multicultural and Transcultural Malaysia. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 23(4): 184-199.

Tibère L., 2015. Food as a factor of collective identity. *French Cultural Studies*, 26(4): 1-11.

⏩ Acknowledgements

This study is a part of Taylor's University Flagship Research Grant entitled 'Food Behaviour in Asian Eating Out Contexts' (TUFR/2017/003/01). The authors would like to thank Narinder Singh for support with fieldwork and Vivien Yew Wong Chin for her comments on the first draft of this paper.

Chapter 8

Sweet commercial drink adoption by urban Chinese middle-class people – between social control and new beverage consumption contexts

Jingjing Ma

Summary. This chapter focuses on the consumption practices of Chinese urban middle-class people regarding sweet commercial drinks. A qualitative study conducted between 2014 and 2016 revealed that bland boiled water is considered relatively healthy but is not evocative of conviviality, in contrast to commercial beverages and sugar which are considered more unhealthy, but associated with pleasure and conviviality. This ambivalence appears in the representations of sweet commercial drinks, especially around the symbol of balance between traditional Chinese medicine and dietetics and industrial modernity. This chapter addresses the new social and family tensions that have emerged regarding beverage and sugar management. It highlights the settings in which commercial sugar-containing beverages have been embedded in the consumption patterns of middle-class city dwellers in China.

⏩ Introduction

In a little less than a century, Chinese society has undergone major transformations, which have had a decisive effect on household consumption patterns. From 1950 to 1980, daily life in China was a time of shortages. The Chinese economic reform of 1978 (改革开放 *Gǎi gé kāi fàng*) is considered to have triggered industrial and economic development, alongside urban growth in the country. The broadly state-controlled planned market has gradually been liberalised, which has lifted a major share of China's population out of poverty. A middle class has also emerged and, between the late 1990s and early 2000s, this class embraced a form of materialistic consumerism.

Commercial sugar-containing beverages (SCBs) began to appear in the 1980s and became widely available in the late 1990s, and they now take up considerable shelf space in most distribution outlets. These sweet drinks are the focus of many advertisements on TV, internet and in the public space.

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/c8

The SCB consumption trend in China is very poorly documented. Singh *et al.* (2015) showed that China had one of the lowest levels of consumption of these beverages in 2002 among the 187 countries they focused on in their analysis. Yet Duan *et al.* (2009) reported that SCB consumption increased significantly between 1998 and 2008. Shang *et al*. (2012) calculated that 46% of a sample of more than 6,900 children aged 6-13 years in six major Chinese cities regularly consumed SCBs. There is currently no explanation in the literature, however, about how these beverages are consumed, on what occasions, or how they are regarded in comparison to traditionally consumed beverages. This chapter strives to clarify this issue based on qualitative research findings.

In China, SCBs include soft drinks, sweet teas, energy drinks, fruit juices, etc. Prior to the advent of these products, the only beverages commonly consumed were boiled water, tea, herbal infusions and soy milk. These drinks were usually consumed hot or at room temperature. In traditional Chinese medicine and dietetics—which permeate the common practices and representations of beverages—there are preventive measures and restrictions on the consumption of sweet and cold beverages. So how has the consumption of sweet commercial drinks spread? How do people deal with the symbolic meanings, social norms and situations that frame the consumption of beverages and the interplay between associated ambivalent elements: pleasure, health, conviviality, practicality of use, social prestige, etc.?

⏩ Methodology

A qualitative study on beverage consumption was conducted between 2014 and 2016 among 114 urban middle-class respondents[1]. Eighteen children and youths (age range: 7 to 17), 52 young adults (age range: 18 to 35), and 24 adults over the age of 35 were thus surveyed in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou and Chengdu (cities located in northern, eastern, southern and southwestern China, respectively)[2]. The survey involved semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, combined with observations[3].

The inductive, descriptive and comprehensive method used varied the observation scale (Desjeux, 2004). We thus conducted observations on a micro-social scale, i.e. group games between family members, between friends or colleagues, as well as on a micro-individual scale, i.e. cognition and the meanings that individuals attribute to their consumption practices and daily life. The itinerary method also helped demonstrate the extent of material, social and symbolic constraints in relation to individual trade-offs involved in decisions to buy commercial drinks. These decisions are also

1. Here, by middle class we mean families with relatively high purchasing power, earning more than CNY8,000 (about €1,000) per household a month in 2014. The middle class definition is quite ambiguous in China based on different criteria: income, socioprofessional category, class identity and lifestyle. We have drawn on the article by Zhu (2017) and the book by Desjeux (2018) and the criteria we have selected mainly concern the income level and urban setting.
2. Further results of these surveys are reported in Desjeux and Ma (2018).
3. The data presented in this chapter are based on a research programme on food styles in Chinese cities, involving Paris Descartes-Sorbonne Paris Cité University (France), Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (Guangzhou, China), the French Agricutural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), Agropolis Fondation, Danone Waters China and Danone Nutricia Research.

based on social temporality, i.e. triggered by occasions or events—triggers associated with social lifestyles. Socio-anthropological methods were used here to highlight the mechanisms of individual choices linked to everyday beverage consumption behaviours, but also to gain insight into the impacts of material and cultural constraints on these practices and their representations.

⏩ Between health, pleasure and facility – the ambivalence surrounding sweet commercial beverage drinking in China

Sweet commercial beverages – between traditional Chinese medicine and modern nutrition

SCBs are industrially manufactured beverages packaged in glass or plastic bottles or metal canisters, generally refrigerated and consumed cold or at ambient temperature. These beverages are often pitted against so-called natural, homemade or even traditional beverages. Perceptions of SCBs are symbolized through the traditional Chinese character system by the logograms for hot (*Rè* 热) and cold (*Lěng* 冷). These two inseparable hot/cold principles are supposed to ensure the balance of the body and promote proper circulation of energy, or *Qì* (气), which in turn governs everyone's good health. However, SCBs are associated with cold and are therefore considered—by consumers who espouse this traditional symbolic system, and particularly by women who are considered more sensitive to cold, especially from puberty onwards—as a potential threat to health and the reproductive potential, as some field observations showed us. An 11-year-old girl just reaching puberty explained that she decided to drink a hot drink rather than a cold soft drink—her usual choice—on the advice of her mother, who prohibited her from drinking cold drinks during her menstrual period so as to avoid any ensuing health problems. Several young married respondents also claimed that drinking or eating cold food could upset menstruation and therefore the reproductive potential.

Yet not all respondents agreed with these views. On the basis of the interviews carried out, three types of consumers were distinguished according to their documented food and dietary knowledge. Some respondents who embraced and strictly practiced traditional Chinese medicine identified SCBs as *Lěng* (symbolically cold) drinks, while others who acknowledged both Western and traditional Chinese medicine tended to consider them both as *Lěng* and, from a more nutritional perspective, as energetic due to their caloric contribution. Finally, others only used Western nutritional criteria and refused to associate traditional Chinese medicine principles with them.

Sweetness in traditional Chinese medicine

While food industrialization has led to the introduction of many new sweet foods, including beverages, sugar was obviously not previously absent from Chinese diets. It has long been part of the elements used for body and health management. Several types of sugar are traditionally distinguished: honey sugar, malt sugar, brown sugar, white sugar and white candy sugar.

Honey is a sweet substance that is regarded as positive. Respondents believed that it is *natural* and *healthy* and can balance the body according to the standard principles of traditional Chinese medicine. It purges the intestines and stomach through a laxative effect and eliminates fat and waste products. Honey can also remove excess damp *Qì* from the body.

Malt sugar is extracted from wheat, barley or sticky rice. It can be an industrial component in some sweets. It has a neutral or even positive significance in traditional medicine because of its medicinal value in facilitating digestion and giving *Qì*.

Brown sugar has a *Rè* (symbolically warm) nature and can promote good blood circulation. For some people, brown sugar can be used to relieve menstrual pain, as explained in traditional Chinese medicine by the symbolism for hot. However, some respondents said that they did not trust this dark-coloured sugar and claimed that it resembled something impure and burnt.

White sugar is generally used for its taste, while its white colour is associated with purity. This is why some people prefer white to brown sugar—its colour is described as pure and homogeneous.

White candy sugar is transparent and resembles small ice cubes. Some people think it is better than white sugar because of its crystalline purity—it is transparent like water. By analogy, it is considered as moisturizing. Moreover, it is attributed a *Lěng* nature. According to traditional Chinese medicine, it can moisturize the organs and lower the symbolic fire.

Note therefore that sugar cannot be solely reduced to its gustatory function. It does not, depending on its form, have the same value in traditional Chinese medicine food classification. These various forms of sugar participate differently in body management. Yet sugar, in its diverse forms, is generally recognized as being a food for good health, enhancing digestion, blood circulation and *Qì*, which promotes a good balance between hot, cold and damp.

However, sugar consumption is considered to have ambivalent effects. Sugar is known to improve the taste of foods and contribute to health management, yet it is viewed negatively when consumed in excess and associated with commercial drinks. Coca-Cola is a commercial drink with an excessive sugar content that was the most frequently mentioned by respondents. Sugar is also seen as a possible cause of overweight and tooth decay. Several respondents felt that there is a higher risk of diabetes if you do not control your weight and your sugar intake. Diabetes in Chinese is called 糖尿病 (*Táng niào bìng*), which literally means ‘sugar-urine disease’. The very name of this disease gives people a negative impression of sugar. That said, some of the youths surveyed did not feel threatened by diabetes, unlike some older people who said that they “really control all sweet foods, so as not to consume any sugar if possible—to prevent diabetes” (male, 40 years old, Chengdu, 2014).

Several people surveyed referred specifically to the traditional Chinese medicine precepts warning against the effects of excessive sugar consumption: “Drinking sweet beverages, especially in the evening, increases toxicity to the symbolic kidney” (female in her forties, Beijing, 2014); “We should avoid eating too much sugar. Sweet beverages produce sputum and damp *Qì*. Too much damp *Qì* in your body causes spleen problems” (female doctor, 48 years old, Chengdu, 2014).

Sweet tastes are associated with pleasure, but this can be out of line with Chinese social standards, i.e. projecting the image of someone who loves and seeks enjoyment more than work. Sweet food consumption is even often banned in some professional spaces. Bitter tastes are, conversely, more favoured. Saying that someone can eat bitter food 吃苦 (Chīkǔ) is a compliment and implies that the person "is hard-working and able to withstand hardship and deprivation." Tea, for instance, has a bitter taste but also a healthy image. Some people consider that bitter cucumber is a positive summer vegetable that can lower the symbolic 'fire'. Many people thus feel they should limit sweets, whose consumption could harm their spirit and health and prevent them from having real success and/or great happiness.

Finally, SCBs are recognized as being more practical—they are much easier to consume than drinking water, which has to be boiled daily to avoid the risk of contamination.

Given the ambivalence of their representations—between the positive and negative values associated with them, between good taste and threats to health, and between pleasure and duty—how is SCB consumption regulated? A study of occasions when they are consumed provides some possible answers.

⏩ Sweet commercial beverage consumption occasions – between prohibition and permissiveness

The study of SCB consumption occasions and, more generally, of sweet products helps understand how Chinese consumers are being mainstreamed into affluent society. This mainstreaming offers people more opportunities for pleasure and convenience, but also poses health risks while generating more tension between generations. What the respondents said about their SCB consumption reveals how daily life in households revolves around conflict, transgression and trade-offs. At the micro-social level, an image of China is emerging that is as far removed from that of a harmonious, dominated and passive society, yet all of these realities coexist and are visible depending on the monitoring divisions and scales.

Consumption during everyday life

The domestic, work and mobility environments are three spaces that provide opportunities for SCB consumption.

In the domestic space, the family household usually consists of maternal or paternal grandparents, parents and an only child. These actors are instrumental in setting the standards for or against the use of a particular food or beverage, including SCBs. In this space, beverages that are considered safe, nourishing and healthy are recommended. The household is thus the domain where boiled water, milk and other homemade beverages prevail. At home, the focus is on managing the uncertainties related to drinking water quality and anything that could threaten the health of the child and other family members (Ma, 2017).

Sugar is consumed in the form of sweets and beverages, but can also be added in the different forms mentioned above in food dishes or homemade beverages. The two most common times when families consume sweet products are in the

morning and evening. After waking up, some respondents said they drank a glass of lukewarm water with honey before breakfast, not for the taste, but rather for the beneficial effects on health and external beauty. At breakfast sugar is associated with a positive image since it is considered a basic element of the body. Sugar consumption evokes the idea of energy and cheerfulness. According to our respondents, eating a sweetened breakfast is not necessarily frowned upon, even for dieting people, because a sugar-free breakfast does not have much taste. The habit of adding sugar, especially by youths, varies according to personal preferences, which in turn depend to some extent on the consumer's region of origin, e.g. people in Shanghai and Hangzhou consume more sugar than those in other parts of China.

Some of the respondents felt that SCB consumption during the day is not healthy. Yet SCBs are tolerated from late afternoon and evening onwards. The evening is a time adults get back from work and youths from school and when social rules and standards can be less strictly enforced. It is a time of relaxation, sharing, togetherness and communication with other members of the family. Some parents prepare or buy sweets or sweet commercial drinks such as candy, cookies, commercial iced tea, etc., when they go to pick up their child at the end of the school day. Some adults bring SCBs home from work. After a strictly standardized working day, this is a moment of reward, sharing and pleasure, which is also essential in the structuring of family life: parents are willing to make compromises with their only child to maintain a good family relationship; the couple can share a moment of relaxation in their home after work, after taking care of the child, and consuming sweets creates an intimate bond between them.

The workspace for youths is the school, while it is the office for adults. Youths abide by the social standards dictated by their teachers. But schools are generally opposed to SCBs, especially soft drinks. For parents and teachers, banning SCBs in schools is a way of reducing the risks and uncertainties that could affect children's health and their success in school.

SCBs and sweets are not forbidden in the workspace where adults meet with colleagues, but they are not well regarded. Consuming these items in the office may be considered as a sign of a lack of seriousness and concentration at work. Sugar consumption at work is socially frowned upon.

The mobility space lies between the domestic and work spaces—adults tend to cross this space individually, but sometimes also collectively. Mobility generally takes place in the morning and late afternoon on the way to and from work. Social standards are much more relaxed and flexible during this phase. Firstly, there are many places where SCBs can be bought, i.e. in kiosks, grocery stores, mini-markets, vending machines near public transport, etc., and secondly, family and social oversight is less prevalent when the actors are alone or in peer groups. This is a potential loophole in the system of family monitoring and enforcement of social standards. It is therefore an opportunity to consume SCBs and sweets. When someone needs a drink, SCB access is facilitated by the many distribution outlets on the way. These areas are more anonymous and beyond the control of teachers, parents or colleagues. One way of curbing the risk of over-consumption of products considered harmful in these free spaces is to control children's pocket money.

Eating in restaurants – an inversion of social standards

Restaurants, cafés, pastry shops, bakeries and beverage shops are prime locations for sweet commercial or artisanal drink consumption. Going to a restaurant is a custom that had disappeared during the shortage period but then it resurfaced in the late 1990s (Yang, 2006).

When people go to a restaurant with their relatives, it is an opportunity for social interaction—the first thing is to create a joyful and harmonious atmosphere. It is also an opportunity for everyone to share and maintain their social relationships, so mutual respect is essential. The status of SCBs, with their sweet taste and higher cost than water, is shifting into the mainstream from their prior unrecommended status.

The 'face-saving' issue[4] explains why restaurants are a locus for commercial or home-made-like beverages that taste great or are hard to make at home. Guests make voluntary or compulsory choices, except when they have a health problem, in favour of an alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverage, with a festive significance, i.e. sweetened, sparkling or not, but under no circumstances do they choose water, which is a free bland drink.

> "Of course you can get water in restaurants, but you can't choose it, otherwise you'll offend your friends. I take a Jia Duo Bao [sweet commercial 'cold' tea], or an iced red tea [commercial]. I don't usually drink such beverages." (male, 40 years old, Chengdu, 2014)

> "I don't choose water because it would be impolite and break the social bond. When eating with people in a restaurant, you should always ask for a beverage that will create a friendly atmosphere." (male, 35 years old, Guangzhou, 2014)

These respondents highlighted that water is taboo during a meal, whose primary function is to maintain social relationships. Choosing water implies that you do not want to lose face to your guests.

Furthermore, some men avoid choosing a beverage that is too feminine, such as hot water. The choice of commercial drinks for a special event, such as a birthday, wedding, etc., is not an individual choice, but instead involves respecting a series of social codes associated with saving face, so bland and cheap drinks such as lukewarm water or tea are generally avoided.

Commercial drinks are allowed when children eat with their parents and other people in a restaurant. Children understand that this is an exceptional opportunity to drink a beverage that is usually out of bounds or hard to get:

> "I've never tasted Nutri-Express [sweet milk beverage] because it is too expensive for me. Jia Duo Bao (sweet cold tea) is expensive too. When I share a meal with my parents' friends, it's an opportunity for me to drink it. They [adults] order what they want first, and then the children can choose too." (young female student, 13 years old, Chengdu, 2014)

Some parents hence do not want their children to drink commercial beverages in everyday life, but they do occasionally make compromises in such cases:

> "I don't usually let my child drink commercial beverages, except when eating out with people. Sometimes there are other kids at the table who want to drink something and

---

4. 面子, *miànzi* refers to a set of courtesy rules. Managing ways to save face could be likened to reputation or honour in the Western world.

> my child wants the same. [...] I can't say no, he can drink a little bit during the meal in restaurants. [...] They're bound to ask for Coke, Sprite or other soft drinks when eating out with the whole family or friends." (female high school teacher, Shanghai, 2014)

This mother therefore makes compromises according to the situation. She has to juggle between her role as a teacher, where she must strictly apply the school standards, and her role as a mother, where she has to make trade-offs. She believes she will upset the atmosphere if she is too strict with her child during a meal in a restaurant, despite the fact that she is still convinced that commercial drinks are not good for her child. Since Chinese families usually only have one child, parents are constantly trying to strike a balance between educating their child well and giving lots of love, which generally means spoiling the child.

Consumption during sports activities

Sports activities provide an opportunity to re-energize, share a drink with friends and overstep the norm. People feel hot, dehydrated and tired after sports, so they need to drink to calm their body. Some people rehydrate themselves by drinking boiled water, while others take the opportunity to drink and sometimes share with others a commercial beverage that they do not normally drink.

