

## AGROFOOD CRAFTS AND PUBLIC POLICY AT THE CROSSROADS OF GLOBALIZATION

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### ABSTRACT

**I**n the second decade of the century, we live in a worrying world full of threats to the survival of mankind. It is a world filled with change, marked by tension and conflict, triggered by globalization and multinational corporations that threaten the survival of crafts and local food traditions. Reconsidering the origins, history, and future prospects of these traditions in a national, Latin American, or global context presents a challenge to the theoretical and methodological approaches of those social sciences interested in influencing this field with public policy actions. Hence, the importance of addressing the following set of measures: first, encourage, at all educational levels, the sociological analysis of films, documentaries, books, and magazines on cultural, ecological and social values that embody agrifood crafts; second, promote multi- and inter-disciplinary research, as well as the extension and dissemination of local food knowledge; and third, develop cooperation schemes between local governments, civil society and academia to contribute to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies for the long-term social, economic, cultural and ecological preservation of crafts and agri-food traditions.

**Keywords:** *agrifood crafts, public policy, social sciences, globalization.*

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## Re-thinking food: Latin American identity and diversity

Many are the reasons that invite us to research food. They range from the cultural dimension to the macro dimensions such as health, the economy, public policy, to agricultural and climatic conditions of the place where food is produced, to sales processes, distribution and consumption conditions brought about by globalization.

Why is it important to study what we eat? Food, Yankelevich (2010) tells us, joins the double human condition of biological and cultural beings. While Delgado (2001) states that "in every morsel of food we live our daily double human condition of cultural and biological beings" (p. 83). Lévi-Strauss argued that the mechanics of transforming raw food into cooked food marks the beginning of humanity. Cuisine, cooking food, then emerges as the space where man articulates both nature and culture.

Mexico, for example, has a rich history in terms of gastronomic identity, in which we must consider individual elements of identity. Tortillas, beans, and chilies, for example, are emblematic seals of its past and present in which we may observe historical, economic, agronomic, and identity processes. In food, we also find climates, raw materials, interests, values, symbols, tastes, and flavors at work. Each country has its food and its gastronomy that are "symbolic ambassadors" in the midst of a globalized world.

In the case of Latin America, we note that some foods produced are considered gifts to the world, ranging from sublime dishes to sweet or alcoholic beverages. In Brazil, for example, we have the caipirinha, a processed drink that resembles Mexican tequila. The liquor with which it is prepared is equivalent to the Mexican pulque. This liquor (cachaça, similar to the Mexican pulque made with few utensils and traditional techniques) made with sugarcane, sugar, coffee, beans or cassava are hallmarks of Brazilian agrifood traditions. Peru, meanwhile, has a wide variety of potatoes of different sizes, shares, flavors and textures, which are used to prepare a large range of dishes. In Chile, we also find this tuber, where the "casserole" stands out as a representative dish, containing potatoes, sweetcorn, meat, and green beans. In the case of Argentina and Uruguay, the production of beef is the raw material from which a diverse variety of meals are prepared. While Columbia is internationally known for its coffee beans, whole or ground. In the case of Mexico, lofty are their varieties of corn, beans, tomatoes, and cocoa, as well as a diversity of preparativos. In every region of the country there is a genetic diversity of these crops, depending on the climate, soil, and topographic conditions.

We could continue to list the raw materials that constitute the basic diet of Latin American countries. Foods build individual and community identity of the places where they are confected because they evoke national identity, and may even cause modern "conflicts", such as the case of Uruguay and Argentina, countries that defend mate (a tea of *Ilex paraguariensis*) as their own, meat production, tango and other distinctive elements that make them different from the us-them. Therefore, some historians argue that you can analyze the history of mankind based on the study of crops like rice, wheat, maize, and cassava.

The wealth of food tells us who we are and how we are. Food tells the story of a nation and its people. In Brazil, for example, we find diversified agricultural production. The Northeast region, for instance, was the largest producer of cane sugar until the seventeenth century, and declined in the period of independence in the nineteenth century when coffee production became important. The above is telling of the past and present of this country, which is also characterized by performing the most famous carnivals in the world, parties that give identity to the country and its people. Thus, through food, we can investigate the history and status of indigenous peoples (Guarani, for example) whose most important food base is cassava, with which we can savor juices, flours, and various drinks. Doubtless, these are all agrifood traditions from Latin America to the world.

The soft drinks and spirits of native peoples (pulque, tejate, posh, and cachaça, among others) are liquid gold. We can, in addition to the history, know the worldview of the people that produced and consumed them. For example, we note that religious holidays revolve around food (e.g. a chicken or turkey) or religious practices such as prayers or dances are used to ask the gods for rain so that the fields be fertile. It is also common to observe that cocoa beans were "currency" among the ancient peoples of Mexico, yet they still form part of a major trade for the Tzeltal communities in the region of the highlands of Chiapas. We can then analyze the worldview and syncretism of our peoples through food. "(...) Thirteen grains are the price of a soul that has been kidnaped by creatures coming from the world of the Night" (Pitarch, 2011, p.69).

Nor is it coincidence that on the day of one of the most important festivals of the Mexican people, the famous "Day of the Dead", we find altars and offerings full of food: coffee, tamales, mole, sweets, soups, many more dishes, especially those dishes that their deceased relatives loved. There is also food at parties, carnivals, and processions. Attractive and intimate public spaces are created, where food is shared and made. The extraordinary wealth that impacts on the daily lives of people also allows the mystical relationship with native, luxury, and religious elements. Therefore, we may also observe multiple ceremonies involving corn that have been integrated into the Christian liturgy. Lofty syncretism in which, in the case of Mexico, we see the Virgin of Guadalupe and Jesus Christ associated with a corn cob (Gonzalez and Camacho, 2006). It is because people may identify with a crop such as corn that is considered, by many native peoples, the protagonist of the origin of the human race.