Young people are generally hot, thirsty and quite tired after a sports activity and they do not necessarily feel like having a glass of warm water in their study room. Moreover, sports classes often take place outside, so students are usually out of sight of their main teacher and thus may readily go to buy cold commercial drinks in a store:

> "You're tired after sports classes. There are always classmates who buy cold soft drinks. Some buy juices or iced tea. We buy these different beverages when we feel like it." (young male high school student, 17 years old, Chengdu, 2014)

They justify themselves by saying that they are hot and thirsty as well as tired, and that they need something cold and tasty, because they sweat a lot.

Some youths buy their beverages together after sports. This is a moment of sharing and pleasure. The inversion of the social norm is thus shared by the group. It is a moment of communication and conviviality, which creates a form of mutual bond between them.

⏩ Conclusion

Sweet beverage consumption is an indicator of the linkage between traditional dietetics and the industrialization of food. The sweet composition and taste, cold temperature and industrial nature of these beverages are negatively viewed by Western nutritional medicine as well as traditional Chinese dietetics. Yet SCBs are now commonly consumed by Chinese city dwellers in practical settings where the sweet taste is promoted, particularly in convivial circumstances (restaurants), as well as in connection with sports or mobility activities (transport). In these situations, SCBs compete with blander tasting traditional beverages.

More generally, warm boiled water consumption, especially for women, is a way to avoid health problems, as cold beverages can cause cold *Qì*, at least for anyone

for whom it is essential to maintain a proper body balance, according to these two symbolic dimensions of cold and hot. Prior to industrialization, Chinese beverages were often served hot, e.g. lukewarm boiled water, tea, herbal teas and soups. Beverages consumed warm are considered healthier, yet those consumed cold are often not recommended for women.

Bland boiled water has a strong positive symbolic significance while, conversely, that of commercial drinks may be negative. Meanwhile, commercial drinks are somewhat integrated into this system of body balance management and hot-cold regulation, which can vary according to the situation. The significance allocated to commercial drinks is not stable or fixed, it fluctuates according to changes and cleavages in Chinese society.

The choice of beverage ultimately appears to be a complex trade-off and is subject to substantial social constraints. It varies according to the tensions that permeate the generations, between those who give priority to the traditional Chinese system and those who prefer to make compromises by drinking commercial beverages. The key trade-off is between the goal of achieving good health, socioprofessional success and pleasure, between a healthy but bland beverage, such as boiled water, and a tasty commercial drink. One solution may therefore be to choose a commercial drink that is perceived being the least bad, therefore striking a balance between a pleasant taste and having good health. The price is also an important factor in this trade-off, especially when the consumer is young and short of money.

Some children would thus like to consume commercial drinks because of their taste, but they often ultimately agree to drink healthy drinks so as not to upset their parents or grandparents. Similarly, some parents refrain from drinking a commercial drink at home that they would otherwise enjoy because they do not want to set a bad example. Parents are willing to make compromises with their only child in order to maintain a good family relationship, but without threatening the child's health or success at school (Desjeux, 1991).

In straightforward terms, we could say that those interested in commercial drinks tend to be young people between the ages of 18 and 35 because they are less constrained by family and social standards. They are, therefore, more entitled to pleasing themselves. For children and teenagers between 6 and 18 years old, commercial drink consumption may exist but it is a social transgression, which means that there is a social risk of losing face, for them as well as their parents. Beverages also concern people on the move. Finally, it concerns people outside the home, at work, in restaurants or after sport. Within this triad (young adults, mobility and outside the household), Chinese consumers mobilize the different trade-offs between hot and cold, healthy and unhealthy, bland and tasty.

Finally, some of these trade-offs are clearly related to the new situation of abundance that prevails among the Chinese urban middle class. City life is marked by a greater sweet product selection, urban mobility and hedonic occasions such as going out to restaurants or even family celebrations.

⏩ References

Desjeux D., 1991. La Place de la prescription de l'enfant dans le comportement d'achat alimentaire des parents. *Économie et gestion agro-alimentaire*, 19: 24-27.

Desjeux D., 2004. *Les Sciences Sociales*. Paris, PUF, 127 p.

Desjeux D., 2018. *L'empreinte anthropologique du monde: méthode inductive illustrée*. Brussels, Peter Lang, 383 p.

Desjeux D., Ma J., 2018. The Enigma of Innovation: Changing Practices of Nonalcoholic Beverage Consumption in China. *In: Cultural Change from a Business Anthropology Perspective*. McCabe M., Briody E.K. (Eds.), Lexington Books, 165-185.

Duan Y.F., Fan Y.O., Fan J.W. *& al*., 2009. The beverage consumption analysis of primary and secondary students living in 7 cities of China. *Chinese Journal of Health Education*, 25(9): 660-663 (in Chinese).

Ma J., 2017. *La gestion, la consommation et les représentations de l'eau en Chine*. Doctoral thesis in Sociology, University Paris Descartes, Ceped, 557 p.

Shang X.W., Liu A.L., Zhang Q. *et al*., 2012. Report on Childhood Obesity in China (9): Sugar-sweetened Beverages Consumption and Obesity. *Biomedical and Environmental Sciences*, 25(2): 125-132.

Singh G.M., Micha R., Khatibzadeh S., Shi P., Lim S., Andrews K.G., Engell R.E., Ezzati M., Mozaffarian D., 2015. Global, Regional, and National Consumption of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages, Fruit Juices, and Milk: A Systematic Assessment of Beverage Intake in 187 Countries. *PLOS ONE*, 14(3), https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0124845 (accessed on 08/11/2019).

Yang X., 2006. *La fonction sociale des restaurants en Chine*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 310 p.

Zhu B., 2017. [La recherche de la classe moyenne chinoise contemporaine]. *Sociological Review of China*, 5(1): 9-22.

⏩ Acknowledgements

This chapter was based on the results of thesis research conducted under the supervision of Dominique Desjeux, which partly benefitted from the financial support of Danone Nutricia Research. Prof. Yang Xiaomin, the team from the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and Prof. Wang Lei facilitated the analysis of the findings of the surveys conducted in Guangzhou (China). Finally, the author would like to thank the entire symposium and editorial team for their support and advice.

Part 3

When the city invents its cuisine

Chapter 9

Bâbenda – a modernized traditional dish Urban trajectory of a Burkinabe culinary specialty

Raphaëlle Héron

Summary. *Bâbenda* is a traditional 'lean season dish' of the Mossi ethnic group, mainly in the Plateau-Central region of Burkina Faso where the capital Ouagadougou is located. This dish is currently undergoing a popular 'modernization', in the words of *bâbenda* eaters. This chapter aims to shed further light on this urban modernization trend, clarify what it refers to in terms of practices and social perceptions, and how it reshapes food satisfaction functions.

Introduction

Tô is a staple food dish in Burkina Faso. This thick cooked dough-based dish consists of different cereal flours (millet or sorghum in rural areas; maize in urban settings) and is eaten accompanied by a sauce. In the Ouagadougou capital, rice, pasta and sandwiches are also commonly eaten in addition to traditional *tô*. Yet the latter is still the 'cultural super food' consumed throughout the country—the food that bridges nutrition and symbolism, to quote nutritionist Derrick B. Jelliffe (quoted by de Garine, 1988).

Cereal consumption thus accounts for up to a third of household expenditures in West Africa (Bricas *et al.*, 2014). The marginalization of so-called traditional cereals (millet and sorghum) in relation to maize, rice and wheat (bread or pasta), which are often imported, is the upshot of new dietary patterns linked to urbanization or social change (Debevec, 2007; Lamine, 2006; Ag Bendech, 2003). This trend is an economic

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/c9

reality because maize is actually cheaper in cities[1], while also being a means of urban and rural consumer identity differentiation (Konkobo *et al*., 2002). However, despite greater dependence on international cereal markets, several authors refute the idea of food standardization (Bricas, 2008, 2012a, 2012b; Fumey, 2007) and instead put forward the notion of diversification. This chapter aims to contribute to this view.

Some traditional dishes from specific ethnic groups, e.g. *bâbenda*, are markers of this sought-after dietary diversity. They are subject to paradoxical rejection and reappropriation dynamics in urban areas according to differentiated social practices and representations and specific food satisfaction reconfigurations (Héron, 2016). This paper[2] assesses the mechanisms for revaluing *bâbenda* in the Ouagalese setting by highlighting the above factors and perhaps what underpins the 'making of heritage' (for 'patrimonialisation': Poulain, 2011) of Burkinabe food, namely a change of perspective on practices that were once demeaned because of their links with poverty.

Bâbenda – a Mossi specialty

Ouagadougou-born residents are not in the majority in the city (except in the under 15 age group) (Delaunay and Boyer, 2009). The religious and ethnic mix in the city (within neighbourhoods and households) reflects the diversity of ethnic groups and religions present in Burkina Faso. Here we do not intend to discuss the relevance of the notion of ethnicity, and opted to focus mainly on the opinions voiced by the food consumers interviewed regarding this issue. Ethnicity is transmitted by paternal descent and is tightly linked with specific areas.

Box 9.1: A recipe for traditional *bâbenda* prepared by Catherine, a young woman from a poor neighbourhood, with limited and uncertain income (field observation, Ouagadougou, 21 March 2014)

Strip off *kinebdo* (cleome; *cleome gynandra*) leaves and wash them in plenty of water. Cut the leaves coarsely and then cook them in a large pot of boiling water.

Clean, sort and add *boroum-bouré* (amaranth; *amaranthus candilis*) and *bito* (sorrel; *hibiscus sabdariffa*) leaves to the pot.

Coarsely pound the rice (presoaked in cold water) and add to the pot of leaves, while mixing well to avoid lumps.

Coarsely pound fresh peanuts and sieve them to remove most of the red husk. Coarsely pound the peanuts a second time and add them to the pot when the rice is almost cooked.

Add salt, a stock cube and potash to taste.

1. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Demography (Burkina Faso) based on price surveys conducted from 2007 to 2013.

2. This analysis stems from thesis research on the socioanthropology of food (defended in December 2016 and financed by a CIFRE agreement with the Nutriset Group). It is based on: 61 semi-directed interviews with city dwellers (Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso) from a range of social and economic categories, 38 days of family immersion to observe individual and community food practices and domestic organization around meals, and 11 months of monitoring street catering activities.

Figure 9.1: Catherine's *bâbenda*

Mossi is the largest ethnic group in Burkina Faso. Mossi people are locally called *Mosse* (*Moaga* in the singular) and their language is Moré. They are mainly present in the high Plateau-Central region, where Ouagadougou is also located. Scant statistics are available on this subject, but Moré speakers likely represent more than three-quarters of the capital's residents. Based on this, we cannot however claim that three quarters of the inhabitants actually belong to this ethnic group (e.g. someone may adopt the language of his/her spouse), but this does reveal its prevalence. In Ouagadougou, ethnic food specialities are generally known by name (as well as composition) by people from other ethnic groups, but they are not necessarily shared. Food consumers are not particularly interested in tasting these specialties, let alone consume them regularly. *Bâbenda* (Figure 9.1) is thus a Mossi ethnic speciality (but variants are found in other regions). Lamine[3], a driver in his forties who we talked with in Bobo-Dioulasso, says: "People from the West say that *bâbenda* makes them sick. [...] It's a dish that people eat on the other side, not here. Here we're not used to it." Food practices thus have a pivotal role in marking people's belonging or difference, establishing and maintaining social bonds and boundaries between groups (Calandre, 2012). "Traditional dishes are related to ethnic groups—for us, Gourounsi people, it's *kanzagha*[4], for Mossi people it's

3. The first names have been changed.
4. A sorrel leaf-based Gourounsi specialty resembling *bâbenda*.

bâbenda, as well as *zamné*[5], while among the Bissa, it's *boussantouba*[6]", says Souleymane, a carpenter in his forties who lives in a popular residential neighbourhood in Ouagadougou.

Appreciation of the taste of a 'foreign' ethnic specialty is not necessarily an incentive for people to discover or adopt 'other people's' practices. Gertrude—a 38-year-old Mossi hairdresser, wife of Souleymane—loves *bâbenda*, but her Gourounsi husband does not eat it. She seldom prepares this dish because she does not want to leave him without a meal: "It's Mossi people who know *bâbenda*. He has tasted it, but he's not at all interested. His people don't eat that." Souleymane nods: "It's not part of our weekly routine, we're not used to it." Tasting is sometimes even a deterrent when the experience does not enable us to overcome the sensory impressions we had beforehand. Emeline, an unemployed 50 year-old widow from Bobo Dioulasso, says: "*Bâbenda*? I've seen it in Ouaga, but I don't like it. I've tasted it, but I don't like the way it's presented, it reminds me of vomit [laughter]."

Although ethnic specialties may be known by food consumers from other ethnic groups, people mainly eat food from their own ethnic culture. The identity function serves as a marker of taste, which in turn shapes food habits.

⏩ From belittled poor man's fare to a revived identity dish

Burkina Faso, like many other West African countries, is plagued by extreme poverty and high food and nutrition insecurity. A national surveillance mechanism has been operational since 2009. The 2016 survey revealed prevalence rates of acute malnutrition[7] of 7.6% (compared to 11.3% in 2009) and chronic malnutrition[8] of 27.3% (compared to 35.1% in 2009). This brief statistical update highlights the reality of the problem of food insecurity and the importance of lean season dishes.

In rural areas, *bâbenda* is hence a dish designed to help people preserve their grain stocks and make it through to the next harvest. During the lean season, grain stocks are generally completely or partially depleted, but the rainy season has often already begun, with the emergence of the first edible leaves. *Bâbenda*—a thin porridge made with a handful of crushed millet combined with these new leaves—enables people to save on grain because only a small amount is used compared to a normal meal of *tô* and sauce. In Ouagadougou, it is also an inexpensive meal to prepare for people on a small budget—the handful of cereal flour may be replaced by a handful of imported rice, which is cheap and 'swells up well', or crushed maize. *Bâbenda* can also be prepared daily during seasons when inexpensive edible leaves are available, so it is therefore an integral part of a minimally diversified diet.

When asked, "If you had more money, what changes would you make to your food diet?", Catherine, a young woman from a poor neighbourhood with limited and uncertain income, answers: "We would eat less *tô* and *bâbenda*! [...] In good

5. Acacia seeds (*Acacia macrostachya*)—generally eaten cold in salads.
6. Cowpea flour mixed with water and fried.
7. An excessively low weight-to-height ratio resulting from a food shortage situation that is intense and occasional, or less intense but repeated.
8. An excessively low height-to-age ratio resulting from a long-term unbalanced diet.

situations, we would have rice, macaroni, and soups[9]!". For people with scant resources and limited dietary diversity, eating less *bâbenda* would be a sign of an enhanced livelihood.

The status of *bâbenda* as a poor man's dish thus highly discourages city dwellers, many of whom have attained a certain social level no longer wish to eat it. Gérard, a Mossi sociologist in his forties, has a gut reaction when this dish is mentioned: "I don't want to hear any more about *bâbenda*, my family has suffered too much." The reaction of Simon (a former senior civil servant in charge of food security and livestock issues) is more measured, but indicates the same distancing from the dish, which reminds him of his austere past, times of high dietary monotony:

> "*Bâbenda*, I admit that I'm not very fond of it. [...] Nowadays it's becoming a fashionable dish, but when we were little, it was much more of a dish to fill the hunger gap, it was a food of... I wouldn't say famine, but almost."

Yet another trend is also emerging, which Simon summed up well with these words: "It's becoming fashionable". *Bâbenda* is currently being revived and reappropriated by some Mossi of Ouagadougou, especially those who no longer have a tangible recollection of lean season life in rural areas.

Bâbenda is also becoming a popular dish on festive buffet menus (e.g. weddings) and can now be purchased from specialized caterers for snacks or lunch. We agree here with Chantal Crenn and colleagues (2015) on the "permeability of the territories crossed by food eaters/consumers" (in our case, rural to urban areas), where different processes emerge, including identity attachment and distancing from rural practices that are considered backward. *Bâbenda* is thus highly symbolic—for Ouagalese inhabitants, for whom this dish is a daily constraint, it is not very rewarding or interesting, and is often eaten for lack of anything better. Two trends may be noted with regard to city dwellers who have access to greater food diversity (particularly because of their greater affluence). Some people who have directly experienced the lean season in their childhood or have assimilated it via family recollections and discussions may distance themselves from the dish, as we have seen for Gérard, the sociologist. But others who have not directly experienced deprivation or whose psychological resources have bolstered their resilience see it as a dish that bears an identity, which could be modernized by tailoring it to the tastes, means, and social status that they wish to flaunt. We will come back to the different factors that underlie this positioning.

Symbolically, *bâbenda* can indeed be considered emblematic of the renewed interest in local products. Several local specialties like *bâbenda*, as well as *zamné* and *gonré*, may be bearers of an identity, a symbolic link that connects urban dwellers to their rural origins, although sometimes fantasized. *Bâbenda* is reappropriated as a strong identity marker, bearing historical, symbolic and emotional significance for Mossi city dwellers. This reappropriation is possible because it is materially and mythologically tailored (Fischler, 2001) so as to align its composition, use and image with representations that are in constant flux—material 'recoding' is hence necessary to refresh the representations attached to this dish, which otherwise echoes harsh times.

---

9. This includes meat soups (sheep's head, beef leg or beef skin), which are very popular dishes typically eaten by affluent people.

⏩ Material recoding

Reappropriation implies changes in the ways of preparing and garnishing a dish. These changes are not imposed and depend on individual tastes and histories: "Innovation in the food heritage field is the result of transmission mechanisms, social co-construction, various influences, external borrowing, overlapping of empowering practices and complex combinatorial processes" (Bessière, 2013). They mainly concern the ingredients used (cereals and leaves), texture and culinary status.

While in rural areas *bâbenda* is prepared with cultivated cereals (millet, sorghum), in the city it can be prepared with corn or rice depending on preferences (and resources). Yet it is still only made with millet or sorghum by uncompromising individuals who are intent on preparing typical *bâbenda* strictly according to village practices. Regarding the leafy ingredients: "Formerly *begdo* and *bito* were used. The novel feature is the use of *bouroum-bouré*, *tchinnebdo* and *bito*," explains Meriem, an elderly Ouagalese woman living in a popular downtown neighbourhood. Ingredients can be added during cooking, such as spring onions, bouillon cubes, onions, tomatoes, *soumbala*[10], and sometimes a few pieces of meat (although fairly uncommon). Patricia, a school principal (widow of a former senior civil servant) with a high diversified income, sometimes even adds canned vegetables (peas, mixed vegetables, etc.). The name 'modernized traditional dish' was mentioned on several occasions by interviewed restaurant staff or caterers specializing in local products, who sometimes 'improve' the dish by adding minced meat.

The consistency and texture also change depending on the use. Alice, an IRD[11] research assistant, explains: "I prefer heavy *bâbenda*, that's how we prepare it in our family. In shops, they prepare it light because they're selling it. In the bush it's also light because it's a lean season dish." Interestingly, this relationship city dwellers have regarding the consistency of *bâbenda* contrasts with that they have regarding the consistency of *tô*, which is prepared 'heavy' in rural areas, and is thus more suitable for rural working people, while city dwellers prefer it 'light' as a mark of distinction.

Bâbenda can also be accompanied by a condiment made of onions and tomatoes simmered in oil. The oil enhances the taste, while the sweetness of the onion offsets the acidity of the leaves. This condiment—which is relatively common and can be spicy—is used to garnish many other dishes: *benga*[12], *gonré*[13], *samsas*[14] and *caracolos*[15]. Colette, who has a very low income, says she prepares *bâbenda* regularly, but without this condiment: "That's for grown-ups!" (i.e. for more affluent people). Moreover, nowadays in the city *bâbenda* is sometimes accompanied by *tô*, or even *vice-versa*. In such cases it is an optional sauce, while in the lean season it is a sole staple food dish prepared to save on grain. The culinary status of *bâbenda* shifts according to changes in its social status.

---

10. Local condiment obtained from fermented nereid seeds (néré), used like stock cubes (or bouillon cubes).
11. French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development.
12. Black-eyed peas or cowpeas.
13. Dishes based on cowpea paste steamed in mango leaves or yoghurt pots.
14. Cowpea fritters.
15. Fritters made with plantain or dessert bananas, or blend of both.

Everyone therefore tailors *bâbenda* to his/her wishes and resources, while making it 'modern' by adding extra ingredients or, conversely, 'traditional' by retaining the simplicity of the initial recipe, depending on the person's representations and desires. In cities of Burkina Faso, the identity function of food is actually based on a set of polarities—between 'modernity' and 'tradition' on the one hand, between 'urban' and 'rural' on the other and, to a lesser extent, between 'African/Burkinabe/local' culture and 'Western' culture. These polarities do not perfectly overlap and, more importantly, there is no consensual appreciation of one over the other for food consumers.

⏩ Modern and traditional

There is a sharp distinction between what refers to rurality—sometimes disparaged and rejected, sometimes valued and glorified—and that which instead refers to an urban reality, synonymous with openness and change, but also with uprooting. The discourse of the eaters questioned highlighted that 'tradition' is what we are accustomed to doing without questioning ourselves. These practices are designated by the expression 'being born-found', which implies that the practice was already present at the person's birth and that this pre-existence alone legitimizes its replication. Conversely, modernity generally designates what is new, irrespective of whether this novelty is linked to industrialization, comes from abroad or is associated with urbanity, yet there is no need to date the novelty (from several decades to a few years). Modernity is highly relative to the urban environment since it is via this trend that imported products or products from recent processing units arrive.

Table 9.1 summarizes how 'traditional' and 'modern' practices and dishes are characterized. This is obviously a general trend that does not reflect all Ouagalese views on the subject. While tradition seems to be fundamentally what derives from the village, not all urban dwellers describe their food as 'modern'. Modernity requires the means and above all the will to adopt certain specific practices, which may be far removed from a broad identity attachment, from flaunted rural roots, sometimes reshaped or even invented.

Table 9.1: Emic representations of what is considered modern and traditional in cities (Héron, 2016)

	Social preparation and commensality practices	**Dish preparation products and techniques**
Traditional	Complicated norms and rules (unsuitable for urban life)	Simple natural dishes (small quantity of ingredients, control of origin/quality control) Complex preparation techniques (specific recognized and valued know-how)
Modern	Simple norms and rules tailored for urban life)	New dishes (mixed vegetables 'macedoine', gratins, hamburgers, etc.) Overly complicated commercial preparations (suspicion on commercial preparation processes, depreciation of recipes with too many ingredients)

⏩ Shifts in food satisfaction functions

Changes in resource acquisition patterns, monetarization, increased market reliance, household reorganization, increased salaried work for women, etc., are all factors that impact the restructuring of urban societies, and thus ultimately the ways food resources are acquired, transformed and distributed. *Bâbenda*—once part of an old routine (dictated by economic and technical constraints, i.e. preparation of a lean season dish) and now transformed into a traditional dish with a strong historical, symbolic and emotional legacy—could thus be analysed as a symbol of a form of (re)invented tradition because "objects or practices become free for full symbolic and ritual use once they are no longer impeded by their practical applications" (Hobsbawm, 1995).

To shed light on this change of perspective, we propose to leverage the food satisfaction scheme (Heron, 2016), which is hinged on four universal functions of food—physiological, social, sensory/hedonic and identity functions—as an ideal of representational coherence. Beyond absolute crisis situations, what is edible must therefore be aligned with norms and representations defined jointly by these four functions. Eaters build specific representations (Lahlou, 1995) that they implement through contextualized practices.

These practices reflect both material (prices, accessibility, etc.) and immaterial determinants, which here are alluded to by the terms 'sociality' and 'sociability', in line with the research of J.-P. Corbeau (1997, 2002, 2012). Sociality relates to an individual's internalization of his/her food model according to the definition of J.-P. Poulain (1997, 2002, 2012):

> "Food models are [...] a body of technological knowledge accumulated from generation to generation, enabling the selection of resources in the natural space, their preparation into food, dishes and their consumption. Yet they are also systems of symbolic codes that portray the values of a human group participating in the construction of cultural identities and personalization processes." (Poulain, 2002)

Sociability, on the other hand, represents the individual aspirations and leeway of an eater in his/her 'space of freedom' (Corbeau and Poulain, 2002), which will lead him/her to accept, refuse or reshape the rules imposed by sociality. This sociability—whereby inclusive (accepting norms dictated by sociality) or exclusive (rejecting them), active (militant) or passive (unconsidered) forms may be distinguished (Héron, 2016)—is in turn based on three forms of interdependent determinants. This certainly includes the social categories most widely used in quantitative studies (socioprofessional categories, ethnic groups, etc.), but there are far more categories than these. Yet individual life trajectories, lived experiences as well as those passed on must also be taken into account, along with idiosyncratic individual psychology drivers. We have seen that being economically well off is not a prerequisite for valuing *bâbenda*—this dish should not (or no longer) be associated with a hunger gap experience or rural hardship.

The decision-making system at the root of the food issue has been well characterized under many rationales and schools of thought, which dovetail the four functions of food. The preparation and consumption of *bâbenda*, i.e. a 'modernized traditional dish', hence reveals the different functions leveraged by urban practices—from

the reasoned rejection of a dish that evokes a demeaned social class or history, to a revival of the traditional identity function by accepting this unique Mossi food model, whose recipe is an integral part of village culinary culture[16].

In a multi-ethnic urban setting, some individuals promoting the revival of *bâbenda* are striving to reassert their link with rurality and a narrow identity (where rurality and ethnicity underlie the expression 'in the village[17]'), as materialized in the modernization of a symbolic dish. The identity function thus takes precedence over the physiological function, after practical or mental distancing from the idea of a 'lean season dish', which in essence fulfils the physiological imperative. The multi-ethnic urban setting—dissociated from necessity consumption—favours the promotion of significant dishes with specific origins and identities, such as *kanzagha* (a leafy vegetable-based dish similar to *bâbenda*) for Gurunsi people, or *boussantouba* (bean flour cakes) for Bissa people.

⏩ Food heritage build-up conditions

Beyond these specific identities, a public laudatory discourse is occasionally heard in Burkina Faso, amidst nutritional considerations that have been more prominent until now. In recent years, 'local products' have been the focus of several national events[18] that reflect a wish for public recognition of the nutritional, health and economic virtues of local resources.

This newspaper excerpt (Box 9.2) reveals an imperative to love one's food, suggesting that this may be a precondition for making others love it—the community's focus on this food would then be vital for its sharing[19]. This first condition seems to be in the process of being fulfilled regarding the Mossi *bâbenda* dish.

Thomas Sankara's nationalism[20] is still omnipresent in the Burkinabe political imagination and seems to have paved the way for these 'eat local' demands. Several State agencies, for example, believe that it is essential to revert to the 'consume what we produce' watchword, while leaving the management of initiatives to private stakeholders, potentially through public/private partnerships. Despite the declared intention to carry out heritage designation operations, in practice we clearly noted the difficulty of moving from an emic revaluation of local specialties to a surefire institutional heritage designation policy.

The high mobilization among institutional actors (State structures, international organizations, international civil society) regarding malnutrition could explain the

16. It could thus be compared to the Aubrac *aligot* dish in France, which was once a main dish but is now a garnish, or *socca*, which formerly was cheap dish from the hinterlands of Nice but is now popular in many cities of southeastern France.
17. *Au village* in French.
18. For instance: the *Koudou du Faso* Fair (Oxfam), National Culinary Arts Week (Ministry for the Promotion of Women), and the Agrifood Fair (Federation of Agrifood Industries of Burkina Faso), etc.
19. See Fournier *et al*. (2018) for a similar analysis in a European setting.
20. Former President of Burkina Faso (1983-1987) who came to power following the Burkinabe Revolution of 4 August 1983. For 4 years he pursued a policy of national empowerment, fast-paced development and combating corruption. As an anti-imperialist, he defended national preference, people's right to eat properly, while encouraging people to "eat Burkinabe".

scant concern on promoting food heritage, which is rightly considered to be of lower priority, especially in a budget allocation competition context. However, developing the local agrifood sector could also be part of long-term contributions towards developing sustainable food systems, alongside dealing with emergencies.

Box 9.2: "Reinforced concrete", "Africa in danger"... let's take it easy! (excerpts from an article in the online daily newspaper Le Pays accessed 24 July 2013)

Poor Burkinabe dishes! My compatriots not only scorn you in favour of dishes from elsewhere, they qualify you in a really unworthy way. The famous *tô* dish is so despised that people even suggest it puts "Africa in danger", while delicious and nutritious *kansa*, *souma*, *benga* and *gonré* are referred to as "reinforced concrete"!

We do not create frameworks to promote our dishes because we are ashamed of them. Yes there actually are contests and festivals where our dishes are showcased, but they are too circumstantial and they only target tiny social circles. Are there any great chefs from restaurants and hotels in Burkina Faso who offer their customers local dishes on their menus? I actually do not think that many people have thought about it. However, the big chefs need to start cherishing, caring for and enhancing our dishes so as to promote them. We have to continue the work already done in the beverage sector. *Bissap* and *yamacoudji* are now served in big hotels and at receptions. Intellectuals have to stop spitting (excuse me) on our dishes, they have to value them. First, we have to love what we eat, let us be proud of it. Then we should improve the design, the way we present our food and when a stranger comes here, why not get him/her to taste our *bâbenda*, *kansa*, etc.

⏩ Conclusion

Few ingredients are needed in the traditional preparation of Mossi *bâbenda*, i.e. mainly grains and leaves, which makes it a characteristic lean season dish, synonymous with hardship and even destitution. This status has led many working- and middle-class city dwellers to distance themselves from it. Yet this dish has also been reappropriated by some other people. Its urban trajectory is part of a broader trend towards the revival of so-called traditional dishes and foods, associated with changes in the way they are prepared, consumed and, above all, represented. This paper confirms the relevance of the identity function in shaping urban food satisfaction in Burkina Faso.

Eaters' knowledge and know-how are embedded in food heritage because the "sustainability of local, controlled-origin or *terroir* products depends on the existence of competent eaters" (Chabrol and Muchnik, 2011). A product will therefore be sustainable and well disseminated pending the eaters' competence. Cheyns (2003a) notes that the low competence of young cooks in selecting *soumbala* prompts the development of production systems that are not recognized by 'elders' as having the qualities required for a 'good' *soumbala*. The question of *bâbenda terroirs* and the competence of *bâbenda* eaters has yet to be raised. A more in-depth analysis

focused more specifically on the geographical features of the dish could undoubtedly showcase this aspect along with the benefits that an institutional heritage designation could bring in terms of archiving and development of special expertise.

The heritage of a food should not be solely viewed as an endogenous phenomenon associated with cultural and intergenerational transmission, but also as a social construction (Davallon, 2000), or even as a voluntary act led by a sovereign institution to promote the wealth and diversity of local products and ethnic specialties. Some people refer to this heritage designation as a revelation of identity-related tensions that deny cultural mixing, but it could also be viewed through a different lens.

⏩ References

Ag Bendech M., 2003. Stratégies alimentaires d'amélioration de la situation nutritionnelle en Afrique de l'Ouest. 2nd International Workshop, Voies alimentaires d'amélioration des situations nutritionnelles, Ouagadougou, November 23-28 .

Bessière J., 2013. Quand le patrimoine alimentaire innove. *Mondes du Tourisme* [en ligne], 7, http://tourisme.revues.org/182 (accessed on 03/10/2016).

Bricas N., 2008. La pluralité des références identitaires des styles alimentaires urbains en Afrique. *In: Les nouvelles figures des marchés agroalimentaires. Apports croisés de l'économie, de la sociologie et de la gestion*. Chiffoleau Y., Dreyfus F., Touzard J.M. (Eds.), Montpellier: 149-159.

Bricas N., 2012a. Transitions alimentaires et nutritionnelles: une question d'échelles d'observation ? Interview with C. Le Stunff, consultant LRBéva Nutrition, http://www.lrbeva.com/ (accessed on 30/11/2019).

Bricas N., 2012b. Comment mange le monde : convergence ou diversité ? Symposium of the UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems, Montpellier, 27 January 2012.

Bricas N., Tchamda C., Thirion M.-C., 2014. La consommation alimentaire des pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest, du Cameroun et du Tchad. *Demeter 2014*: 45-61.

Calandre N., 2012. Ethnicité et alimentation. *In: Dictionnaire des cultures alimentaires*. Poulain J.-P. (Ed.), Paris, PUF: 507-516.

Chabrol D., Muchnik J., 2011. Consumer skills contribute to maintaining and diffusing heritage food products. *Anthropology of Food [online]*, 8.

Cheyns E., 2003a. Incertitudes et procédures de qualification des consommateurs urbains: le cas du soumbala. *In: La construction de la qualité des produits alimentaires. Le cas du soumbala, des céréales et des viandes sur le marché de Ouagadougou au Burkina Faso*. Bricas N., Cheyns E. (Eds.), CIRAD, Montpellier: 13-27.

Cheyns E., 2003b. Le rôle des institutions professionnelles dans la production et la garantie de la qualité des produits. *In: La construction de la qualité des produits alimentaires. Le cas du soumbala, des céréales et des viandes sur le marché de Ouagadougou au Burkina Faso*. Bricas N., Cheyns E. (Eds.), CIRAD, Montpellier: 59-73.

Corbeau J.-P., 1997. *Socialité, sociabilité et sauce toujours*. Internationale de l'Imaginaire, Paris, Babel/Actes Sud, Maison des cultures du monde: 69-81.

Corbeau J.-P., 2012. Socialité. *In: Dictionnaire des cultures alimentaires*. Poulain J.-P. (Ed.), Paris, PUF: 1280-1282.

Corbeau J.-P., Poulain J.-P., 2002. *Penser l'alimentation: entre imaginaire et rationalité*. Toulouse, Éditions Privat.

Crenn C., Ka A., Leport J., 2015. Entre brousse, ville et cadre de la globalisation: les paysages alimentaires du Sénégal. *In: Santé et Société en Afrique de l'Ouest*, CNRS Édition: 171-202.

Davallon J., 2000. Le patrimoine: 'une filiation inversée'? *Espaces Temps*, 74-75: 6-16.

Debevec L., 2007. The meaning of African and white man's food at Muslim and civil wedding celebrations in urban Burkina Faso. *Anthropology of Food [online]*, 12 p.

Delaunay D., Boyer F., 2009. *Ouaga 2009, Peuplement de Ouagadougou et Développement urbain. Rapport provisoire*. Ouagadougou, IRD and AFD, 250 p.

Fischler C., 2001. *L'homnivore*. Paris, Odile Jacob, 414 p.

Fournier T., Lepiller O., Simonet G., 2018. Un patrimoine alimentaire endormi. Le cas de la vallée pyrénéenne du Vicdessos. *Ethnologie française*, 171(3): 553-566.

Fumey G., 2007. La mondialisation de l'alimentation. *L'Information géographique*, 2(71): 71-82.

Héron R., 2016. *Les mangeurs urbains burkinabès entre sécurisation et satisfaction alimentaire*. Doctoral thesis in socio-anthropology, Iedes, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, IRD, Nogent-sur-Marne, 437 p.

Hobsbawm E., 1995. Inventing traditions [1983]. *Enquêtes [online]*, 2 (posted online on 02/07/2013).

Garine I. (de), 1988. Anthropologie de l'alimentation et pluridisciplinarité. *Écologie humaine*, 6(2): 21-40.

Konkobo-Yaméogo C., Karimou A.R., Kabore S., Diasso K., 2002. *Les pratiques alimentaires à Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso. Céréales, légumineuses, tubercules et légumes*. CNRST-CIRA, 148 p.

Lahlou S., 1995. *Penser Manger, Les représentations sociales de l'alimentation*. Doctoral thesis in Social Psychology, EHESS, Paris, 447 p.

Lamine C., 2006. La « résistance » de l'huile rouge. *Journal des anthropologues*, 106-107: 225-243.

Poulain J.-P., 2002. *Sociologies de l'alimentation. Les mangeurs et l'espace social alimentaire*. Paris PUF, 288 p. English version: Poulain, J.-P.. 2017. *The Sociology of Food. Eating and the Place of Food in Society*. London, Bloomsburry Academic, 288 p.