Thus, we find that food and drink are important cultural elements through which we can study the history of a people, but also social, cultural, political, and economic transformation processes. Through the Mexican tequila, the Cuban Mojito, Brazilian caipirinha, Colombian coffee or Argentine or Uruguayan Mate, we can also study social transformation processes. So we share the reflection of Ruy Sanchez (2008), who argues that:

The food and drink of each region and country bring with them a universe of values, customs, and ideas; that is, an entire culture. Among the rituals of Mexican food, the tequila ritual occupies a special place that is growing in importance. It is now a matter that makes people feel initiated into a practice and specialized knowledge, and not only a drink. To the pleasures of flavor, we add a value of initiation into a cultural world that are the traditions of Mexico (Sánchez, 2008, p. 7).

Therefore, in countries like ours there is a poetry of tequila in the film and literature of Mexico (Sanchez, 2008), as well as in music. The same goes for other foods, in the following section we briefly reflect on this.

### Food in cinema and documentaries

In the last decades of the twentieth century and so far in the 21st, we have seen a boom of films and documentaries that have portrayed a series of economic, philosophical, aesthetic, ecological and political aspects of food and agribusiness traditions of different cultures and latitudes of the planet. Powered by a series of philosophical, aesthetic, educational, and political motivations, this avalanche of audiovisual productions brought into the 21st century an everyday topic that documentary filmmakers of the early 20th century had ignored. The truth is that cinema has shown signs of opening and an evolution in the treatment of much-needed topics in the menu of the millions of spectators attending theaters. Furthermore, this film boom dealing with food and agribusiness traditions offers an educational and teaching resource for the social sciences interested in these issues.

Examples of films and documentaries abound: the film *Babette's Feast* (1987), for instance, presents the conjunction of human kindness, sense gratification, and the wonders of French cuisine in Scandinavian countries; *Vatel* (2000), offered through the chef Vatel (Gerard Depardieu) the art of flour, spices, vegetables, pigs, quail, ducks, melons, watermelons, pumpkins, and shellfish, the greatest ad hoc French feast to the demanding tastes of the king. Similarly, *The Mistress of Spices* (2005), highlights the best of the Indian traditions through Tilo (Aishwarya Rai), a Hindu spice salesman who falls in love with an Anglo-Saxon man (Dylan McDermott) and breaks with the "magic rules" of spices because the romance is forbidden due to her status.

Other films that also portray the culinary traditions and the pleasure of eating are *Like Water for Chocolate* and *A Touch of Spice*. For example, in *A Touch of Spice* (2003), Fanis, a Greek boy who lives in Istanbul with his grandfather, a philosopher passionate about spices, teaches him that both food and life require a little salt and a touch of spice. The tension during the 60s between Turkey and Greece forces Fanis to separate from his grandfather, who remains in Istanbul. Fanis grows up, waiting for the day his grandfather will arrive, and also becomes an excellent cook; but that day never comes. After 35 years since leaving Athens he returns to his hometown, Istanbul, in order to meet his grandfather and his first love.

In contrast to the aesthetic dimension, the film *Romper Stomper* (1992) provides an example of racial discrimination when Hando (Russell Crowe), a neo-Nazi gang leader in Canberra, Australia, rejects the Indian food that his girlfriend prepares for him. Another sociological example is provided by the criticism of fast food consumption in the United States, *Super Size Me you are what you eat* (2004), a documentary in which Morgan Spurlock, director, writer, and producer, was subjected to an experiment for a month with the support of doctors and nutritionists to eat fast food for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and to prove that you are what you eat: a person frighteningly obese and sick.

A documentary that also caused a stir in 2008 by the rawness of its images was *Food Inc.* "The industry does not want us to know the truth about what we eat because if you knew it, you might not want to eat it". This phrase, one of the first to be heard in the documentary by Robert Kenner, pretty much sums up the purpose of the entire film: a report on how food is cooked, transported and processed. From the beginning, we suspect that there are things that are better ignored. In order to feed approximately 7 billion people, the food industry has been forced to adjust their methods. Therefore, animal growth has been accelerated, and genetically modified seeds are used in agriculture. However, as in many other areas in the US, we soon discover that the real problem is that a handful of industries monopolize the food industry. Through several witnesses, among them that of Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food* (and producer of the film) we enter the dark world of food production on a large scale, as well as health risks and the environment.

Another documentary related to the philosophical dimension of cooking and eating filmed in 2006, *How to Cook Your Life* by Doris Dörrie, who accompanies the Zen master Edward Brown in his lectures and in his cooking classes to prove that cooking, or rather, knowing how to cook, it is a matter of taking care of oneself and caring for others. The philosopher, teacher and Zen master teaches us the sensuality of baking bread, the philosophy of radishes, and the serenity of carrots to offer us this culinary delight that shows the wisdom contained in their practical advice.

Meanwhile, *The World According to Monsanto* (2008), a documentary directed by French journalist Marie-Monique Robin, not only about the terrible effects of Monsanto's pesticides on the environment, or the comparison of GMOs with natural organisms, but also the social impact caused by the fact that farmers no longer own the seed planted, and what happens when Monsanto dictates the rules by which a country must regulate their activities. Likewise, the documentary also tells us what happens to an ecosystem when an introduced organism begins to destroy centuries of biological evolution and agri-food traditions. *The World According to Monsanto* leaves a vision of a bleak and uncertain future for small farmers, whose *modus vivendi* revolves around agriculture and are forced to migrate to cities due to geopolitical and economic control of Monsanto through its seeds and monocultures. In conclusion, this documentary provides an educational resource for the cultivation of a sociological imagination of academics and students of agronomy, biology or social sciences interested in analyzing the social and environmental impact of the globalization of food, and the expansionist power of multinational corporations.