Poulain J.-P., 2011. La gastronomisation des cuisines de terroirs: sociologie d'un retournement de perspectives. *In: Transmettre, quel(s) patrimoine(s) ? Autour du patrimoine culturel immatériel*. Adell N., Pourcher Y. (Eds.), Paris, Michel Houdiard Éditeur: 239-248.

⏩ Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank—for facilitating the conditions under which the survey was carried out—the institutions to which she is affiliated, including IEDES (particularly Pierre Janin) and the Nutriset Group, the people who familiarized her with *bâbenda* and helped her in the data collection (especially Alizeta, Adjara, Judith and Colette), as well as all the *bâbenda* producers and eaters she met. She also thanks the organizers of the Eating in the City Symposium for the opportunity to contribute, to the coordinators of this book, as well as the reviewers and evaluators of this chapter for their proofreading and suggestions for improvement, and the translator for his translation. Finally, she would like to thank Jean-Pierre Héron and Samuel Legendre for their support, proofreading and advice during the writing of the many versions of this paper.

Chapter 10

Attiéké-garba – good to eat and think about Social distinction and challenging hygiene standards in the Ivorian urban context

N'da Amenan Gisèle Sédia,
Amoin Georgette Konan, Francis Akindès

Summary. *Garba* has become a food mainstay in Abidjan and several major cities in Côte d'Ivoire, while also being a select food dish in popular food outlets throughout the country. Nutritionists claim that *garba* is harmful to health, yet it is 'worth thinking about' in terms of challenging food hygiene standards. *Garba* is nevertheless a hallmark of the rich and diversified Ivorian food heritage, while the wealth of terms currently used to describe it reflects changes in the cultural landscape within which it is eaten. *Garba* is also 'worth thinking about' because the spaces where it is produced and consumed are also venues where social categories take shape: "Tell me where you eat your *garba* and I'll tell you who you are".

Introduction

Urban legend has it that in the 1980s a Nigerien Hausa man called Garba created a less refined variant of the traditional *attiéké-poisson frit* dish—a highly prized and vital part of the food culture of coastal communities in Côte d'Ivoire—made with ingredients of inferior quality. His name was thus inadvertently attached to a new food model which subsequently became an emblematic feature of Ivorian gastronomy. Despite critics calling it Ivorian junk food, *garba* is now widely renowned select dish in popular eateries. The spaces where *garba* is produced and consumed are the locus of social distinction and an embodiment of urbanity hinged on economic, food and commensal issues.

This chapter is presented in three parts. The first showcases *garba* as an urban food innovation. The second shows how *garba* can be viewed as a form of food hygiene challenge. The third describes and analyses the interactions and social representations around this embodiment of urbanity which actually echoes specific cultural references.

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/c10

⏩ What is *garba*?

The following was posted on the *afriquefemme.com* website on 2 July 2015:

> "In the vicinity of schools, industrial areas, business centres and neighbourhoods, you will inevitably run across a *garbadrome*. These stalls are not always very clean but they are never empty. Inside, a male vendor will serve you *attiéké* along with a piece of fried tuna seasoned to your liking with chilli pepper and some very dark oil. That's *garba*."

Garba is primarily a food dish

The local so-called *garba* dish has a quite standard structure, being composed of *attiéké* (an Ivorian cassava semolina-based dish) garnished with pieces of fried salted tuna and served 'wet', i.e. generously doused with frying oil. *Attiéké* and salted fried tuna are thus the two basic food ingredients. Traditional *garba* is served sprinkled with coarsely chopped fresh chilli peppers. Tomato, onion, stock cubes and mayonnaise are optional extras presented in a basket and sold individually.

Garba constituents

Attiéké is made through a process involving peeling, cutting, crushing, soaking-fermentation, drying and steaming of cassava roots. This dish—a culinary speciality in lagoon communities in southern Côte d'Ivoire—is produced almost exclusively by women. This highly consumed fermented product is so popular in Côte d'Ivoire that it is a prime commodity exported towards the West African subregion, Europe and China. Locally, *attiéké* is sold in *maquis*[1], restaurants and retail outlets. There are several types of *attiéké*, which vary in terms of quality: coarse-grained *agbodjama*, small-grained *attiéké*, and *attiéké-garba*. Coarse-grained *agbodjama*[2], also known as *attiéké prestige*, is prepared with the utmost care: selection of the best raw materials, longer cassava dough fermentation, complete defibration and uniform grain size. This homemade dish—formerly intended solely for guests of honour in lagoon communities—is now often marketed in Abidjan.

Small-grained *attiéké* is the commercially marketed type. It is produced everywhere in Côte d'Ivoire and undergoes the same manufacturing process as *agbodjama*, except that the grain size is smaller and less uniform. Like bakery bread, *attiéké* is prepared professionally by women producers who also reserve part of their production for household consumption.

Less care and time is devoted to making low-grade *attiéké-garba*, i.e. only 24 h compared to 48 h for the first two types. It is prepared exclusively for marketing, so steps such as fermentation are skipped or quickly done. The owners of the

1. *Maquis* are popular food outlets with a friendly family atmosphere where you can eat and drink while listening to music or watching TV.
2. There is also fine *agbodjama* (called *ahími*), but it is relatively unknown because it is not commercially marketed and is therefore meant solely for domestic consumption.

garbadromes, also known as *garbatigui*, sell this type of *attiéké*, which they buy very cheaply[3] to satisfy a clientele whose prime goal is to 'settle their stomachs', i.e. relieve hunger[4].

The fried tuna served with *garba* is bought in fishing ports and is already heavily salted. By popular belief, tuna is considered to be a naturally salty fish, but actually the tuna scraps used have been salted at sea on fishing boats when the fisherfolk do not have sufficient space for proper conservation of their entire fish catch[5]. At *garbadromes*, the cleaned fish pieces are coated with wheat flour before being fried in very hot oil. After cooking, they are directly displayed in a large aluminium or plastic tray and sold at prices that vary according to their size.

The refined palm oil used for frying is purchased retail from shopkeepers or street vendors. The oil in the fryer can be used for frying all day or until it is entirely absorbed. The remaining oil is stored in a can at the end of the day to be added to the new oil the next day.

Garba is also a food outlet of Hausa cooks

There would be no *garba* without a *Garba*, i.e. a Hausa *garbatigui*. The name *Garba* is linked to the fact that the first *garbadromes* were mainly run by Nigerien nationals. As *Garba* is a popular name in Niger, the new food model implemented by Nigerien nationals was named according to the first name of the initiator of the food style in question.

Garba could theoretically be made at home because all the ingredients are available in markets, yet for its fans, "eating *attiéké* with fried tuna prepared at home is not synonymous with eating *garba*", i.e. the only good *garba* is the type that can be bought in a Hausa *garbatigui*.

Garba – a food innovation

The first *garbadromes* sprang up in Abidjan around the university residences where they mainly served student communities with limited financial resources. Prior to the advent of *garbadromes*, popular catering of the usual array of traditional *attiéké-poisson frit* was exclusively reserved for women. This innovation was especially remarkable because *garbatigui* were normally run by Hausa men from Niger, a country where cassava is not produced and *attiéké* is not commonly eaten. These Hausa men seized the opportunity offered by the strong and consistent food demand from working class people and succeeded in proposing a cheaper *attiéké*-

3. The price for a basket of *attiéké-garba* (about 30 kg) ranges from FCFA4,000 to 7,000. Small-grained *attiéké* is twice as expensive, while a 15 kg basket of large-grain *agbodjama* costs around FCFA10,000.

4. Some customers get around the poor quality of *attiéké-garba* by purchasing *attiéké* elsewhere and then eating it with garnishes from a Hausa *garbadrome*. Some female *attiéké* vendors even set up their stands near *garbadromes* to offer better quality *attiéké* to such customers.

5. After sorting and freezing the best fish, leftover tuna scraps are salted to keep them from spoiling before landing. At the port, they are sold to wholesalers who distribute them to *garba* vendors and other actors who supply the fish smokehouses.

based dish[6]—it was soon appreciated for its organoleptic quality and lasting hunger relieving potential. *Garba* thus differs from the traditional *attiéké-poisson frit* dish with all of its refinements (choice of ingredients, presentation of the dish served with a spicy tomato sauce). *Garba* has been a very successful innovation since it emerged on the urban street catering market at the incentive of men who did not know much about *attiéké*, but whose stroke of genius was to combine it with fried salted tuna—which was novel. The added value of this product to urban food has been celebrated in Zouglou music, i.e. a genre of popular music in Côte d'Ivoire that conveys messages of social misery experienced by youths particularly hard hit by the structural adjustment programme measures (Bahi and Biaya, 1996; Konaté, 2002).

⏩ Portrait of a *garba* eater

Garba eaters do not fit any particular profile, although the clientele mainly consists of pupils, students, unemployed people, workers and 'resourceful people' (i.e. with no fixed activity). *Garba* was long considered as a poor man's meal, but it is now so mainstream in people's diets that—despite having risen up the social ladder—its enthusiasts, i.e. former pupils and students, have retained it in their diet. Eating *garba* is an act in remembrance of its 'hardship' trajectory even though people's livelihoods improved several years later. *Garba* has thus become part of the urban foodscape among all socioeconomic classes.

A key distinction between *garba* eaters from different classes concerns where they consume the dish they buy. Indeed, not everyone eats *garba* at Hausa *garbatigui*. Although working class consumers eat there, so-called middle-class *chocos*[7] buy *garba* and then leave the *garba* production site to eat the dish at home or in a more comfortable place that is more in line with his/her class identity (e.g. a *maquis*). By local social standards, eating *garba* in popular places with poor hygiene and service quality is not always viewed favourably for people who have climbed the social ladder. Middle-class consumers therefore distance themselves from these regulars who sit down and seem to ignore the poor hygienic conditions. Yet the shared interest in *garba* is to be found in the combined gustatory pleasure and fulfilment of dietary needs offered by this dish regardless of whether the eater belongs to the working or middle class.

⏩ *Garba* – a food hygiene challenge?

Toxicological aspects of *garba*

From a normative standpoint, it is often noted that the *garba* preparation and consumption conditions may pose a health threat to eaters. Criticism on the nutritional and hygiene quality—which is regularly noted in the Ivorian press and by food consumers (especially among the middle class)—is further substantiated

6. Initially *garba* could be eaten for FCFA100 (*attieké* FCFA50, fish FCFA50), but it now costs at least twice as much for a dish due to the rise in the port price of tuna.
7. This term, which is short for chocolate, is used in reference to well-off people who have chocolate and coffee for breakfast, i.e. a luxury for the local working-class population.

by scientific survey findings. Koffi *et al.* (2015) reported the overuse of fish frying oil, with up to seven fryings before changing. This practice is said to induce oil oxidation via the formation of carcinogenic compounds (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2008). This carcinogenic quality is exacerbated by the fact that the fish is coated with wheat flour, which also produces toxic compounds such as acrylamide after high-temperature or repeated frying (Dobarganes and Marquez-Ruiz, 2015). Nutritionists further claim that histamine levels found in the low-grade tuna used are not up to export standards. Other potential risks for *garba* eaters are associated with the high oil levels in the dish, given that the tuna absorbs oil during frying and that frying oil is added after cooking as a condiment to 'wet' the *attiéké*. *Garba* eaters are hence at risk of developing cardiovascular diseases and other disorders such as high blood pressure and obesity. Moreover, the tuna used is presalted for preservation and the resulting high salt content in the finished product is a risk factor for these diseases. Moreover, some eaters add high sodium containing stock cubes as a condiment, which further exacerbates these risks.

Unsanitary premises, service and equipment

Hausa *garbadromes* include a kitchen area and another space where customers are hosted. In the kitchen, there is a large gas- or charcoal-heated deep fryer, a table with a basin containing *attiéké*, a tray for displaying pieces of fried tuna and a jug filled with frying oil to 'wet' the served dish. The customer reception area is generally furnished with a long roughly built table surrounded by benches. The dishware and cutlery often consist of a few plastic plates, spoons and two-pronged forks. The forks, whose two central prongs are purposely broken, enable eaters to 'catch' the fish, i.e. choose their fish when it is in the hot oil.

Garbadromes are generally unhygienic places. On the floor at the entrance, two basins, one with soapy water and the other with rinsing water, are used for both dish and hand washing. The basins are only emptied at the end of the working day, i.e. around 10 p.m. Customers often just have access to a single towel hung on a nail to wipe their hands.

The *garbatigui* serves *attiéké* by plunging his right hand into the basin, kneading to detach the grains before placing the quantity corresponding to the amount paid for by the customer on a plate. He uses the same hand to collect money, give change, coat fresh fish in flour, etc., in keeping with the popular view that certain acts such as taking money or eating cannot be done with the left hand.

Note that this type of setting is not solely specific to *garbadromes*. The same conditions apply to other popular food outlets (*maquis*, kiosks and stalls) selling cooked food in Côte d'Ivoire—the setting is generally rough and often unhealthy, as is the surrounding environment (along roads, over ditches partially covered with planks or near bus or communal taxi stations, which may be dusty or muddy depending on the season). Food is directly exposed to dust, smoke from kitchen fires, vehicle exhaust and foul odours from ditches. Street food eaters are thus constantly exposed to bacterial contaminants that can cause infectious diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid, etc.

Risks associated with table manners

People say that *garba se paume*, which means that it is eaten by hand, as finger food, and never with cutlery, regardless of the social class of the *garba*phile. In the local food culture, the *attiéké-poisson frit* dish is also generally eaten by hand. To eat *garba* properly, the eater must above all form a ball of *attiéké* in the palm of the hand in which the oil, stock cube and vegetables have been mixed beforehand. A piece of fish is then added to it, before the whole mixture is put in the mouth. For *garba* lovers, eating by hand adds to the taste, especially when eating in a group. *Garba* culture presupposes the respect of a consumption ritual which generates osmosis between the eater and the *garba* by the fact of handling it before putting it in the mouth.

Cultural construction of the organoleptic features is questionable here due to the risks potentially linked to food hygiene in its multiple facets. The food consumer's trade-off is resolutely focused on this organoleptic aspect.

'Good food' versus culturally 'eating well' – a challenge to 'eating to ensure good health and a long life'

In a global setting of increasing chronic diseases (cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes), food is often assessed relative to potential health risks on the basis of nutritional standards, while *garba* is a high calorie and high fat dish.

Not all eaters have sufficient scientific culture to be interested in the toxicological aspects of *garba* and its nutritional contributions. *Garba* consumers often feel that the high calorie and fat content of this dish underlie the pleasure it generates. They are also aware of the risks linked to the lack of hygiene and to the dousing of the dish with 'motor oil'. However, concern for taste combined with the quest to relieve hunger at an affordable price seem to weigh more heavily in the balance of *garba* eaters' food choices than awareness of the health risks. By the eater's rationale, the taste pleasure and the wish to survive (for the most deprived) clearly outweigh all the health risks, especially when also considering the pleasure of meeting with friends around *garba* plates.

Regarding *garba* consumption, the dietary advice of nutritionists and the Ivorian Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene (as reported on TV) are often derided by expressions such as: "microbes don't kill Africans", meaning that the body takes care of defeating any microbes ingested during a meal; "you eat you die, you don't eat you die, I prefer to eat and die in peace", to express the person's zest for life despite these many risk factors.

The impacts of the asymmetry in information access in different social contexts underlie this choice rationale justified by forms of derision. Middle-class consumers have more ready access to information that can heighten their awareness of the risks and guide their choices if they wish, whereas working-class *garba* eaters are less able to control their food choices. Instead they rely on popular opinion to determine the type of food that will be good for them and their survival. Given the constant decline in people's purchasing power, *garba* has quickly become a mainstay in urban food cultures. It is a quintessential dish that combines the three most sought-after functions—enjoyable to eat, economical and capable of relieving hunger.

⏩ Imaginary aspects of *garba* consumption

For enthusiasts, eating *garba* has multiple meanings.

Garba – the 'KO blow' and good to eat

A plate of *garba* primarily has a utilitarian function—to relieve hunger. With FCFA200, you can treat yourself to a dish that will get you through the day without any other meal, which is why in the popular imagination it has the image of 'hard concrete' or a 'KO blow'. Moreover, the strategic timing of the meal (e.g. at 10 a.m.) enables consumers to skip breakfast and lunch. The organoleptic qualities of *garba* are generally put forward to conceal the lack of alternative options.

Garba – a symbol of urbanity

Garba is a city food. This new food model—created via the combination of *attiéké* and fried tuna—differs from the dietary habits of rural people who do not use much refined palm oil for frying as it is considered a luxury item. *Garba* has over the years become a hallmark of the culinary identity of Ivorian cities, given all the events focused on this dish, such as the *Garbadromes* TV series (seasons 1 and 2) and 'Garba parties', i.e. garba-oriented gastronomic and musical festivals held especially during school vacations.

Garba – a commensality factor

Garba is also an African sociability vector as it is seldom eaten alone. This food dish is generally consumed when meeting friends outside the family. The choice of *garba* commensal meal partners is not trivial. *Garba* is not shared with just anyone, it is preferably shared with peers, people with whom you can 'let go' without the risk of looking ridiculous.

Even when eating alone in a cheap food outlet, eaters are never really lonely because social bonds are formed between them and other eaters in the *garbadrome*. Eating *garba* is therefore a communal act even though there is always a personal aspect to this food ritual.

By frequenting a *garbadrome*, eaters are showing their attachment—in a recognized food-related language—to the community of *garba* 'hand eaters'. The table manners that prevail in more formal restaurants are set aside in *garba* eateries. Eating in a *garbadrome* is a moment of conviviality, of meeting people around the same table, often with conversations on everyday urban problems. Consumers in these popular eateries feel communion with others in the same socioeconomic situations.

⏩ Partial compliance of *garbadromes* to cleanliness requirements

Garba remains a food staple and the most profitable dish offered in popular restaurants. The hygienic conditions of the premises, utensils and dishes is a problem that

authorities and researchers in Côte d'Ivoire have been striving to solve since 2014. The Ebola epidemic prompted awareness-raising initiatives that have led to some extent of compliance to certain hygiene regulations in *garbadromes*.

A more hygiene-friendly service

Although there is still a lot to be done, fried fish is now well protected with covers in Hausa *garbadromes*. Large clear plastic fabrics are used as covers in some of these outlets, while the fish is displayed in clear plastic containers in others. Customers take two-pronged forks from the container to select their fish, and then they put them back in the container without cleaning—the most important thing is to avoid direct contact between the customer's hand and the fish.

The creation of 'Ivorian *garbadromes*' that are more compliant with hygiene standards

Ivorian *garbadromes*—which can be recognized by their *Garbadrome Ivoire* signs and banners—are food production-consumption outlets that offer more comfort and evident hygiene, with cleaner cutlery, more attractive food presentation and good quality *attiéké*. In recent years, the emergence of young Ivorian actors in this segment of the catering profession seems to be effectively capturing the market opportunity stemming from the demand for more hygienic *garba*. There are two categories of Ivorian *garbadromes*.

The first category consists of *garbadromes* partially managed by young entrepreneurs. The facilities where customers are hosted are more comfortable and comply with hygienic standards. We also noted some degree of feminization in the management of these Ivorian *garbadromes*. Unlike Hausa *garbadromes*, onions and tomatoes are offered, in addition to chilli pepper, which are also offered as side orders for customers wanting more. These *garbadromes* are located in all neighbourhoods, with prices per dish practically identical to those charged in the Hausa *garbadromes*.

The second category consists of so-called *choco garbadromes*, i.e. prototypes designed to capture a middle-class clientele. They are generally set up in residential neighbourhoods, unlike Hausa *garbadromes* which are located on city roadsides and near bus stations. They are managed by professional caterers and the minimum order costs over FCFA1,000, i.e. five times more expensive than basic *garba*. In addition to green chilli pepper, chopped onions and tomatoes, bouillon cubes, water or soft drinks are available in much cleaner customer reception areas.

Hausa *garbadromes versus* Ivorian *garbadromes*

Ivorian *garbadromes* use the same preparation method as the Hausa types—the salted tuna is coated in flour before being fried in refined palm oil, while the frying oil is overused, like in most cheap food outlets in Côte d'Ivoire.

Attempts to 'Ivorize' the *garba* dish through improved hygiene is transforming this urban catering sector. It provides an opportunity for self-employment for some young people, while others invest in the activity, spurred on by the political rhetoric

of 'nationalizing' certain economic activities. So far this competition does not seem to worry the Hausa *garbatigui*, who claim they still have the best legendary garba recipe, whose 'special taste' is the result of a secret ingredient unknown to the Ivorian *garbatigui*.

"Tell me where you eat your *garba* and I'll tell you who you are"

Garba eateries have actually become spaces of social distinction—according to popular parlance, there are '*garba* of some' (wealthy people), '*garba* of others' (middle-class people), and '*garba* of the etc.' (socially disadvantaged people).

The more a person is geared towards consumption of 'etc.', the more the *garba* is close to the original Hausa *garba*. The higher a person climbs the social scale, the more the '*garba* of some' deviates from the '*garba* of the etc.', even though *garba*, as a popular dish, is an innovation of the 'lowest' people (i.e. Hausa migrants or socially disadvantaged people). From initially being marginal food, *garba* gained credence once it became a prime theme in Zouglou music and was socially heralded by the budding student elite. Presented as the 'grub' of the lean season and transitional periods of student life, it has morphed into a staple food of the urban middle class in Côte d'Ivoire. In popular parlance, *garba* (the food of the 'lowest of the low' people) has been reappropriated by the 'highest of the high' people (very well-off) and 'middle of the high' people (middle class). In this reappropriation game, Hausa cooks no longer prepare *choco garba*. Yet in this game it is essential to maintain the image of the '*garba* of the etc." so as to be able to keep calling it *garba*, even though the hygiene requirements of the middle class oblige Ivorian *garbatigui* to make a distinction by attaching the *choco* qualifier to *garba*.

The relationship with *garba* is thus also an income inequality indicator. Social categories are segregated in popular restaurant consumption spaces according to what is eaten.

Conclusion

Garba is not only good to eat but also worth thinking about considering the sociological and economic weight associated with the act of consuming this historically marginal product that is becoming a key constituent of the urban food culture in Côte d'Ivoire. The *garba* model has transcended the Ivorian borders and is now found in neighbouring countries and even beyond. A veritable symbol of the triumph of eating pleasure over dietary and food hygiene considerations, *garba* continues to be a favourite dish on the menu of popular eateries in Côte d'Ivoire. Despite the criticism regarding the toxicological risks associated with *garba* consumption, the number of *garba*philes from all social strata seems to be growing. What began as a one-off response to a consistent urban food demand has gradually over the years become a food reference in Côte d'Ivoire. It is also a sign of urbanity for the community of 'hand eaters' with a shaky relationship with dietetics and hygiene.

Alongside the development of the *garba* service sector (to meet the new class requirements of former students who have become *chocos*), the actors and production sites have diversified, along with an attempt to feminize the activity, but the preference for the Hausa label and Hausa *garbadromes* still prevails.

The success of *garba* and its popularity beyond the borders of Côte d'Ivoire illustrate the success of this food innovation, where the know-how of Hausa migrants 'from below' has benefitted a local culinary culture (lagoon peoples), while preserving the basic structure of the meal—*attiéké* and fried fish.

⏩ References

Bahi P., Biaya T.K., 1996. Danse et espace idéologique de la marge. Le Zouglou et la transformation socio-politique des jeunes d'Abidjan. *Société africaines et diaspora*, September 3: 105-120.

Bhattacharya A.B., Sajilata M.G., Tiwari S.R., Singhal R., 2008. Regeneration of thermally polymerized frying oils with adsorbents. *Food Chemistry*, 110: 562-570.

Dobarganes C., Marquez-Ruiz G., 2015. Possible adverse effects of frying with vegetable oils. *British Journal of Nutrition*, 113(S): 49-57.

Koffi A.L.J., Fokou G., Yao G.R, Bonfoh B., 2015. *Dynamique des habitudes alimentaires et gestion des risques socio-sanitaires liés à la consommation du garba dans le secteur informel urbain d'Abidjan*. Bi-annual report 2014-2015, Swiss Center for Scientific Research in Côte d'Ivoire, 109 p.

Konaté Y., 2002. Génération Zouglou. *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 168(4): 777-796.

⏩ Acknowledgements

All the authors would like to thank the editorial committee reviewers.

Chapter 11

‘Food from the pot’ Child nutrition and socialization in two Cameroonian cities

Estelle Kouokam Magne

Summary. This chapter aims to show that feeding 0-1 year old children in the Cameroonian cities of Yaoundé and Douala is a humanization and socialization issue. From June 2013 to March 2014, a qualitative research study was carried out using purposive nonprobability sampling in these two cosmopolitan cities. The households were selected on the basis of socio-economic status, high, average and modest living standards, and according to their ethnic diversity. Food practices are geared towards ensuring the integration of children into their social group. The expression ‘food from the pot’ epitomizes this child socialization trend.

Introduction[1]

According to the Cameroonian Ministry of Housing and Urban Development:

> “The current average annual growth rate of Cameroonian cities is 5%, including 7% for Yaoundé and 6.4% for Douala. In 34 years (1976-2010), the urban population has increased by 4.6-fold. At this rate, more than 75% of the Cameroonian population will live in cities in the next 25-30 years.”[2]

Studies on childhood and children’s diets in sub-Saharan African cities focus primarily on the relationship between environmental and social determinants and how it impacts the health of children in the 0-5 years age range (National Institute of Statistics, 2011). These findings meet public health imperatives and serve to assess the role of the State in the prevention and management of childhood disease, and in turn the latter are often used as indicators of the economic and social level of households.

1. This research was carried out within the framework of a collaboration contract between UCAC, CIRAD and Danone Nutricia Research. The main focus of the study was to highlight food styles among children aged 0 to 3 years in African cities.
2. Source:http://www.minhdu.gov.cm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=846%3Apoint-de-presse-du (accessed on 20/06/2018).

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/c11

Beyond this research, which is geared towards assessing health and political emergency situations, it is essential to gain insight into the ordinary diet of young urban dwellers so as to shed light on the rationales that drive the food choices of parents, regardless whether they are privileged or not. This research was conducted in Yaoundé, the political capital of Cameroon, and in Douala, a port city and the country's economic hub. Cultural practices with regard to feeding young 0-3 year old children were studied in an urban environment to showcase the food diversification tensions and challenges in a setting underpinned by a highly diversified food supply. This age group was chosen because it corresponds to a pivotal period in children's taste learning. According to Benoit Schaal, sensory imprinting can have an important role in the prevention of eating disorders and "the very possibility of this early sensory imprinting can reveal whether children are subject to adaptive influences when their most paramount preference and choice systems are developing". (Schaal *et al*., 2008: 227).

An approach combining the biological and social age was implemented to gain insight into nutritional issues regarding young urban dwellers. Taking the social age into account helps shed light on mother's choices and trade-offs when introducing their children to local food models—social age is here understood to be a set of "sociotechnical and symbolic elements that link a group of people to its environment, form its identity and trigger internal social differentiation processes [...] and symbolic code systems that showcase the values of a group of people" (Poulain, 2002: 25).

The main objective of this chapter is therefore to show how urban households in Yaoundé and Douala combine multiple traditional and contemporary references during the identity-building process of young children from 0 to 1 year old. The key issue at stake in this process is the humanization and integration of the child into his/her group, as epitomized by the 'food from the pot' expression at the epicentre of commensality.

⏩ Background and methodology

In Cameroon, less than 15% of household heads have jobs in the formal economic sector while 37.5% of households are below the poverty index. These are households in which adults spend less than FCFA 339,715 per year, or less than FCFA 28,309 per month[3] to live according to the 2014 Cameroon Household Survey (National Institute of Statistics, 2014).

In this socioeconomic setting, the nutrition and wellbeing of children from 0 to 5 years of age are public health policy concerns. Institutional organizations in charge of the management of children's illnesses include the National Breastfeeding Promotion Programme (NBPP), the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI), the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI), etc.

Thirty-three percent of children aged 0-59 months suffer from chronic malnutrition in Cameroon despite the fact that breastfeeding is socially recognized as

3. Equivalent to €43.22 per month.

a positive practice. Moreover, only 20% of 0-6 month old infants are exclusively breastfed (National Institute of Statistics, 2011), which is far from meeting the recommendations of the World Health Organization.

"The city can be defined as a bridge between local perspectives and global dynamics" (Stebé and Marchal, 2010) and therefore the food socialization of young city dwellers can mediate the values and identity constructs involved in this local/global linkage. Our basic assumption is that the diet of young children in the cities of Yaoundé and Douala contributes to the development of their urban identity. Food serves as a mediator in the relationship between the child and his/her social environment, as well as his/her level of integration into the group, while providing information not only on the child's social age but also on his/her urban identity.

The choice of these two cosmopolitan cities, i.e. Yaoundé and Douala, enabled us to gain insight into current nutrition dynamics regarding young children in an urban context where economic insecurity prevails among the lower classes[4]. These cities also pool the different Cameroonian social classes.

This research was carried out using purposive nonprobabilistic sampling in three neighbourhoods per city. Three living standards were represented in this sample: high, medium and popular. Ethnic diversity in the two cities was taken into account when forming the groups.

Households in Douala and Yaoundé were mainly selected according to their socio-economic class. The second criterion was that households had to have a child between 0 and 1 year old. Three-generation households—parents, grandparents and children—were also included amongst the criteria to assess the impact of the mother's close social environment.

Sampling of 15 to 20 households was planned per neighbourhood. In Yaoundé, 53 households were thus surveyed, while 55 were surveyed in Douala, for a total of 108 respondent households. Five focus group sessions were carried out in each city, in addition to 107 direct interviews. We supplemented this sampling by also surveying 10 web users through social network discussions, while interviews were also conducted with 12 health professionals and 3 grandmothers.

Combining biocultural and social approaches

Research in Cameroon is often highlighting the nutritional knowledge of local communities (de Garine, 1996). In our study, we sought to illustrate the link between citizenry and local nutritional knowledge.

It is therefore vital to make a clear distinction between biological age and social age, since trade-offs are made regarding the child's diet at the junction of these two ages. Children's food trajectories highlight this distinction between social and biological age. This is reflected, for instance, in the relationship with the child's body—in the child's early years his/her body is not very mobile and is nourished with soft or liquid food, followed by semi-solid or solid food once walking begins.

4. According to the Cameroon Household Survey, "the severity of poverty increased from 5.0% in 2007 to 7.2% in 2014 and reflected deepening inequality or consumption gaps among the poor over this period." (National Institute of Statistics, 2014).

At birth, the child is considered as an intermediary being who has not yet completely broken away from the world of deities and genies[5]. Practices documented in Central African countries, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon (Erny, 1990; de Rosny, 2000), indicate that the main challenge is to get the child to integrate his/her social group and to eat like other members of the group. Any deviant eating behaviour suggests that the child wants to stay in or return to the world of genies. Eric de Rosny noted that in Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon, one of the clues for identifying an *enfant-ancêtre* (child as an ancestral reincarnation) is his/her refusal to eat any solid food (de Rosny, 2000). Since the child's integration into the group is a health issue for the social group, the latter is committed to understanding and caring for a child who continues to feed on milk while spurning common food, which is interpreted as a refusal to be part of the group. Child feeding, because of its commensal function, reveals the group membership mechanisms. Solid food is therefore both a rite of separation from the ethereal world of genies and a rite of integration into the social group in the view of Arnold Van Gennep (1981).

Body as object and subject of children's meal adaptation

Food practices are adapted to children's bodies insofar as the food offered complies with the physiological strengthening process. The child is first fed liquids, which echo the food received during his/her *in utero* life. This feeding highlights the fact that the child is a being from both here and elsewhere. Exiting from the mother's womb is in itself a rite of passage into the host family. However, the child remains an intermediary being between the world of the living and that of the ancestors (Erny, 1990; de Rosny, 2000). The child's food trajectories provide information about his/her future within the family: "The child as a social player acts and reacts to his/her care and co-constructs situations. From this standpoint, the child is no longer the object of social and cultural shaping over which he/she has no control" (Danic *et al.*, 2017: 6) insofar as he/she is considered to have a personality, needs and expectations towards the family and *vice versa*.

Hereafter we propose a sequencing of child feeding practices based on mothers' accounts of their children's rites of passage regarding feeding. These reconstructions link the child's biological and social ages. The different sequences conveyed by the mothers often did not follow a strict temporal pattern. The survey nevertheless revealed an overall chronological picture. The gradual socialization of the child through feeding could thus be divided into four main stages and several sub-stages. The first stage is from 0 to 4 months old, when the child is considered frail; the second is from 4 to 6 months old, when the meals begin to thicken; the third is from 6 to 9 months old, when the family gradually introduces shared meals within the group; while the last stage is between 9 and 12 months of age. During this last phase, 'food from the pot'—epitomizing commensality and belonging to the group—gradually becomes the child's main dish, with milk and industrial flours being snack foods.

5. Genies are supernatural beings considered to be present in the elements of nature: water, forest, earth, etc.

⏩ From birth to 4 months old – the frail child

This narrative also relates to the gradual access to the technical items associated with the social group's diet. The dishware used for newborns and young children are bottles and bowls specifically intended for them and the focus of special care. This separation could also be explained by the fact that at birth the newborn is considered a 'cooled child'[6], i.e. frail and fragile. Mixing the child's dishware with that of the rest of the household could pose hygienic risks for the newborn.

From 0 to a few days old – milk and water

At this stage, among the respondents, only mothers who were unable to breastfeed for health reasons did not actually breastfeed. Bernadette, a social and family economics teacher from the Ndogpassi neighbourhood in Douala, says:

> "When the last one was born she was given glucose for 2 days because I was in a coma. She was on glucose for 2 days but she cried a lot. Two days after she was born she was given X milk,[7] which she continued to take until she was 3 months old." (survey conducted on 22 June 2013 in Douala, Village neighbourhood)

Breast milk is important for mothers. Those who were not able to breastfeed their child at birth expressed their concern, which was the case of Bernadette:

> "Since I didn't breastfeed her at birth, I was really afraid it would affect her health... that she wouldn't grow well and would be sick all the time. But she's doing very well." (survey conducted on 22 June 2013 in Douala, Village neighbourhood)

Mothers feel that breast milk is the most suitable food for the first few months. As pointed out by Madina Querre, milk is considered:

> "[...] as a fluid at the epicentre of human vitality. Stemming from the union of the bodily fluids of a man and a woman in the same manner as a child, it is the food that enables a human being to grow and shape his/her inner and outer self." (Querre, 2003)

Breast milk and mineral water are offered at the same time. The women we spoke to did not feel that this water was an additive. Water is percevied as an integral part of the child's diet. This inclusion of water in the newborn's diet is often interpreted with reference to religious beliefs and hospital practices. One mother noted: "Even the child is thirsty" (interview conducted on 23 June 2013 in Douala, Village neighbourhood). The newborn status therefore does not erase the need for the child to drink water. A newborn has all of its living organs like any other complete human being. It can therefore be as thirsty as any grown-up. The nutritional advice given at the hospital, which generally recommends not giving infants water until they are 6 months old, was questioned by most of our respondents. Instead, they believed it was in the child's health interest to drink water.

This practice relates to beliefs that link the child to water and that still persist in the urban environment. Pierre Erny's studies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo highlight the view that:

---

6. *Mou fui* in Bayangam, for instance.
7. The trademark has been masked.

> “The foetus is regularly in contact with aquatic animals, molluscs, snakes and fish, particularly catfish. Claiming that a child is ‘water’ is tantamount to saying that he/she is not yet a person [*muntu*], that he/she does not yet have any social value.” (Erny, 1990: 137-138)

Among the Bamileke people of Cameroon, Charles-Henry Pradelles de Latour Dejean notes that in the imagination of people in the Bangwa group, “before birth, children live in dual form in river water, which is the archetypal environment of the origin of life”. (Pradelles de Latour Dejean, 1979: 237).

Here, water is a ‘self-evident’ food item. Apart from two women who exclusively breastfed their children, water was not considered as an additive in any of the classes studied. It is an element that all human beings must consume.

From 0 to 2 months old – food consumed and intimate maternal contact

Certain foods are sometimes added to breast milk with the aim of satisfying the child’s hunger, as perceived by the mother. The child’s cries or constant weeping are all signs that worry the mother and lead her to suppose that her milk is not enough to satisfy the child.