We may infer from the multitude of films and documentaries that the advance of globalization, environmental issues, food multiculturalism, problems of obesity, and the increased consumption of fast food, and genetically modified food promises not to stop, as we move deeper into the 21st century. Therefore, the social sciences must work together to make food (in its traditional and modern aspects) a multidisciplinary study area and a new challenge for generations of social scientists. In short, with the production, distribution, and consumption of food we can explore the history of peoples and processes of social and identity transformation.

However, food is also an inspiration for literature, poetry, and all those elements that allow us to construct a sociological imagination at the local, national, and global scales.

## Crafts and agri-food traditions in a globalized world

According to American sociologist C. Wright Mills (2003), the "sociological imagination" is a mental quality that helps us to use information and develop a reason to obtain lucid summations of what is happening in the world, and what may be happening within ourselves.

1) The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the wider historical background in terms of its meaning for inner life and the outer path of the diversity of individuals. The first lesson is the idea that the individual can only understand their own experience and assess their own destiny by locating oneself in time, and can only know their own chances in life by knowing that of all the individuals that have been in the same circumstances. The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography, and the relationship between them in society. That is its task and promise. This imagination is the ability to go from one perspective to another. It is the capacity to move from the most impersonal, and transforms the most intimate features of the human self, and allows us to see the relationships between the two.

2) The sociological imagination is the most fertile form of self-awareness. The most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination is perhaps the one that operates between "the personal concerns of the environment" and "public issues of social structure". This distinction is an essential instrument of sociological imagination and a feature of all classic social science works.

What can we say about the simple act of drinking a cup of coffee and how we can deploy the sociological imagination with this example? According to Anthony Giddens (2002), from a sociological point of view we could say many things:

a) First, we might note that coffee is not just a drink, as it has a *symbolic value* as part of daily social activities.

b) Second, coffee is a *drug* that contains *cafeína*, which has a stimulating effect on the brain. Like alcohol, coffee is a socially accepted drug, while marijuana, for example, generally is not. Sociologists are interested in finding out why these contrasts exist.

c) Third, an individual, upon drinking a cup of coffee, is part of a highly complex set of *social and economic relations* that are spread throughout the world. Coffee is a product that links people from some of the richest countries on earth with those of the poorest areas of the planet. The study of these global transactions is an important task for sociology.

d) Fourth, the act of drinking a cup of coffee has previously assumed a *process of social and economic development*, as the colonial legacy has had an enormous impact on the elaboration of the global coffee trade.

e) Fifth, coffee is a product located in the center of discussions currently dealing with globalization, international trade, human rights, and environmental destruction. With the increasing popularity of coffee, it has been "tagged" and politicized: the choices made by consumers as to the type of coffee they drink and where they buy have become *vital decisions*.

Now, what about agrifood crafts and a study of the kitchen (as a tradition, institution, and social practice) in the context of a sociology of food? What is behind the consumption of Mexican corn, Peruvian potatoes, Colombian Coffee, Chilean salmon or Argentinian beef? How does history, culture, politics,

economics, agronomy, media and communications, and aesthetics intermingle in the preparation and consumption of these foods? How is tradition and modernity confronted in the kitchens of Brazilians, Peruvians, Colombians, Mexicans or Chileans? What environmental and health problems are caused by the consumption of genetically modified foods? How does the globalization of an American lifestyle (eating fast food) affect local agri-food traditions? How do we redirect public policy for the preservation and promotion of agri-food traditions? Sociology is interested in answering these and other questions related to food and agri-food traditions at the local and global levels of different countries and cultures.

In that sense, the consumption of corn, chili, and beans, for example, reflects a cultural practice of most Mexicans since pre-Hispanic times. In fact, the Aztecs in *Centeotl* had the corn goddess, they granted the avocado aphrodisiac properties, and sacrificed humans so that their gods would drink their blood and eat their hearts as part of an ecclesiastic ritual that anthropologists have called cannibalism, similar to the "deified cannibalism" of consuming the flesh and blood of Christ in the Catholic religion. Every society and social group reflects the culture of what they eat and how they prepare their food, as in the case of the "culture of the potato (Peru)", the "culture of hunting and fishing (Eskimo)", "coffee culture "(Colombia), the "rice culture (China)", the "culture of bread and wine (Judeo-Christian tradition)". For example, Greco-Roman mythology offers a pantheon of gods representative of certain foods and beverages: Ceres, goddess of grains; Diana, goddess of the hunt; Bacchus, god of wine; Pomona, goddess of fruit, and Aphrodite, goddess of beauty associated with aphrodisiac food and drinks (whose effects came to be worshiped by Cleopatra and Casanova) that the writer Isabel Allende invites us to delight in her book *Aphrodite stories, recipes, and other aphrodisiacs* (2012).

"Of all that is common to men, the most common is that they have to eat and drink." It is the most obvious physiological act of our species. However, dining in a traditional market, a Starbucks coffee shop or a Sanborns restaurant is not the same. Nor would it be the same to carry out this physiological and social act in a McDonalds, Burger King, KFC, or Domino's Pizza, not to mention the eating habits and traditional cuisines of Argentina, China, Turkey, France, Morocco, and Australia.

Ares we what we eat? For the American sociologist Richard Schaefer (2006), there is no doubt about the answer to this question, because the food we eat, along with the ways of preparing and consuming them, say a lot about a culture. In some countries, such as Papua New Guinea, the roast pig is a delicacy reserved for holidays; on other days, it is a forbidden food. In the United States, genetically modified food it accepted without much hesitation, while it is banned in Europe. In some cultures, like the French, the cuisine is a cultural institution. The French prefer fresh local produce carefully prepared and consumed calmly and accompanied by a nice conversation and a bottle of wine. For the French and worldwide gourmet, a good cook is a celebrity.