Commercial formula milk is sometimes bottle fed to the infant at this stage. In lower social classes, when parents are unable to provide a full ration of milk, a very liquid corn flour porridge s mixed with milk and bottle fed to the child. This switch to offering liquid porridge generally occurs earlier when there are twins, as the mothers feel doubly exhausted. Moreover, it is hard for mothers from a modest social class to buy milk cartons[8]. In such circumstances, milk substitute foods may be offered as early as the second month of life.

The mother’s main concern is to satisfy their infant’s hunger. When the child is not satisfied he/she generally cries or has difficulty falling asleep. Mothers may also notice that the child has become ‘light’ when carrying and handling him/her. ‘Skin-to-skin’ contact between grown-ups in the close family circle thus can help a mother gauge her child’s satiety.

Mothers frequently express their reservations about exclusive breastfeeding their child for 6 months, with two arguments: first, the feeling of exhaustion (“it’s tiring”) and secondly, the insufficiency of breast milk alone to meet the needs of a growing child whose bones are hardening.

From 2 to 4 months old – nourishing foods

The introduction of adult foods is based on the belief that porridge and milk are not nourishing foods. Hence, for mothers and grandmothers, the consumption of these liquid foods is not related to eating. This grandmother from the Village neighbourhood of Douala, states in this regard: “Once eating starts, the child no longer bothers us” (interview conducted on 27 August 2013 in Douala, Village

8. A 400 g milk carton costs €6 on average.

neighbourhood). This early diversification practice is out of line with public health standards that advocate exclusive breastfeeding between 0 and 6 months. Cereals such as corn and tubers such as potatoes can be reduced to a liquid porridge and mixed with commercial formula milk in a bottle.

⏩ From 4 months old – thickened dishes and tiered weaning

Weaning

In urban areas, feeding patterns vary depending on the mother's economic activity sector. When the mother works in the formal sector, the child is no longer breastfed at the end of maternity leave. These mothers cannot bring their children to the workplace as there is generally no in-house nursery due to the organizational constraints of private and public enterprises. The mobility of mothers in relation to their paid activity is thus not compensated by any specific arrangements to ease mother-child mobility.

Although it is now possible to express breast milk and store it in a bottle so that the child can be bottle fed this expressed milk, even in the mother's absence, children are still often bottle fed commercial formula milk. Mothers often hesitate to delegate the task of feeding their children expressed breast milk to domestic helpers out of fear that they will not respect hygiene standards. Moreover, the mothers we interviewed were not convinced by the idea of storing breast milk outside the breast.

In low income settings, mothers continue to breastfeed their children and are allowed to take them to their job sites when they work in the informal sector. This flexibility in working conditions enables mothers to continue breastfeeding their children.

Food transition

The age of 4 months old heralds a food transition in all social classes—milk is thickened with edible flours available in both household kitchens and shops.

Mothers may then readjust the feeding bottles—which is tantamount to cultural poaching (de Certeau, 1990)—so as to tailor them to the texture of the new dishes that will be introduced into the child's diet. This may involve enlarging the size of the hole in the nipple of the feeding bottle.

In terms of recipes, there is a shift from a simple three-ingredient preparation (water, milk and corn) to a more complex form with more than three ingredients, sometimes with the addition of soya and peanuts.

Semi-liquid and solid foods are introduced to bolster the child's psychomotor development. From 4 months old onwards, the child starts to sit up and can already hold his head well. In addition, the introduction of solid foods is concomitant to the child's body development, which is gaining strength daily. Solid food intake also helps harden the child's bones.

Moreover, the child watches the grown-ups eat, e.g. how they bring the spoon to their mouths, and the attention the child pays to this movement is interpreted as a longing to taste the grown-ups' meals. This mother says:

> "The child stares at you when you eat—you bring the spoon to your mouth and you see the child's eyes following the movement. You have to give him some. You have to communicate with the child." (interview conducted in June 2013 in Douala, Village neighbourhood)

At this age, the child is considered to be at the cusp of two worlds and to be half-human/half-genie. Their anger could thus be harmful to adults. Hence, they could play tricks on adults even though they may not yet be able to use words to ask or have the ability to convince adults to share meals with them[9]. A mother from the Village neighbourhood confides: "You don't know what kind of child you're carrying. My daughter used to follow me with her eyes" (interview conducted in June 2013 in Douala, Village neighbourhood). Beyond the imaginary status of the child, "the food offered is a proof of a mother's love. To refuse food is to refuse love". (Hubert, 2006).

From 6 to 9 months old – between global food culture and identity-building dishes

Children are weaned as of 6 months old, an age at which the first teeth emerge—this is a sign of humanization of the child, as Pierre Erny notes:

> "Dentition, for many people, is a sign that the child is really turning into a human, whereas prior to that he/she was just 'water'." (Erny, 1990: 147)

Feeding gradually includes more solid meals and purées. Here mothers juggle with information conveyed to them via the media, health centres and their social circles regarding the contribution of meals to children's wellbeing. Commercial formula milk is combined with purées, especially mashed potatoes. The porridge offered to children is more complex.

Enriched porridge ingredients may include corn, peanuts and durum wheat pasta. Fish powder and biscuits may also be added. This recipe is shared by all socio-economic classes in Yaoundé and Douala. The composition of this dish also reflects the features that are socially appreciated in meals, i.e. heavy and hot—this type of meal 'makes children strong'.

Otherwise, lower class mothers melt commercial biscuits (four-biscuit packs sold for FCFA25[10]) in warm water and the resulting dough is given to their children. According to one mother, "it's very heavy, the child stops bothering you after eating it". The addition of biscuits gives the typical commercial 'biscuit' flavour to the food.

In addition to advertising messages that foster children's wellbeing, enriched porridge is also promoted in maternal and child protection centres to treat children suffering from protein-energy malnutrition.

Meal preparation for babies is often a quick do-it-yourself affair (de Certeau *et al.*, 1994). This popular culture interlaces traditional representations of identity-building

9. A recent observation in Yaoundé in 2015 showed how an adult visiting a household where a 5-month-old child was living decided to let the child taste a sweet soft drink he was drinking, while justifying himself as follows: "You never know with children. I've already heard a lot of anecdotes about children. I have to get back on the road to Douala right away".
10. Less than 10 euro cents.

dishes that nurture the child, preparations promoted in health centres and manufactured food products. The latter are promoted with images highlighting ingredients that comfort mothers with regard to their nutritional qualities: milk, and raising a chubby, smiling and glowing baby, etc. (de Certeau *et al.*, 1994).

The child still has his/her own dishware, while also using those of the rest of the family on an increasingly regular basis. From the age of 6 months onwards, women caring for the child want the him/her to get used to what he/she will eat later on. The child is introduced to food as a symbolic component of the group's ethnic identity. This mother says: "We have to start getting the child used to food" (interview conducted in July 2013). Food is therefore the nexus of the child's cultural roots and identity. It confers a human status to this being who, in accepting the meal, shows "his/her willingness and [...] ability to leave the slack and shapeless category" (Erny, 1990: 147). Food is also a rite of initiation into the group's food heritage, which here is seen as what makes a region or a *terroir* specific (Bessière, 2012). The socialization of children into the group's food heritage renews this social construct, which is reappropriated over the generations in an urban setting.

The heritage notion should in no way be viewed as a backward-looking ahistorical view of food. It is dynamic and in line with the cultural practices regarding consumption within which the inventiveness of communities can be identified in a context of precarious living conditions.

For example, lower and middle-class Bamileke mothers say they give 'kneaded banana', which they consider to be an identity-building food. Cocoyam (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*) grated and stirred in oil and then steamed in banana leaves is another food heritage dish to which the child is introduced among the Bamileke. This preparation is garnished with peanut sauce. This latter sauce is also served with other starchy foods—corn dough, rice, potatoes and sweet potatoes—which are served to the child accompanied by sauces made from leaves, peanuts, tomatoes, okra, etc.

In the coastal region, for instance, Bakoko women already encourage the consumption of mashed cocoyam with palm oil or cooked in red oil for children at this age. This woman respondent said: "I give her Bakoko food!". Moreover, these foods are usually available and accessible in the immediate vicinity of the child and his/her family.

In Yaoundé, in the lower and middle classes, parents from the far northern regions of Cameroon use corn paste and millet dough with a garnish similar to that served with cocoyam, i.e. sauces made from leaves, peanuts, tomatoes, okra, etc., and a mixture of other foods such as rice, tomatoes, and tomato paste.

There are also cultural representations pertaining to meals that will strengthen children's bodies. According to our respondents, local foods make children strong while so-called 'White food'—understood here as all commercial flours—would make them soft, fat and fragile. The discourses linked the child's body to the harshness of the environment and the living conditions to which he/she could be exposed. Children therefore have to be robust in order to be adapted to these future conditions. Parents hence metaphorically prepare their children for the harshness of life.

⏩ From 1 year old – the family pot

The child's main meal is that of the family. For the early age group, breakfast consists of commercial formula milk in which bread or biscuits are dipped. Mothers may blend in commercial flours when their children refuse to eat this preparation.

Children of medium and modest social class families often eat semi-liquid porridge as a snack, usually consisting of home-made preparations: corn flour, soy flour, peanut paste, durum wheat flour paste, etc. The dishware used for children at this age is generally no longer the focus of special care.

The midday meal is hot and solid and exactly what the other members of the family eat. Meat is sometimes minced before being given to the child. At 1 year old, the child is therefore a full fledged 'human' member of the kinship circle and he/she can partake in the family meal. Dishes eaten by grown-ups are considered nourishing and fortifying for children at this age.

⏩ Conclusion: the pot as symbol of children's attachment to the group

This research on the eating patterns of young children in two Cameroonian capitals revealed that the diets of young urban dwellers are at a crossroads—influenced by the opening up of families to new forms of media-promoted food sociality and by their respect for the value of food as a heritage from the elders.

Childrens' integration into the social fabric is at issue with regard to the diversified feeding practices for young children. Food therefore does not only have a biological function but also fulfils a social function, i.e. commensality and integration of the child into the group. As the child eats like and shares the same dishes as the others, he/she is considered as a humanized being, i.e. having left the intermediary 'half-human/half-genie' world to join the human world, and as a socialized being. The food shared by all family members is cooked in a common pot. This pot therefore assimilates the child into the group, while the food it contains is assimilated by the child.

⏩ References

Bessière J. (Ed.), 2012. *Innovation et patrimoine alimentaire en espace rural*. Versailles, Quæ, 155 p.

Certeau M. (de), 1990. *L'invention du quotidien 1. Arts de faire*. Paris, Gallimard, 416 p.

Certeau M. (de), Giard L., Mayol P., 1994. *L'invention du quotidien 2. Habiter, cuisiner*. Paris, Gallimard, 448 p.

Garine I. (de), 1996. Savoir nutritionnel chez les Massa du Cameroun. *In: Médicaments et aliments: approche ethnopharmacologique*. Schroeder E., Balansard G., Cabalion C., Fleurentin J., Mazars G. (dir.), Paris, Orstom: 63-68.

National Institute of Statistics, 2011. *Enquête démographique et de santé et à indicateurs multiples*. https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr260/fr260.pdf (accessed on 08/05/2019).

National Institute of Statistics of Cameroon, 2014. *Enquête camerounaise auprès des ménages (ECAM 4) : Rapports des études thématiques*. http://www.statistics-cameroon.org/news.php?id=393 (accessed on 29/11/2019).

Erny P., 1990. *L'enfant dans la pensée traditionnelle de l'Afrique noire*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 306 p.

Hubert A., 2006. *Nourritures du corps, nourritures de l'âme. Émotions, représentations, exploitations*. http://www.lemangeurocha.com/fileadmin/images/sciences_humaines/_ANNIE_HUBERT_Nourriture_et__motions_0106.pdf (accessed on 08/11/2017).

Poulain J.-P., 2002. *Sociologies de l'alimentation. Les mangeurs et l'espace social alimentaire*. Paris, PUF, 286 p. English version: Poulain, J.P., 2017. *The Sociology of Food. Eating and the Place of Food in Society*. London, Bloomsburry Academic, 312 p.

Pradelles de Latour Dejean C.H., 1979. La symbolique des rites de la naissance chez les Bangwa au Cameroun. *Enfance*, 3-4: 237-240.

Querre M., 2003. Quand le lait devient enjeu social: le cas de la société peule dans le Séno (Burkina Faso). *Anthropology of food [online]*, 2, September 2003, http://aof.revues.org/324 (accessed on 07/11/2017).

Rosny E. (de), 2000. Le cas de l'enfant qui voulait rester ancêtre. *In: L'enfant ancêtre*. Nathan T. (Ed.), Paris, La pensée sauvage: 115-134.

Schaal B., Delaunay - El Allam M., Soussignan R., 2008. Emprises maternelles sur les goûts et les dégoûts de l'enfant: mécanismes et paradoxes. *Enfance*, 3(60): 219-230.

Stébé J.-M., Marchal H., 2010. *La sociologie urbaine*. Paris, PUF, 127 p.

Van Gennep A., 1960 (2004). *The rites of passage*. London, Routledge, 125 p.

⏩ Acknowledgements

This research was carried out as part of a collaboration contract between UCAC, CIRAD and Danone Nutricia Research, which aimed to highlight food styles among children aged 0 to 3 years in African cities. The author would like to thank Ms Ghisleine Ouokouomi Djouonang and Ms Anne Laurence Hye Ndindjock, MSc students in Project Management and Development in Africa, who contributed to the collection of ethnographic data in Douala and Yaoundé. This chapter also benefited from the criticism and comments of pediatricians and nutritionists attending the feedback workshops in Abidjan (July 2013) and Yaoundé (March 2014).

Chapter 12

Modern culinary traditions for precarious times. Food insecurity and everyday practices among poor households in Mexico City

Ayari G. Pasquier Merino

Summary. This research focused on the food situation of poor households in Mexico City and specifically on women's coping strategies to meet their families' food needs under growing economic insecurity. The survey highlighted the cooking techniques used by a group of women to blend commercial ingredients into everyday dishes to satisfy family expectations in terms of taste, appearance, and texture relative to 'traditional' food dishes. This chapter shows how these techniques are gradually changing the array of everyday dishes served in Mexico City—a phenomenon described as a process of building 'modern food traditions for precarious times'.

Introduction

Mexico has been undergoing accelerated urbanization in recent decades, in line with global trends. According to the latest census, 77% of the Mexican population lives in communities of over 2,500 inhabitants, 62% in cities of over 15,000 inhabitants and 47% in cities of over 100,000 inhabitants[1]. Urbanization has taken place in Mexico without sufficient planning (Pírez, 2013)—like in many other countries of the Global South—which has generated major management challenges and multiple everyday problems for city dwellers. Rural migrants often enter the urban labour market via precarious informal jobs. At least a quarter of the country's urban population consequently experiences food shortages due to food procurement difficulties. It is estimated that 68% of the Mexican population is living in food poverty. (Coneval, 2014).

This research focused on the interplay between change and continuity, which is part of the daily food experience in urban areas in the Global South, where social inequality rates are increasing. In this setting, we sought to gain insight into the

1. Source: INEGI (*Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Geografia*), *Encuesta intercensal*, 2015. See: https://www.inegi.org.mx/programas/intercensal/2015/ (accessed on 30/11/2019).

 DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/c12

impacts of globalization of the food system on the food practices of people living in poverty. More generally, we looked at the food insecurity conditions in cities—an issue that has gained prominence since the global economic crisis of 2008. To this end, this research analysed the food practices of a group of women in Mexico City, who had been singled out by a food programme[2] as belonging to food-insecure households. The strategies that these women used to overcome food supply and preparation problems helped identify the tensions between growing economic constraints, family expectations regarding food taste and quality, dietary recommendations from social programmes and the medical sector, and the constraints of a everyday life exacerbated by various work and family obligations.

This research was designed on the basis of an ethnographic survey carried out during the 2016-2017 period that mainly involved daily monitoring in two social centres for beneficiaries of the *Sin Hambre* programme[3] run by the federal government until 2018. Groups of women beneficiaries meet in these centres to receive in-kind benefits, deal with administrative matters and attend training sessions on issues related to food and family health. We also conducted 50 interviews and accompanied 10 women to the places where they purchased their food and to their homes at meal preparation times. Moreover, we analysed a set of recipes written by the programme beneficiaries as part of a family diet brainstorming session carried out at the request of the programme managers.

⏩ Insecurity and diets in Mexico City – description of the research context

Mexico's contemporary food situation has been shaped by policy decisions implemented since the 1980s that have fostered export-oriented agriculture to the detriment of conventional distribution chains, while prioritizing the supply of staple foods from the international market[4], and promoting trade deregulation and direct foreign investment. In an inflationary economic climate, this international market food supply dependence has prompted a steady rise in consumer prices and a sharp decline in purchasing power[5]. Table 12.1 shows the increase in the value of certain foods in the basic food basket since 1992, especially after the NAFTA free trade

2. *Sin Hambre* ('without hunger') is a Mexican government programme that was launched as part of the National Crusade Against Hunger, i.e. the government's main food security initiative for the 2012-2018 period. This latter initiative was launched after several indicators showed a significant increase in food poverty in the country.

3. This programme provides in-kind benefits to families identified as vulnerable through a survey. Those in the Mexico Without Hunger National Program are mostly women, and each one receives a bi-monthly card worth MXN1,276, i.e. around €60.

4. During the 2009-2011 period, the contribution of imports to the domestic food supply was: 89% for rice, 80% for yellow corn, 51% for wheat, 40% for pork, 35% for beef, 18% for poultry meat, 14% for beans, 13% for milk, 10% for sugar and 4% for white corn, which collectively accounted for 75% of Mexico's per-capita food energy (energy from food intake) supply (SAGARPA/FAO, 2013).

5. Over the last 10 years, the estimated monthly per-capita value of the national urban basic food basket has increased at an average annual rate of 5%, i.e. higher than the annual increase in the minimum wage and at least a percentage point higher than the inflation rate.

agreement was endorsed in 1994—this increase has been particularly marked for beef, vegetables, tubers and fruit, but other staple foods such as corn and wheat have also been affected. The everyday impacts of these trends provide a backdrop to the setting in which this survey was carried out.