One of the first sociologists who raised the need to address the sociological study of food was Georg Simmel. Unlike Marx, Weber and Durkheim, Simmel did not give preference to the study and interpretation of the significant large-scale historical processes (class struggle, rationalization, division of labor). Simmel was more interested in the "micro" phenomena, and the field of interest was enormous. The study of money, gender relations, art, freedom, cities, the poor, and food, "to the extent that food becomes a sociological issue, it is configured under style, aesthetics, and is regulated supra-individually. So, all the prescriptions on eating and drinking arise, and certainly not in the here inessential perspective of food as a commodity, but as a relative form of consumption" (Simmel, 2001, p.402). Simmel paid particular attention to the socialization, the aesthetic principles, the symbolizing of the order and regulation of customs that represent food.

Meanwhile, Norbert Elias (1897-1990), also makes significant contributions to the "civilizing process of the Western table" by making comments on the consumption of meat, and the use of cutlery at meals. For example, in his work *The Civilizing Process* (1994), he reconstructs the transformation of the European lifestyle (from the Middle Ages), through habits related to eating, sleeping, spitting, defecating, clothing or fornication.

In another vein, a Professor at the University of Maryland, George Ritzer, has shown in his book *The McDonaldization of Society*, the enormous influence that the well-known fast food company has in modern culture. Ritzer defined *McDonaldization* as the process by which the principles of fast food restaurants are increasingly dominating sectors of American society and the world. In his book, he shows how the market principles of the fast food industry: effective, calculable, predictable, and controllable, have changed not only changed the way we do business and lead organizations of Americans, but also our way of life. Despite the overwhelming success of McDonalds and its imitators, and the advantages these companies suppose for millions of people around the world, Ritzer criticizes its effect on society. Waste and environmental degradation such as the millions of disposable packages and dehumanized routines of work for fast food employees are two of the objections (Ritzer quoted in Schaefer, 2006).

Concern about the effects that eating fast food brings for contemporary society has not only been the focus of attention of journalists and sociologists, but also philosophers, such as the professor of bioethics Peter Singer, who has proposed a reflection on the ethics of our diet:

A diet based on animal products, driven by intensive livestock production, is catastrophic for animals, for the environment, and for the health of those who adopt it, the scale of the disaster will be multiplied many times if the trend of other peoples copying the Western diet and production methods continues. There is an urgent need for a concerted effort to stop the spread of our disastrous diet (...) professors of philosophy at university should play a major role in this change (Singer, 2003, p. 386).

Singer & Mason (2009), posed the question: What should we eat? Which translates to "Food Ethics" that help us soothe our ethical doubts when buying food in a supermarket: a) transparency: the right to know how food is produced; b) Justice: food production should not impose costs on third parties; c) dignified treatment: inflicting unnecessary suffering on animals is wrong; d) social responsibility: workers should have a wage or decent jobs, and e) need: protecting life and health is more just than mere desire.

Are we what we eat locally despite the food models promoted by globalization? What is globalization and what kind of threats are there for local food processing traditions? For many philosophers and social scientists, there is no doubt about the positive response that can be given at the local or national level to the first question. However, a global sociology in a comparative perspective disagrees with the positive reaction of methodical nationalism, that is, the classic view that the nation-state becomes the container of sociology and other social sciences. Hence the importance of raising a new area of research entitled "sociology of global nutrition" to realize the processes of media and cultural expansion of food such as American *fast food*, for example; history and identity of agrifood crafts and traditions as well as the socioeconomic and political impact of transnational corporations (Coca-Cola, Diageo, Novartis, Nestlé, Monsanto) in the production and consumption of agrifood crafts. Therefore, we must study the ways in which Latin American governments and public policies (agricultural, educational, labor, health, environmental, economic or cultural) are responding to the risks, dangers, and social costs of the neoliberal agricultural model.

Globalization is a process of global capitalist expansion, it is multidimensional and is affecting all spheres of human life. Globalization as such is based on the premise of unstoppable economic growth and development of consumerist patterns of life. At the beginning of the century, the social sciences faced many challenges and dilemmas about their objects of study, epistemology, and methodologies; no doubt that the restructuring processes inherent in globalization are transforming the social sciences: how to respond to the pressures of globalization and what is involved, will depend on its future prospects.

Globalization is an issue that in recent decades has been on the lips of politicians, academics, thought leaders, entrepreneurs and managers of large financial institutions like the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The term globalization is here to stay in dictionaries of social science of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, examination of the causes and implications of globalization is necessary for an apparent reason: cultivating the sociological imagination requires the sociologist to study the relationship between biographies, national structure, and globalization.

How can we understand the American fast food consumption in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, without reference to the global power of the media? How do we explain the expansion in the production and consumption of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) without making reference to the political influence that multinational corporations such as Monsanto are exerting on Latin American governments? How can we understand the epidemic of obesity and diabetes in Mexican children without relating it to the consumption of Coca-Cola? How do we understand the decline of peasant agriculture and local agro-food crafts without attending to the expansion of Western food consumption patterns?

Globalization has recently been boosted by a series of technological, cultural, and geopolitical transformations which include the collapse of the socialist bloc and the end of the Cold War, the expansion of liberal democracy as a universal form of government, the influence of large multinational corporations, the growth of civil society through NGOs, the impact of telecommunications (the Internet, for example), and the dissemination of culture and lifestyles of consumer societies.

Globalization should not be seen only as the development of a global network of some social and economic systems that are extremely remote from our individual concerns. It is also a local phenomenon that affects all of us in our everyday lives. Globalization is changing the face of the world and our way of looking at it. By adopting a global perspective, we become more aware of our connections with people from other societies. The global perspective makes us see more clearly that as we increase our ties with the rest of the world, our actions have consequences for others, and, therefore, the world's problems also affect us (Giddens, 2002).