Table 12.1: Index of current food prices in 2015-2017 (1992-1994 = 100)

Starchy products		Animal products		Other products	
Corn	1,441	Beef and veal	737	Oil	774
Wheat	1,043	Pork	633	Fruit	670
Rice	656	Processed meat	636	Sugar and honey	923
Other cereals	639	Chicken meat	561	Food prepared for home consumption	630
Tubers and vegetables	850	Fresh fish	766	Bottled water	717
Legumes	753	Dairy products	741	Non-alcoholic beverages – juices and soft drinks	735
		Eggs	793	Food and beverages consumed outside the home	629

The table shows the current 3-year average food price index for the 2015-2017 period compared to the baseline index calculated for the 1992-1994 period.

Mexico City is the capital, as well as the political and economic centre of the country, while also being one of the largest urban areas in the world—covering around 7,850 km^2 with some 21 million inhabitants. Mexico City enjoys a privileged position relative to the rest of the country yet, according to official data for 2014, 723,300 people (8.2% of the population) suffer from food poverty and 2,037,104 people (23.1% of the population) claim to have insufficient food access for economic reasons[6].

⏩ Daily food procurement and preparation practices of a group of women living in poverty in Mexico City

Food is distributed in Mexico City through a broad range of outlets, including hypermarkets and supermarkets, covered markets, grocery stores, street markets, mini-markets and small grocery shops. Our research revealed that although women are increasingly entering the labour market, they are still also generally responsible for household chores and childcare. Moreover, women are supposed to provide their families with tasty, varied and nutritious food, and must find ways to do this despite their economic and time constraints.

6. This is according to a food insecurity indicator based on module of questions on the perception of a lack of access to food for economic reasons from the National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure (ENIGH, for its Spanish acronym).

The women interviewed preferred to buy food weekly at the local market and supplement this with small daily purchases in grocery shops near their homes. However, these strategies varied according to the extent of their income and the time they had available, as the following testimony shows:

> "I buy my vegetables at the market on Sundays. They're cheaper there. I buy all my vegetables at the market when I can, and then I don't have to go to the corner grocery shop. It's really cheaper at the market, I can buy a kilo of tomatoes, a kilo of onions, and it suits my budget, whereas at the grocery shop, for a few tomatoes and onions, I've already spent it all. [...] What's more, the market has more varieties, *quelites* [edible herbs] and purslane, which allows me to vary so that I don't always have to serve the same thing. [...] But you need time and money to go to the market because it's not worth just going there to buy two or three things, it doesn't even offset the transport cost." (Susana, Beneficiary Service Center (CAB), San Francisco, Mexico City, 30 March 2017)

In families with fewer resources and irregular income, women manage their food supply on a day-to-day basis, or even by making small purchases throughout the day in local shops, which considerably increases the product price, especially fresh products.

An overwhelming majority of the households we surveyed could not reduce their rent and transport expenditures. Faced with rising food prices, poor families tend to opt for cheap commercial foods—to the detriment of food quality—whose prices have risen less than those of fresh produce.

With regard to the selection of ingredients for daily meals, the research findings showed that legumes, various fruits and vegetables, as well as meats are being replaced by canned goods and other industrially processed foods, which are less expensive but often also less nutritious. This trend was documented by the National Health and Nutrition Survey (ENSANUT, 2012)[7] and the National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure (ENIGH, 2014), which also reported an increase in the consumption of processed foods and soft drinks. In this context, the decrease in the consumption of corn, which has lost its prime place in meals and become a mere side dish, should be noted (Bertran Vilà, 2016). In addition, the industrially produced tortillas (corn cakes) consumed in cities have not undergone nixtamalization, a process that has been used in Mexico since pre-Hispanic times whereby corn kernels are ground and then cooked with water and quicklime. This process boosts the nutritional value of the corn, provides about 30-fold more calcium while facilitating iron uptake[8]. There has also been a decrease in black bean consumption (SAGARPA/FAO, 2013). The tortilla-bean combination was actually a daily staple and a key nutritional element for Mesoamerican communities.

Among the women interviewed, carbohydrates were provided via the consumption of tortillas (commercial), bread, rice and pasta, which often substituted vegetables in soup preparation. The interviews revealed a steady decrease in the consumption of fresh foods, especially fruits, vegetables and meats due to their high price. In the

7. Ensanut 2012, Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública.
8. For a more detailed description of the chemical nixtamalization process, see: Paredes López *et al*. (2009).

most disadvantaged households, vegetables (tomatoes, peppers and onions) were only consumed in sauces, and sometimes even substituted by cheaper and quicker canned preparations. Fruit consumption was also low. Mothers often reserved fruit for their children, especially when medical services had identified them as having special nutritional needs. These special-needs foods were often consumed outside the home "so that the others wouldn't be envious". The main sources of animal protein were eggs, chicken and, to a lesser extent, pork. Processed meats, canned tuna and sardines were also frequently consumed, whereas milk was mainly earmarked for children and pregnant women.

The survey revealed how these women incorporated new ingredients into their everyday dishes, which were considered traditional by the women and their families. An analysis of the compiled information showed that women who managed meals adapted their dishes in different ways to cope with the daily economic restrictions. We pinpointed three types of strategies: 1) reducing consumption of the most expensive products, 2) replacing them with cheaper similar products, and 3) adding carbohydrates to make the dishes more hearty. These strategies were often applied simultaneously for the same dish.

Beef is the ingredient most often omitted from daily meals and was generally replaced by pork or chicken. If money was in short supply, only small quantities of the cheapest cuts—morsels of meat, offal, chicken feet and gizzards—were purchased to add flavour.

> "Well, I'm not going to tell you that we don't eat chicken, but at the market I only buy chicken pieces, offal, gizzards and legs, which is the cheapest. And that's only when we can afford it—it gives taste to the broth." (Modesta, CAB San Pedro Martir, Mexico City, 28 October 2016)

This strategy was also implemented so that the preparations would look (visually) a little more like what the family would expect to see on their plates, as illustrated by the following comment of one of the interviewed women.

> "Tomatoes are getting expensive, they've gone up to 40 pesos a kilo (€2), so I say to myself let's buy two tomatoes to at least give some colour to the soup. You have to be imaginative." (Monserrat, CAB Chimalhuacan, Mexico City, 25 January 2017)

The interviews revealed that soya was one of the most common meat substitutes. Soya was first introduced in Mexico in the 1930s, but was not widely adopted in popular households prior to being included in food packages[9] that the government handed out to the poorest families about two decades ago. This strategy was backed by a recipe-supported awareness campaign geared towards boosting soya acceptance amongst consumers, particularly via its inclusion in food aid packages. The following interview excerpt illustrates some of the strategies commonly used for including soya in everyday meal preparations, which exemplifies a situation that was documented throughout the survey. The inclusion of soya in the diet was considered practical by many of the women interviewed, who stressed its low price and high protein content. This message was reiterated throughout the interviews when the social workers handed them the food-aid packages.

9. These generally include non-perishable products such as oil, black beans, rice, powdered milk, instant coffee, tuna, pasta, etc.

> "Soya has no taste, but cooking it changes everything. Otherwise if I give it to them to eat like that they won't want it. If I tell my husband "I'm going to make a soya stew", he'll tell me to forget it because he's not used to eating soya. Yet if I serve him soya meatballs with a small piece of chorizo or his 20 pesos worth of minced meat, he doesn't even notice and I haven't spent too much. But you have to be organised and prepare the food before the children come home from school, because if you get back just in time to make lunch it won't be good. We often don't have enough time, but with a little ingenuity we always manage to prepare a good cheap meal. We're just short of time." (Miriam, La Magdalena Contreras, Mexico City, 23 March 2017)

Very low quality industrial sausage, with a high content of fat, sodium and various chemical preservatives, is also regularly used as a meat alternative. The following account shows that women are aware of the nutritional deficiencies of such products, but they also consider them as a resource that can be tapped when needed and tailored to suit their family's tastes.

> "Maybe I can't give them their steaks, but if I buy 10 pesos worth of sausage and serve it with rice [...]. I know that sausage is not very nutritious, I try not to serve it to them often, but it helps me out during the week and they like it cooked Mexican style or with small potatoes." (Rosa, CAB San Pedro Martir, Mexico City, 17 August 2017)

Note also the growing prominence canned food has acquired in families' daily diets, especially tuna and prepared sauces, which often replace vegetables. As can also be seen from the following account, in all cases these ingredients go through a modification process to tailor them for incorporation into so-called 'traditional' preparations, while also fulfilling families' taste expectations.

> "I can't give them expensive foods, but we know how to substitute them. Since I can't buy fish to make my *ceviche*, I can get cans of flaked tuna. It's good if you cook it well—you add onions, fresh coriander... You just have to work at it." (Rosalinda, La Magdalena Contreras, Mexico City, 26 April 2017)

Finally, it is common to add rice, flour or ground biscuits while frying the food to ensure that the prepared dishes will be sufficient to relieve hunger.

> "What I've been doing for a long time, which works, is to put two cans of tuna—you can find cheap ones—lots of oats, and one or two eggs. Then you make fritters in sauce. You fry them first, so that it makes more and tastes better and then I add water [...]. That way you give them fish in sauce, but with the oats and the two cans of tuna it's enough." (Miriam, La Magdalena Contreras, Mexico City, 23 March 2017)

Table 12.2 provides examples of foods consumed throughout the day by families, highlighting the incorporation of industrially processed foods in the daily diet and their poor nutritional quality.

A lack of time is one factor that often hampers food preparation. In this respect, changes in the family meal preparation process are intensified when women who buy and prepare food enter the labour market[10]. The impacts are further exacerbated when spatial segregation and difficult access to public transport prevail.

---

10. In Mexico City, 40.8% of the economically active population is female, corresponding to 43.8% of women over the age of 12. However, these figures do not take into account informal economic activities, which were the most common in this case study.

Table 12.2: Examples of foods consumed throughout the day (based on information gathered during the field survey)

Morning	Fried rice and eggs, fried tortillas with canned tomato sauce; ham, tuna or egg sandwich with black beans; scrambled eggs with sausage and nopals; Mexican style sausages (with chopped tomatoes and onions) and potatoes; canned cereal with milk.
Afternoon	Fried pork rind in canned green sauce with purslane; chicken stock cube with legs and gizzards, vegetables, rice; pork in canned green sauce with black beans; scrambled eggs in canned tomato sauce; canned flaked tuna; soy meatballs with beans; canned Mexican-style sardines with rice; canned vegetable salad with mayonnaise; soy 'tripe'.
Evening	Egg or head cheese and bean sandwich; scrambled eggs with ham or sausages; milk with sweet pastries or commercial biscuits.

⏩ Precarity, daily life and new food traditions in Mexico City

This study reports on fresh food supply and access difficulties in poor Mexico City neighbourhoods, where commercial processed food consumption has become a cheap strategy to meet daily family food needs. This phenomenon is the result of various concomitant causes that frame actors' daily decisions. Some of them are in line with global trends, such as food market globalization and the increased supply of industrialized food, which is now almost constantly available everywhere. Others more specifically concern the rising economic precarity throughout Mexico, the steady increase in the price of fresh food and the inadequacy of distribution chains, particularly in certain working-class neighbourhoods. Finally, women's entry into the labour market under precarious conditions, the lack of public services and working class marginalization are all factors that account for the difficulties encountered in procuring fresh food.

Yet this does not imply that these people endure their situations passively, nor that their cooking is reduced to unfulfilled needs or absences, as Bourdieu's (1984) 'taste of necessity' characterization might suggest. This research revealed that—even in contexts where the vast majority of city dwellers have little hope of emerging from precarity, such as in the poor neighbourhoods of large Latin American cities—the kitchen is a creative space where 'traditional' food is constantly being renegotiated, along with the forms and representations that 'adequate food' may have. The food choices of the poorest populations reflect economic constraints but also depend on strategies that cannot be defined solely in terms of scarcity (Régnier and Masullo, 2009). Moreover, they depend on "attitudes, habits, relations to practices, strategies and choices—in short, 'tastes'" (Grignon and Passeron, 1989: 47).

This research showed that certain industrial food products have gradually become common ingredients in the preparation of everyday dishes considered 'traditional', i.e. preserving the Mexican culinary structure (underpinned by sauce-based dishes), appearance and taste. These ingredients are replacing hard-to-get foods, but they

have to be processed through a series of culinary operations geared towards ‘domesticating’ them (Bertran Vilà, 2017) so that they will be recognized as part of the flavour, appearance and texture of everyday dishes to which families are accustomed. Moreover, social sharing and gratification are also associated with some of these foods. These are identified as tasty foods and treats that are ‘worth sharing amongst the family’ to offset the everyday efforts and lack of opportunities to meet other cravings—so food is therefore sometimes a space of freedom in circumstances jointly hindered by economic and social constraints.

The result is a process that could be described as the construction of modern culinary traditions for precarious times. The idea is to highlight the vibrant character of tradition and the creative nature of daily culinary preparation in popular settings. Far from being a mechanical reaction to necessity (Bourdieu, 1984), the preparation of dishes is a space for accommodating tastes and livelihoods. Women’s capacities and initiatives have a key role in this process by broadening the scope of food alternatives via sourcing strategies and culinary practices.

This study also demonstrated that, although the contemporary food supply and distribution system has led to more varied and stable food availability and thus to an apparent supply homogenization, there are substantial differences in the price and quality of the products. The inclusion of low-cost industrially processed products is a practical and affordable strategy to fulfil poor families’ daily dietary needs. But, in this context, many of these poor women use foods with a high content of fats, sodium, sugars and other additives that generally have negative health impacts when consumed on a daily basis. The resulting diseases caused could therefore be viewed as dietary manifestations of the social inequality mechanisms intrinsic to the global food system[11].

References

Bertran Vilà M., 2016. *Incertidumbre y vida cotidiana. Alimentación y salud en la Ciudad de México*. Editorial UOC, Universidad Auntónoma Metropolitana, Xocimilco, 242 p.

Bourdieu P., 1984. *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 613 p.

Coneval, 2014. Medición de la pobreza en México y en las entidades federativas 2012. *Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social*, 30: 120.

Drewnowski A., Darmon N., 2005. The economics of obesity: dietary energy density and energy cost. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 82(1): 265-273.

Drewnowsky A., Specter S.E., 2004. Poverty and obesity: The role of energy density and energy costs. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 79: 6-16.

Fischler C., 1990. *L’Homnivore*. Paris, Éditions Odile Jacob, 414 p.

Grignon C., Passeron J.-C., 1989. *Le savant et le populaire. Misérabilisme et populisme en sociologie et en littérature*. Paris, Gallimard/Le Seuil, 260 p.

Paredes López O., Guevara Lara F., Bello Pérez L.A., 2009. La Nixtamalización y el valor nutritivo del maíz. *Revista de cultura científica*, 92: 60-70.

11. A more detailed review of the topic can be found in Rivera (2013), Drewnowsky and Darmon (2005), Drewnosky and Specter (2004). This has also been the focus of research in developed countries, see Fischler (1990) and Poulain and Tiberius (2008).

Pírez P., 2013. Urbanization and Urban Services Policy in Latin America. *Andamios*, 10(22): 377-378.

Poulain J.-P., Tibère L., 2008. Alimentation et précarité. Considérer la pluralité des situations. *Anthropology of Food*, 6: 895-97.

Régnier F., Masullo A., 2009. Obésité, goûts et consommation. Intégration des normes d'alimentation et appartenance sociale. *Revue française de sociologie*, 50(4): 747-773.

Rivera Dommarco J.Á., 2013. *Obesidad en México: recomendaciones para una política de Estado.* Dirección General de Publicaciones y Fomento Editorial, Instituto de Salud Pública, 536 p.

Sagarpa/FAO, 2013. *Diagnóstico del sector rural y pesquero: identificacion de la problemática del sector agropecuario y pesquero de Mexico 2012*. Mexico City, Sagarpa/FAO, 86 p.

⏩ Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the UNAM Post Doctoral Scholarship Program for supporting this research over the September 2015 to August 2017 period, as well as the PROSPERA Social Inclusion Program and its beneficiaries who devoted their time to interviews. She also thanks Miriam Bertran and all members of the permanent seminar of the Food Observatory in Mexico for their comments throughout the research process, in addition to the anonymous evaluators and the *Eating in the City* symposium and book editorial team for their help in enhancing this chapter.

Conclusion – what insight emerges to enhance research on transformations in urban food and eating habits?

Audrey Soula, Chelsie Yount-André, Olivier Lepiller, Nicolas Bricas

The authors of the chapters of this book—most of whom are from Africa, Latin America and Asia—have taken readers on a tour of these three continents. What insight emerges from the viewpoints of these researchers from the Global South on urban food patterns in continents where high diversity prevails, as amply illustrated in the different chapters? Three main interpretations are evident from the topics studied and the outlooks proposed that challenge the stances usually taken—primarily from the Global North—on foodscapes in cities of the South.

A first interpretation corresponds to the question we posed in the Introduction: how do food consumers living in cities of the Global South cope with the myriad normative injunctions they face in their everyday lives? The chapters in the first part of the book provide several insights into this question.

A so-called 'gastro-anomie' (Fischler, 1979) and 'food cacophony' (Fischler, 1990) have long been postulated in Western countries that point to a proliferation of contradictory standards—dietetic, gastronomic, hedonic, commercial, environmental, political and moral, etc.—in turn diminishing the legitimacy that usually frames food initiatives (Poulain, 2002). Ongoing research is focused on the anxiety and concerns arising from this legitimacy loss, as well as on the impacts of the situation in terms of morals and significance (Coveney, 2006).

The chapters in the first part of this book—as well as Elisa Lomet's box illustrating that the definition of 'local products' by development agents in Togo does not make sense to food consumers—highlight further implications of the proliferation of contradictory injunctions. This proliferation is splendidly illustrated in the chapter by Liliana Martínez-Lomelí, which reveals the glaring contradictions between the promotion of 'traditional' or 'authentic' cuisine and the nutritional discourse in Mexico City. While these contradictions may obviously generate guilt, they also lead to practical-normative arrangements which, like the 'tactics' studied by Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol (1980), are geared towards managing the tensions of daily life. The Moroccan women studied by Hayat Zirari and the Algerian women

DOI: 10.35690/978-2-7592-3282-6/cc

studied by Mohamed Mebtoul and colleagues demonstrate the impact of judgements on their food and culinary practices despite their attempts to loosen the normative framework. These judgements—which seem to mainly emanate from men, mothers and mothers-in-law—are also a source of guilt. Yet these urban Moroccan and Algerian women, who are called or forced into out-of-home activities and constantly have to cope with a very heavy mental burden (as stressed by M. Mebtoul), also adopt tactics to work around these accumulated constraints, e.g. by modifying the temporal organization of meals during the day (as in the Moroccan case studied by H. Zirari). In India, where domestic food is cherished and anything cooked outside the home is generally not trustworthy, the young generation is forging trust relationships with brands and street vendors through loyalty, as Shagufa Kapadia shows. Finally, this part of the book suggests that the proliferation of normative injunctions and the resulting tensions may generate guilt and anxiety as well as workarounds, the opening of new practical spaces, attempts to achieve consistency, but also rejection or revolt. We note that eaters faced with the proliferation of normative injunctions have leeway which—through very ordinary practices—is a factor of social change.

The second interpretation that emerges from the book concerns the advent of the urban 'foodscape' concept (Morgan and Sonino, 2008). The latter, developed especially by geographers, helps distinguish between the dichotomous vision pitting consumers with knowledge, purchasing power and cultural habits against a diversified supply.

In line with these approaches, the question addressed in the second part of the book could be summarized as follows: how do urban eaters' practices relate to the spatio-temporal dimensions of urban food where the supply—which can take many different forms—is only one of the components? While globalization studies have focused on the determination of consumer food practices by large global corporations (Ritzer (2004) and the 'Macdonaldization'; Wrigley (2000) and the 'Walmartization'; Popkin, 2014), the chapters in this section showcase the interactive nature of the relationship between eaters and food sources. They also underline the crucial role of the informal economy—outside of urban planning and the strategies of major economic stakeholders—in the progression of foodscapes in cities of the Global South.

Several of the book's contributors are especially interested in street food as a response to the impoverishment of space, time and economic capacity and the concomitant precarious nature of work, and also as a support for new forms of social and cultural life. In the Congo, Yolande Berton-Ofouémé shows how street food provides an environment that enables people to eat and maintain their dignity despite their extremely precarious situation. In Jakarta, Laura Arciniegas illustrates the invention of new commensal spaces that are larger than households and where solidarity and social interaction flourish, in addition to trade exchanges, thus enabling individual freedom with some degree of social control. Beyond this informality, Jakarta's *warung makan* also exemplify the sociocultural variability that prevails regarding the boundaries between public and private or domestic spaces, although formulating them in these terms may be questionable. Street food also offers an opportunity to learn about the food of others, a means of mainstreaming certain recipes or foods into our heritage, while even promoting them for tourism. The foodscape therefore does not only have material and physical dimensions, it is also social and symbolic, as illustrated by Anindita Dasgupta and colleagues in their investigation of multiethnic

areas in Kuala Lumpur. Jingjing Ma's study on beverage consumption practices in Chinese cities highlights the broad range of different consumption situations that jointly depend on the physical space, time of day or week and social group (family in the morning, colleagues at the office at lunchtime, friends at other times, etc.). These situations delineate repertoires and possibilities, while generating specific practical routines. Foodscapes shape practices and *vice versa*, as Carolyn Steel (2013) has very clearly shown. This co-shaping is particularly evident in the light of the status of food in urban food eaters' movements. In Jakarta, *warung makan* are partly underpinned by village food sociability involving broad-ranging family circles and affinities, while offering practical flexibility associated with the often individualized movements of urban life. In Malaysia, catering spaces that facilitate interethnic conviviality mirror intercultural hubs, offering consumers a spatiotemporal venue for a shared meal before returning home or to work. Moreover, in China, urban transport seems to provide spaces of greater normative flexibility that are conducive to the adoption of new consumption practices by the younger generations (soft drinks). Food is discussed in this sense in these chapters while also taking its spatial dimension into account—it is thus a way of relating to and interacting with the sociocultural environment, i.e. not simply an activity geared towards mustering resources to meet needs.

The third interpretation focuses on cuisine—where culinary practice is considered as a joint technical and symbolic activity with its attendant category systems—and on its evolutionary factors: what are the driving forces underlying the transformation of urban cuisine?

For several years, many publications have focused on the emergence of a 'middle class' in cities of the Global South (Kharas, 2010, 2017; Ncube and Lufumpa, 2014). There has been a clear rise in a population segment with a sufficiently comfortable income to participate in the consumer society in many of these countries. Yet this social category—whose scope and relevance have led to particularly stimulating discussions, especially regarding Africa (Kroeker *et al*., 2018)—primarily represents a potential market for companies facing consumption saturation in highly industrialized countries. This new segment of the population is often earmarked as a key player—with respect to demand—in the transformation of food, culinary practices and its markets.

This focus on the middle class does not do justice to the sociological reality that exists in many cities of the Global South, where most people live in precarious or even impoverished conditions (Damon, 2014). The chapters in the last section stress that we should not overlook the fact that the culinary transformations under way also stem from the poorest segments of the population, who are struggling to maintain their dignity. While a middle-class diet is emerging, very low cost 'popular' foods are also on the rise, as Ayari G. Pasquier Merino in Mexico City, Yolande Berton-Ofouémé in Brazzaville (Part 2) and Raphaëlle Héron in Ouagadougou clearly show. These chapters illustrate how dishes and recipes are relevant even when resources are in short supply.

They also highlight that little is needed to build an urban attachment and identity on this basis. Through emblematic cases of inventions of typically urban meals or dishes such as the *garba* in Abidjan, as described by N'da Amenan Gisèle Sédia and colleagues, *bâbenda* in Ouagadougou, as studied by Raphaëlle Héron, or food

diversification learning as a means of socializing children in Cameroonian cities, as presented by Estelle Kouokam Magne, food is studied as a process, but not one of destruction as the term consumption (*consumere*) may imply, but rather one of construction of social interactions, values and cultures. Cities are often viewed as places where traditional values and rural knowledge are lost, where social ties are destroyed because of individualization, where cultures disappear under the impact of the standardizing globalization trend yet, on the contrary, here we see cities that are creative and innovative via food, even in the most precarious environments.

This book on food in African, Latin American and Asian cities could have addressed the issue of the dependence of these cities on imports and the price crises they have been experiencing over the past decade, giving rise to the political tensions we are currently experiencing. It could have shown that the advent of supermarkets and multinationals to conquer the new flourishing middle-class market poses a risk of lifestyle and food Westernization promoted by these companies. It could have stressed the reduction in the diversity of agricultural raw materials resulting from industrialization, the loss of traditional cuisines and culinary cultures. It could have focused on the largely documented increase in obesity, cardiovascular diseases and certain cancers, or on the food insecurity situation in *favelas*, slums and other poor neighbourhoods where millions of migrants have fled from rural areas due to insufficient income and a lack of decent living conditions. It could have lamented the problematic sanitary conditions in which these men and women, craftspeople, caterers and street vendors work, and the risks to which they expose consumers.

The chapters in this book do not address the issues that have predominated literature on food in cities in so-called 'developing' countries. They do not draw the same alarming conclusions regarding these generally poor dominated cities, which pool all of the ills of industrial civilization and consumer society at a time when fears of a global collapse are growing.

The book instead largely eludes such catastrophic or accusatory interpretations. Could it be because it is the product of researchers born in these cities of the Global South? Obviously you will have realized that this is our gut feeling. Not that the authors deny these interpretations or overlook the risks, actually most of them are forerunners of change, aware of the importance of their work in improving social, nutritional, economic or environmental situations. Yet their tone differs from what might have been expected. All of them have chosen to show—through food—how tensions and difficulties are experienced, but also how lives, relationships and values are built in cities of the South. Indeed, despite the convergence of problems, people living in these cities thrive, exchange, invent and build.

In doing so, the contributors to this book prompt us to reconsider certain preconceived ideas about food, in relation to poverty, health, the individual responsibility of eaters or the factors that transform food practices and foodscapes. We hope that the empirical elements and interpretations presented here will help fuel the project—formulated by Jean and John Comaroff (2012) and undertaken before them by a few researchers from the Global South—to develop sociological and anthropological theories originating from the South. This contribution is particularly welcome in a climate where studies on food still largely come from Europe and North America. This book garners views forged in and targeting the Global South, and discussed

with researchers from diverse backgrounds gathered in Paris, including the editors of this book. The value of their insight inspires the hope that they will be able to turn their sights more readily towards the Global North in the future, particularly in a more balanced cooperation framework through which the inverted visions proposed by Georges Balandier might be put into practice (1985, 2006).

⏩ References

Balandier G., 1985. *Le détour : pouvoir et modernité*. Paris, Fayard, 270 p.

Balandier G., 2006. Voir ailleurs, pouvoir ici. *Raisons politiques*, 22(2): 15-22.

Certeau M. (de), Giard L., Mayol P., 1980. *L'invention du quotidien. Habiter, cuisiner*. Paris, Union générale d'éditions, 416 p.

Comaroff J., Comaroff J., 2012. Theory from the South: A Rejoinder. *Theorizing the Contemporary. Fieldsights*, February 25, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/theory-from-the-south-a-rejoinder (accessed on 11/11/2019).

Coveney J., 2006. *Food, Morals and Meaning: The Pleasure and Anxiety of Eating*. London, Routledge, 208 p.

Damon J., 2014. Chiffres, approches et paradoxes de la pauvreté urbaine. *Questions de communication*, 25: 143-160.

Fischler C., 1979. Gastro-nomie et gastro-anomie, *Communications*, 31(1): 189-210.

Fischler C., 1990. *L'homnivore : le goût, la cuisine et le corps*. Paris, Odile Jacob, 414 p.

Kharas H., 2010. The Emerging Middle Class in Developing Countries. *OECD Development Center Working Papers*, n° 285, Paris, Éditions OCDE, https://doi.org/10.1787/5kmmp8lncrns-en (accessed on 11/11/2019).

Kharas H., 2017. *The Unprecedented Expansion of the Global Middle Class: An Update*. Washington, Brookings, http://hdl.handle.net/11540/7251 (accessed on 11/11/2019).

Kroeker L., O'Kane D., Scharrer T., 2018. *Middle Classes in Africa. Changing Lives and Conceptual Challenges*. Cham, Palgrave Macmillan published by Springer Nature, 376 p.

Morgan K., Sonnino R., 2010. The Urban Foodscape: World Cities and the New Food Equation. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 3(2): 209-224.

Ncube M., Lufumpa C.L. (Eds.), 2014. *The Emerging Middle Class in Africa*. London, Routledge, 240 p.

Popkin B.M., 2014. Nutrition, Agriculture and the Global Food System in Low and Middle Income Countries. *Food policy*, 47: 91-96.

Poulain J.-P., 2002. *Sociologies de l'alimentation. Les mangeurs et l'espace social alimentaire*. Paris, PUF, 286 p. English version: Poulain, J.P., 2017. *The Sociology of Food. Eating and the Place of Food in Society*. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 312 p.

Ritzer G., 2004. *The McDonaldization of Society: Revised New Century Edition*. Thousand Oaks, Pine Forge Press, 328 p.

Steel C., 2013. *Hungry city: How food shapes our lives*. London, Random House, 400 p.

Wrigley N., 2000. Four Myths in Search of Foundation: The Restructuring of US Food Retailing and its Implications for Commercial Cultures. *In: Commercial Cultures: Economies, Practices, Spaces.* Jackson P., Lowe M., Miller D., Mort F. (Eds.), Oxford, Berg: 221-44.

List of contributors

Francis AKINDÈS
Université Alassane Ouattara,
Département d'anthropologie et de sociologie,
Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire
fakindes@uao.edu.ci

Laura ARCINIEGAS
Certop UMR 5044 CNRS,
Université de Toulouse, France,
CIRAD, UMR MOISA, Montpellier, France
arciniegas.l.a@gmail.com

Hamdia BELGHACHEM
Université Oran 2, Unité de recherche
en sciences sociales et santé, Oran, Algeria
mebtoul@netcourrier.com

Yolande BERTON-OFOUÉMÉ
Université Marien Ngouabi, Brazzaville,
Republic of the Congo
yolandeofouemeberton@gmail.com

Malika BOUCHENAK
Université Oran 1 Ahmed Ben Bella,
Laboratoire de nutrition clinique
et métabolique, Faculté des sciences
de la nature, Oran, Algeria
bouchenak.malika@lncm-univoran.com

Imad BOUREGHDA
Association algérienne pour la promotion
de la nutrition de l'enfant et de la mère
(AAPNEM), Algiers, Algeria
imad.boureghda@gmail.com

Karim BOUZIANE NEDJADI
CHU d'Oran, service de pédiatrie C,
Faculté de médecine d'Oran, Algeria
n_nedjadi@hotmail.com

Nicolas BRICAS
Université de Montpellier, CIRAD,
UMR MOISA, France, and UNESCO Chair
on World Food Systems
nicolas.bricas@cirad.fr

Nabil CHAOUI
Private paediatrition, Algiers, Algeria
nabilchaoui01@hotmail.com

Anindita DASGUPTA
Head-School of Liberal Arts and Sciences,
Taylor's University, Lakeside Campus
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
anindita.dasgupta@taylors.edu.my

Jean-Pierre HASSOUN
Institut de recherche interdisciplinaire
sur les enjeux sociaux (IRIS-EHESS)
jp.hassoun@gmail.com

Raphaëlle HÉRON
Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne,
UMR développement et sociétés (DEVSOC)
et Onyx Développement (Groupe Nutriset)
raphaelleheron@gmail.com

Shagufa KAPADIA
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda,
Vadodara, Department of Human Development
and Family Studies, Gujarat, India
shagufa@gmail.com

Amoin Georgette KONAN
Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny,
UFR Biosciences, Cocody Abidjan,
Côte d'Ivoire, and Centre suisse de recherches
scientifiques en Côte d'Ivoire
georgette.konan@csrs.ci

Estelle KOUOKAM MAGNE
Université catholique d'Afrique centrale,
Institut catholique de Yaoundé, Cameroon
esthelka@yahoo.com

Olivier LEPILLER
Université de Montpellier, CIRAD,
UMR MOISA, France
olivier.lepiller@cirad.fr

Élisa LOMET
Private nutritional socioanthropology consultant,
Toulouse, France
elisa.lomet@gmail.com

Jingjing MA
Sociology consultant,
Meide Health technology Co,
Ltd, Guangzhou, Chine
jingjingma@outlook.fr

Liliana MARTÍNEZ-LOMELÍ
Centre Edgar Morin - EHESS,
Director of the Fundación para
la Alimentación y el Desarrollo (FUNALID)
liliana_lomeli@yahoo.com.mx

Mohamed MEBTOUL
Université Oran 2, Unité de recherche
en sciences sociales et santé, Algeria
mebtoul@netcourrier.com

Ayari G. PASQUIER MERINO
Coordinación Universitaria para
la Sustentabilidad, SDI-UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), Mexico
ayari.pasquier@unam.mx

Logendra S. PONNIAH
Taylor's University, Head of School,
School of Education, Faculty of Social
Sciences and Leisure Management,
Selangor, Malaysia
LogendraStanley.Ponniah@taylors.edu.my

Ouassila SALEMI
Université de Mostaganem, Unité de
recherche en sciences sociales et santé, Algeria
ouassila.salemi@gmail.com

N'da Amenan Gisèle SÉDIA
Université Alassane Ouattara, UNESCO
Chair in Bioethics, Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire
giselesedia@uao.edu.ci

Sivapalan SELVADURAI
Universiti Kebangsaan, Centre for Research
in Development, Social and Environment,
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Selangor, Malaysia
sivap02@gmail.com

Audrey SOULA
Université de Montpellier, CIRAD,
UMR MOISA, France
audrey.soula@cirad.fr

Chelsie YOUNT-ANDRÉ
Université de Montpellier, CIRAD,
UMR MOISA, France
chelsie.yount@cirad.fr

Hayat ZIRARI
Université Hassan II, Faculté des lettres
et sciences humaines Ben Msik,
Casablanca, Morocco
hzirari@gmail.com

Layout: Hélène Bonnet Studio 9
Print: IsiPrint
Print deposit on publication: December 2020

This book explores changes in eating habits in African, Latin American and Asian cities. It reveals—through studies on city dwellers' food practices and representations—the inadequacy of an analytical approach to these changes in terms of Westernization, standardization, transition or convergence towards a widely applicable model.

Surveys conducted in cities of the Global South revealed that city dwellers are inventing new forms of eating based on a multitude of local and/or exogenous sources. Abidjan *garba* and Ouagadougou *bâbenda* are novel dishes that exemplify this urban food invention trend.

The authors of the chapters are humanities and social science specialists from Africa, Latin America and Asia who conduct research in these regions. They invite readers to take a closer look at urban food in the Global South—the picture that emerges is far removed from preconceived ideas regarding poverty, health and the individual responsibility of food eaters.

This book should be of interest to a scientific audience of teachers and food systems professionals, as well as any readers interested in urban social and cultural dynamics and the development of sociological and anthropological theories from the Global South.

Audrey Soula is an anthropologist at CIRAD (UMR MOISA). After focusing initial research on the issue of migration and minorities in Japan, she is currently studying changes in food habits in urban areas in Morocco, while investigating various aspects including food heritage and gender.

Chelsie Yount-André is a food anthropologist at CIRAD (UMR MOISA). Her research deals with transnational families in Dakar and Paris, the socialization of children through food sharing and economic morals.

Olivier Lepiller is a sociologist at CIRAD (UMR MOISA). His research concerns social transformations in food norms and practices at different scales (sociohistorical, biographical) and on creating enabling environments for the emergence of more sustainable food systems.

Nicolas Bricas is a socioeconomist at CIRAD (UMR MOISA) and Director of the UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems. He studies food behaviour and urban food policies.

Book translated by **David Manley** from *Manger en ville : regards socio-anthropologiques d'Afrique, d'Amérique latine et d'Asie,* published by Quae (2020).

Cover illustration: *Manger en ville* © Julien Revenu, 2019

25 €

ISBN : 978-2-7592-3281-9

éditions Quæ

Éditions Cirad, Ifremer, Inrae
www.quae.com

ISSN : 1773-7923
Réf. : 02774