The global perspective, for example, is reflected at the local level when making a sociological field trip to a supermarket (a Walmart) in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Lima or Bogotá, and we see on the shelves a large number of products from other countries and continents. Behind these products are free trade agreements, transnational distribution companies, health standards, marketing, labor and probably risks to human health. So, buying fruits, spices, meats, wines, coffees, cheeses, cookies or chocolates, we realize that its origins are hundreds or thousands of kilometers from the supermarket where we shop. The diversity of products that we are accustomed to at Wal-Mart or Carrefour depends on complex geopolitical, economic and social ties linking countries and people from Latin America to other parts of the world. These connections between the local and the global have been possible thanks to advances in media, information technology, and transportation.

A major factor driving this globalization are multinational corporations, which have become a critical player in the globalization of the international economy by using their tentacles to connect national economies in every corner of the planet. According to some scholars of international relations, its origins can be traced to expansion after World War II due to, among other things to the construction of production facilities in other countries if there were savings in transport costs; offering countries receiving special treatment in taxation, lax rules on pollution, and other advantages; the role of new communication and transportation technologies; economic primacy of the United States and the unique position of the dollar after the second world war; and finally, the growth of multinational corporations is because foreign investment has been very profitable (Pearson & Rochester, 2000).

Some of the criticisms of multinational corporations includes the "invisible sovereignty" beyond the control of national borders, and that given the pervasive presence in the economy of the Third World, they have often been placed in a position to exert considerable influence on host governments regarding their domestic and foreign policies.

In the case of food, some critics have pointed out that the broader impact in relation to food is "the power of the big players in the grain market, in agribusiness firms, and speculators have massive effects on prices and on control of significant food stocks. Along with the ministers of agriculture and trade in the North, these companies tend to dominate the international food trade" (Pearson & Rochester, 2000, p.486).

In the debate on the political assumptions of globalization, the criticism has come not only from the academic or public research centers but also anti-globalization activists and social movements. Over the last two decades, there have been a number of alternative social forums to the economic fora (Davos, Switzerland) of rich countries and large multinational corporations. For critics of corporate globalization, the essential ingredients of the globalization model have several characteristics:

- 1) Promoting hyper-growth and uncontrolled exploitation of environmental resources to fuel this growth.
- 2) Privatization and commercialization of public services and other aspects of the global and community commons.
- 3) Cultural and economic homogenization and intense promotion of consumerism.
- 4) Integration and conversion of national economies, including some with a high degree of independence, export-oriented production, detrimental from social and environmental perspectives
- 5) Complete corporate liberalization and free movement of capital across borders.
- 6) A dramatic increase in the concentration of corporations.
- 7) Dismantling public health, social, and environmental programs already underway.
- 8) Replacing the traditional powers of the nation-state and democratic local communities with local corporate bureaucracies (Cavanagh *et al.*, 2002).

These essential ingredients of neoliberal globalization are opposed to what the anti-globalization movement has called the ten fundamental principles that any sustainable society should have in the new millennium:

- 1) *A new democracy* that flourishes when people organize to protect their communities and their rights and hold elected representatives to account.
- 2) *Subsidiarity*, respecting the idea that sovereignty resides in the people. In other words, the legitimate authority flows upward from the people, by the expression of the democratic will.
- 3) *Ecological sustainability*, economic globalization is not good for the environment because it is based on consumption, exploitation of resources and ever greater waste disposal problems.
- 4) *The common heritage*. *There are common heritage resources that constitute a collective birthright of all species that are to be shared equitably among all*: the first category includes water, land, air, forests, and fisheries; the second group comprises culture and knowledge; and finally, the public services that governments provide to meet basic needs (public health, education, public safety, and social security).
- 5) *Diversity*. Diversity is the key to the vitality, resilience, and innovative capacity of all living systems. Also for human societies, this is reflected in cultural diversity, economic diversity, and biodiversity.
- 6) *Human rights*. *The goal of trade and investment should be to improve the quality of life and respect basic labor, social, and other rights*.
- 7) *Work, livelihood, employment*. *Sustainable societies must protect the rights of workers and at the same time the need to promote a way of life for most people*.
- 8) *Equality*. Reduce the growing divide between rich and poor countries by demanding the cancellation of debts and the replacement of current institutions of global governance with new ones that include global justice.
- 9) *The principle of prevention*. That is, when a practice or a product poses a potentially serious threat or harm to human health or the environment, we must take preventive action to limit or prohibit it, although there is no scientific certainty whether or not it will actually produce that damage.
- 10) *Food security and safety*. *Communities and nations are more stable when its people have enough food, particularly when these countries can provide their own food. The monopolistic control of food and seeds by a small number of companies threatens millions of farmers and food security and security of tens of millions of people* (Cavanagh et al., 2002).

In this context, the battle for control of the gene pool among biotechnology companies from countries in the North and South, conflict has been the subject of debates in forums and publications such as the book *The Biotech Century. Genetic trade and the birth of a brave new world* (1998), where its author, Jeremy Rifkin, glimpsed a scene of a bleak future for agricultural schemes and Third World peasants:

The multinational effort to encircle and market the gene pool is facing stiff resistance in a growing number of countries and NGOs in the southern hemisphere, who demand an equitable distribution of the fruits of the biotechnological revolution. The specialized knowledge needed to handle the new green gold is in scientific laboratories and in the boardrooms of big business in the north, but most of the essential genetic resources to feed the new revolution are in ecosystems in the south. The battle between the northern and southern multinational countries for the control of a common global gene pool will surely be one of the major fights in the century of biotechnology (Rifkin, 1999, p.59).

According to the Indian activist Vandana Shiva (2001), we began the new millennium with a deliberate production of ignorance about environmental dangers like the deregulation of environmental protection and destruction of ecologically sustainable ways of life of farming communities, tribal, pastoral and Third World artisans. For Shiva, the poorest two-thirds of humanity maintain themselves with forms of life based on biodiversity and indigenous knowledge. Today, the resource base of the poor is under threat because Western scientists and companies claim their plants and seeds, they patent them and present them as their own inventions, thereby denying the collective innovation practiced for centuries by farmers, artisans, and healers in the Third world, the real protectors and users of such biodiversity.

Chemical companies worldwide have been restructured and established in the life sciences, and have acquired seed companies and biotechnology. After they had fissioned, Ciba-Geigy and Sandoz merged to form Novartis. Zeneca joined Astra, Hoechst and Rhone-Poulenc to create Aventis. Companies like Monsanto have begun buying major seed companies worldwide. Currently, it owns and controls Cargill Seeds, Dekalb, Asgrow, Holden, Delta and Pine Land, Calgene, Agracetus, MAHYCO, and Sementes Agrocerus. If companies control seeds, they also control the food chain (Shiva, 2001, p. 171).

In the case of the Latin American agricultural sector, as the basis for the production of native handicrafts and food processing traditions, it is clear that neoliberal globalization has brought more disadvantages than advantages, as many of the staples of the continent are still cultivated outside the productivist and technocratic schemes of multinational corporations.

### **Recognition of agrifood crafts: the case of traditional Mexican cuisine**

The kitchen, like the basis of agrifood crafts, is a factor of national identity that goes beyond the mere fact of satisfying human needs. She (this cultural laboratory called a kitchen) is closely related to cultural, social and identity elements of women and men who create bread, cheese, tamales, pulque, jams and all kinds of food with their fingers that allows them to earn income (if carried out for business purposes) but also enables the consumption of raw materials that are transformed and remain traditional family and community elements.

In Mexico, there are many places where you can see a variety of traditional dishes that, not dissimilar to popular music and dance, are elements that give identity to a country. So diverse are these foods, there are multiple challenges facing their producers. Come what may, traditional Mexican cuisine has earned significant recognition. In this regard, we note that in 2000 UNESCO recognized Mexican food as intangible-immaterial cultural heritage. Following this distinction, consistently, it has managed to emphasize the cultural and identity importance of Mexican cuisine, and cultural institutions have sought to promote and preserve this model of sustainable, ancestral wisdom, and artisan tradition.

Therefore, it should be noted that Vargas (2012) considered "eating is not only a result of our physiological needs: it is bounded by the culture of a society and the peculiarities of personal tastes and aversions" (p. 81). There are undoubtedly habits around the act of eating, there are hours stipulated by social-familiar convention, there are fixed positions at the table for each member of the family, there are important issues to share at the table, there are rituals and celebrations to share while food is being shared, why not consider, then, food as culture and an element of identity, why not consider its existence as a space to share cultural values and identity through these flavors and smells that remind us of the several "Mexicos" (north, south, center), that invite us to always think in plural.

As Gironella De'Angeli and De Palacio (2012) defend, Mexican cuisine has been assigned the variously called "regional cuisine, traditional cuisine, cookery, popular kitchen, communal kitchen, modern kitchen and even fusion cuisine" (p.147). In any case, these culinary elements condense cultural, physiological, climatic, agronomic, social, and economic aspects of those towns and regions where the food is produced. We are therefore discussing the regional development of the places that live, in a certain way, between tradition and globalization.

These laboratories -the kitchens- have preserved biodiversity, resources, and the cultural diversity of women (some men too), of small-scale producers and indigenous peoples. Hence, we stress its importance as a cultural "microcosm" where we can study processes of globalization, issues that refer to health, forms of marketing, and the organization of labor in households and production processes and economic reproduction. We can also approach the social, religious, and political environment of food and those who prepare it.

Family relations, cosmology, pain and celebration are also in food. If we approach the study of traditional Mexican food, we can also approach all these struggles that our people had yesterday and continue to face today with the processes of globalization. Besides allowing us to know and think about the strategic uses of the identity those that prepare food and the relentless pursuit of these women, who are seeking their independence, autonomy (personal and financial) through agrifood crafts.

### **Challenges and policies for the preservation of agrifood crafts**

Some of the challenges facing the agri-food crafts have to do with the decline in the number of people who promote and preserve traditional recipes within communities. Grandmothers, for example, take combinations of ingredients that they mix, ground, and chop in kitchens to the grave. Moreover, with the decline in the sense of belonging of young people to their communities, coupled with the economic needs of their rural areas, for example, migration is encouraged and this also, in some way, affects the presence of people engaged in the creation of artisan food in communities.

Another problem, no less important, has to do with the little social recognition given to them and their products (although here we can make some clarification because you cannot always generalize). There are also competing fast food chain stores (like *Oxxo*, *McDonalds*, *Burger King*, etc.). It may also be stated that they compete with the international food present in Mexico (an increasing number of Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Brazilian and, Argentinian restaurants, among others). Mexican artisanal food competes with a variety of international dishes, they abound and proliferate.

The little remuneration for agrifood artisans is another significant challenge; training and marketing to find space for their products, the lack of knowledge or access to information on government programs for the revival and promotion of ancestral recipes, and marketing and distribution, is another problem.

There is more. Little is known about the variety of chilies, spices or condiments that people use in these homemade recipes, and in the face of this ignorance, at times, few value or recognize the importance of these combinations that use and preserve unique species, and may identify with ancient roots.

In addition, we also see another problem around artisanal food production, women - generally - invest many hours of their time to create mole, sweets, atole, tamales and all this variety of foods that require grinding, cooking, and hours of preparation, however, this effort and commitment is not reflected in the income they get from the foods they offer. Moreover, in the long run, the craft may have an impact on

the health of the men and women involved in food processing (one example is the contact with the ovens that can affect the lungs of those engaged in food processing, or burns or scalds from hot water or oil).

We also underline the lack of knowledge on the nutritional richness of Mexican cuisine, as it consists of natural products rich in vitamins and properties that promote the care of our health. To all these challenges facing the artisanal food and those who prepare it, we must add that the low valuation that often "splashes" to the consideration of these foods - made with little technology- and made with ancient techniques, is associated - generally - to the "old", "outdated" "unfashionable" or "backward".

Those engaged in the development of agri-food crafts, as with other producers of other crafts branches, generally, direct their products to a regional market, which is accessible and whose tastes are trying to meet the known market (such as food production). In other cases it is directed to a tourism sector or the broader market that demands the export of these products (as in the case of potters of Dolores Hidalgo in the state of Guanajuato, whose products are exported to several Latin American and European countries). Less often, the products are aimed at a more exclusive group, and it is called art<sup>5</sup> by the characteristics of their product and their work, and to respond to certain canons of an "elite" group interested in getting handicraft-art that supply (as in the case of some products offered in local San Miguel de Allende, the Capital of Guanajuato, or Tonalá and Tlaquepaque, Jalisco). In any case, most producers-creators face multiple challenges and difficulties that fail remedies despite several promoters and defenders of craft production activities in Mexico, because they are considered objects that promote national identity.

Mexico is the only country with more than 40 years doing crafts competitions. These contests enable artisans to disseminate their works. However, many craftspeople and artisans whose work is done in anonymity and little social recognition are left out. There are also many who are unaware of support programs such as those offered in different dimensions by the National Fund for the Promotion of Handicrafts (FONART) or some spaces created by the Culture Houses of municipalities.

Although more and more people are accessing these supports or spaces, we must note that the vast majority do not appear in a record or in a national list of individuals who participate or win contests, or receive any kind of support.

The competitions organized by the above mentioned or other organizations, serve and stimulate creativity and motivate those with expert hands who make objects (textiles, basketry, pottery, lute, etc.), plus it allows for the diffusion of identifying elements of the rural or indigenous peoples who produce it. Those who manage to win recognition in a competition may sell their most expensive pieces for the prestige and recognition that comes with winning a national or regional contest. The social recognition of the work and the product of the craftsman (upon winning a competition) increases, even temporarily, so they can take this opportunity to raise the price of their goods and obtain a better income through marketing.

Competitions also involve elements of identity and stimulate creativity and innovation. However, it must be said that, on occasion, conflicts have arisen between community members, the participation of jurors (who are referred to as "the perjured jury") has also been criticized because they often do not know

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<sup>5</sup> Novelo (2014) states: "In Western culture, which has separated life from art, and whose industrial way of life has divided the moment of creation or design from the moment of execution has caused the differentiation between "pure" art and "applied" art with their corresponding authors, artists and craftspeople, minus aesthetic value to objects of daily life, or qualifying minor art, primitive, naive or other similar devaluation of the works of artisans that add to their craft the talent, sensitivity and skill that makes them artists, although they are not recognized as such"(Novelo, 2014, p.69).

the techniques in detail. Adding to this the lack of organization and the many challenges that artisans face. This formal structure allows us to manage resources, improve marketing and perhaps allow access to new markets, facilitating marketing and the combination of innovation and tradition.

In other studies (Del Carpio, 2012), we have found the psychosocial functions of craftsmanship and that competitions stimulate activities such as listening and encouraging mutual aid to the other. It is a place where ideas emerge, weaknesses are strengthened, and collective success is permitted. We learn about who makes the object, how it is constructed, what its place of origin is like (for material resources used in it) and, on occasion, connoisseurs of these objects and their producers can identify the very hands that made each craft (the individual dimension: inspiration, creativity, taste, shapes, choice of color, the choices of the artisan are impregnated in the object, which is unique despite its many similarities).

It is in each object that we see this subjective part of the work. In the case of the production of agrifood crafts, we see that the kitchen becomes the space where knowledge of alchemy, secrets, and recipes are passed down from the older to the younger generations. This space allows us to solve every day needs, transmit the community worldview, develop skills in being and know-how. In the kitchen, discussions and areas of emotional catharsis abound, where time is structured, where the feeling of social utility is built, where pride is conducive to the experience and knowledge that food preparation allows, showing affection to the family, significant others, and those important to the individual. There, amid the fusion of ingredients, tastes, smells, techniques and culinary secrets we converge tradition and the multiple struggles of those who prepare the food processing crafts for various purposes: consumption, marketing, celebrations, or family gatherings, among many others.

It may also be said that these agri-food traditions have contributed to the preservation of biodiversity, resources, and the cultural diversity of women and men, small-scale farmers, and indigenous and peasant communities. Design and implementation materialize in objects that are fabricated with hands and thinking (attention, concentration, memory) and feeling (emotional catharsis), and together are immersed and allow for the unique creation of multiple creators.

Now, what is a public policy or what is public policy? It is a question that admits as many answers as authors, methodologies, and approaches. To the extent that it is more problematic than useful to reach a consensus definition and universal approach to encompass such as complex field of study as public policy.

The area of public policy has become increasingly important within contemporary social science. Said field studies the various aspects of these systems, such as: a) the process of defining public objectives of the state; b) the development of organizations and programs to achieve those goals, and c) the impact of these programs. While in the US this field has been developed since at least the fifties, in Mexico and Latin America it is just beginning to emerge, although relatively quickly (Méndez, 2010).

Canto (2010: 152), the study of public policy was introduced in the horizon of Mexican political science and public administration during the 1980s. Its arrival coincided with the process of replacing the interventionist state model that had prevailed in Mexico since the thirties by a model of the state committed to the free market, which led to the dismantling of the para-state sector, reducing the central sector, deregulation of economic activity, which ended protectionism and promotes free trade. During the eighties, while a devastating crisis of wasteful and inefficient state interventionism was taking shape, Mexico started to talk about pluralism, citizen participation, incrementalism, public choice and similar topics. Luis Aguilar's contribution falls in line with this logic.

According to Luis Aguilar (2010) the essential features of public policy are: its focus on targets of interest or the public interest and suitability to perform them; citizen participation with the government in defining the objectives, instruments and policy actions; policy decision by the legitimate government and respect for the law; implementation and evaluation of policy. However, the hallmark of public policy is the integration of a set of structured, stable, and systematic actions.

Franco (2013: 88) defines public policy as governmental actions with public interest objectives arising from decisions based on a process of diagnosis and feasibility analysis, for the adequate care of particular public issues, where citizens are involved in defining problems and solutions.

Below we discuss the platform of public policy measures that protect and promote handicrafts in Mexico agri-food crafts.

- 1) Conduct a national diagnostic status of the production, distribution, and consumption of agrifood crafts.
- 2) Implement national training projects for agrifood artisans from the secretaries of the economy, agriculture, social development, and tourism.
- 3) Encouraging, from the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) knowledge and cultural appreciation of agrifood crafts in new and future generations of Mexicans at all educational levels.
- 4) Avoid by all means possible genetic pollution by multinational companies like Monsanto that threaten the preservation of a natural resource base with which the production of agro crafts stands.
- 5) Promote a nationwide system of rewards for those who preserve and promote arts and agri-food traditions.
- 6) Encourage networks and channels of distribution and marketing at regional, national and international levels, promoting better-working conditions and trade relations.
- 7) Authorities at all levels of government and legislators, along with the Departments of Health (SS) and the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) should prohibit the sale and consumption of junk food that multinational companies like Coca-Cola promote in schools.
- 8) Include in national laws the preservation and promotion of agrifood crafts as a seal of national identity and a transversal axis of food sovereignty and self-sufficiency.
- 9) Traditional knowledge about food production and preparation of agrifood crafts together have received designations as "local knowledge" or "ethnic", which contrasts with the foreign cuisine and gastronomy of the elites. In that sense, it requires a knowledge dialog between scientists and artisans around the production, preparation, consumption, nutritional values and cultural identity of agrifood crafts.
- 10) The Mexican scientific system requires finding and discussing the ideas and concepts of the various stakeholders of society involved in the preservation and promotion of agrifood crafts. It is therefore necessary to promote public policies in science and technology that brings together governments, civil society, and experts (agronomists, nutritionists and social scientists) to define, design, and evaluate comprehensive public policies that meet the needs of agri-food artisans.

## Conclusions

In the second decade of the century, we live in a worrying world full of threats and risks to the survival of mankind. It is a world filled with change, marked by social tensions and conflict, triggered by the process of neoliberal globalization that threatens the survival of handicrafts and local food traditions. In that sense, to rethink the origins, history and future prospects of these traditions in a national, Latin American or global context represents fundamental challenges, approaches, theories, and techniques of research in social sciences interested in influencing public policy actions in this field.

How do the social sciences contribute to the conservation and/or protection of these local traditions against the maelstrom of neoliberal globalization and multinational companies who condemn it as "backward"? One of the challenges in interdisciplinary research and development of public policies is to counteract the harmful effects of globalization on food consumption patterns for societies worldwide at local and national levels. We are facing the advance of the processes of "cultural degradation" (erosion of agrifood identities), "environmental degradation (loss of the natural resource base that make the survival of these traditions possible) and "deteriorating health and quality of life" (increased chronic degenerative diseases as a result of the expansion of the consumption patterns of corporate globalization, in addition to food dependency). It is therefore essential to the join the work of universities, research centers, organizations of civil society, and agrifood craftsmen to design strategies for the medium and long term to counteract and/or reduce the dangers and risks of globalization to agrifood traditions and crafts in Mexico and Latin America.

On the other hand, production of films and documentaries about food and local food traditions is a pedagogical and political tool for the social sciences and the ministries of education, health, agriculture, environment, and culture of Latin America as they become aware (through otherness and difference) of the advantages and benefits of local lifestyles addressing environmental, social, economic and health risks posed by the consumption of American fast food or GM food.

In this paper we have shown some examples of films and documentaries that are very useful for workshops, forums, and classrooms to trigger processes of reflection and debate on the advantages and ethical, economic, political and sociological disadvantages, involving a variety of culinary demonstrations and agribusiness worldwide. To the question: Are we what we eat locally or what multinational companies want us to eat? We will have to respond with a series of measures: first with teaching strategies in all levels of education, promoting the analysis of films, documentaries, books and magazines on social, aesthetic, cultural and ecological aspects that agrifood crafts embody; secondly, promoting inter- and multi-disciplinary research, extension and dissemination of local food knowledge to society as a whole; and thirdly, developing cooperation schemes between local governments, civil society, and academia to contribute to the design of public policies, and the *ad hoc* cultural, economic and ecological preservation of handicrafts and local food traditions.

It is also important to promote the creation of public policies to improve the living conditions of the creators. The producers who already face challenges surrounding the means of production. The many struggles, together with the study of agrifood crafts, allows us to understand the minds of the peoples and rural societies, and enables us to analyze the forms of preservation and/or protection of traditions and economic strategies and organizational forms that these people conduct in the face of globalization that threatens their very identities in aspects such as food, health, and the environment.

So we must say no to any bargaining on these products because upon analysis of the forms and functions of these products we realize the personal, social, and community identities of their makers. The exercise of rethinking these products with ancient roots that weave processes of local revival (through oral history) generates identity. Agrifood crafts speak of new processes in the political arena, in local development, and the struggle for the survival of ancestral traditions. To conclude, the cultural diversity of food knows no bounds.

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