

MA MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

INTANGIBLE CULINARY HERITAGE: FRANCE AND MEXICO'S CONSTRUCTION OF  
SYMBOLIC CLOSURE ON UNESCO'S LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this work I argue that UNESCO intangible heritage inscriptions discursively root fluid and moveable food traditions in place. The nomination forms for the French gastronomic meal and Mexican traditional cuisine reign in the symbolic meaning of their food traditions through the process of definition and description, connecting them to territory, national history, and kinship in order to promote fixed and essentialized national culinary identities.

Through an examination of the nominations submitted by each respective Member State, I show how the intangible becomes tangible and how this tangibility serves to assuage anxieties over contamination, the dissolution of the nation state, and the fading away of historical narratives. Embedding and fixing these traditions within place portrays the nation as a site of agency with a unique (and, more problematically, fixed) cultural identity. Taking on solid form, these traditions also come to narrate collective pasts, providing a place for those in the present as cultural protectors and propagators.

## **INTRODUCTION: A PSYCHIC TOPOGRAPHY OF FOOD**

Finding yourself at Bloor Street West and Spadina at seven pm is always a cultural experience. While many of the stores in Toronto have closed for the night, hordes of similarly indecisive upper-middle class professionals flock to Bloor Street after work, meeting up with friends and colleagues, all pondering the same question: “What should we eat?” Money in their wallets, they take inventory of all of the options, trying to figure out what they *feel* like eating. What taste will satisfy their hunger tonight? What atmosphere best suits their mood? How adventurous are they feeling?

This decision is almost always accompanied by a slow stroll down Bloor, thoughtfully weighing the pros and cons of each restaurant. Whenever making this decision myself, a stroll

westwards towards Bathurst is usually the preferred method. Foregoing restaurant chains, my friends and I are often on the hunt for something a little more unique than greasy *Pizza Pizza*, BLT sandwiches at *Tim Hortons*, or roasted chicken at *Swiss Chalet*. We usually bypass *Fresh*, a vegan restaurant that is always crammed with urban hipsters. A little further West we contemplate the spicy Pad Thai at *Thai Basil*, where the chefs, servers, ingredients, and even art are advertised as being authentically Thai. If we are in the mood for something new, we might try the Nepalese Aloo Tama Bodi at *Mt. Everest Restaurant* next door. If not, we might cross the street to the *James Joyce* for some pub fare accompanied by a tall glass of Guinness or we pay a visit to *Sambuca Grill and Italian Restaurant* for some tasty pasta. Whenever we are running short of time we opt for a huge Israel-style salad at *Aroma Espresso Bar* or take a quick jog down to *Sushi on Bloor* where we can get in and out within about half an hour as long as we have a reservation. If not, *Sushi Time* is always a viable alternative, although their salmon sushi is nowhere near as good.

Each one of these restaurants has a distinct atmosphere. While *Sambuca* is slow and relaxed, *Sushi on Bloor* is always frenetic, crowded, and disorienting. Each of these foods demands a particular frame of mind to be thoroughly enjoyed. Sushi may only be eaten on days when we are all craving it. Pasta may be an appropriate choice if we have been eating healthily and want to treat ourselves. Wings and beer are better saved for the end of the week when we can sit and relax. Coming to a place like Bloor and Spadina, we are given the luxury of eating based on our mood, our palette, our budget, and our time. These dining experiences cater to us exclusively in these regards, laid out before us like a banquet of dining experiences.

That these experiences become evaluated based on comparisons of what

we *feel* like eating is significant. This is the postmodern foodscape, where foods take on their meaning in juxtaposition to one another. In a matter of four blocks, we are offered fare from many different cultures; Thai, Japanese, Italian, Turkish, Irish, Vietnamese, Nepalese, and Indian foods, among others, are presented to us as viable options for dinner. That we have so many choices, and that these choices display incredible cultural diversity, is one of the luxuries of living in one of the most multicultural cities in the world. Making these choices allows us to explore and experience other cultures, whether we appreciate these experiences as encounters with the exotic or not.

That we may have so many options open to us also begs a different question. What does it mean for food cultures when they stop being evaluated in relation to how food is made in Thailand, in Italy, in Vietnam, and in Japan, taking on meaning only in relation to each other? What are the implications of transplanting these food practices from traditional contexts into new cultures of consumption? Does this dislocation in some way deplete the places where such food traditions were originally crafted? Is it a fault of these traditions that they are so easily transported and represented in restaurants, cookbooks, cooking shows, and online recipes?

This work will contend that the transportability and fluidity of food cultures, and enacted culture in general, is indeed seen as threatening to host cultures whose food becomes part of the global cosmopolitan palate. In particular, we may look to two recently inscribed food cultures on UNESCO's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in order to gain insight into how the circulation of food cultures beyond their country of origin may threaten not only culinary standards, but also national cultural identities tied to kinship, territory, and history. These inscriptions, announced on November 16, 2010, were the first two instances of food cultures being recognized as intangible cultural heritage. This work will examine nomination files

submitted to UNESCO by France and Mexico, examining the language used to construct and define such traditions, elucidating as well the perceived threats to food cultures being described. In so doing, we may see a new concept emerging, quite similar to the idea of terroir, in which particular foods become linked with and assigned to specific geographical territories. In the case of intangible heritage, however, entire food cultures become defined as uniquely present within the nation and its territories. In so doing, what was once intangible, adaptable, and transportable becomes tangible, inextricably rooted in place, and claimable.

This work will start out with a brief history of UNESCO and Intangible Heritage, followed by a discussion of the context, history, and content of both the Mexican and French submission. These last sections will draw work being done in the field of food studies and cultural studies in order to elucidate how each nomination seeks to discursively embed their respective food traditions within a specific geographical location, nestled in the continuum of a particular national history, and reliant upon a unique socio-cultural context of production and consumption for its survival.

## **HISTORY OF UNESCO AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE**

The historical roots of UNESCO are useful in this attempt to unpack the tangible/intangible dichotomy. The General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (ICH) in October of 2003, institutionalizing a new heritage paradigm that would recognize living culture as heritage. This was a marked change from the previous regimes of heritage recognition pursued by UNESCO, departing from what Smith and Akagawa call the ‘Western authorized heritage discourse’ that emphasizes heritage as “material, monumental and nationally significant” (7).

Instead, the Convention recognizes “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage” (Text 2:1). These are social and cultural practices that take place in the present day but are constituted as heritage through assertions of temporal continuity based on intergenerational, or vertical, transmission. Intangible heritage, due to its emphasis on the present, also promotes a view of safeguarding that leaves these traditions open to change, always being adapted for the present context.

This new vision of heritage, as lived and performed in the present, is not one that came easily to UNESCO. After decades of emphasizing materiality and physical monuments as heritage, the recognition of intangible heritage was extremely controversial and had been vehemently debated by many of UNESCO’s member states for this reason. Member States could not wrap their minds around how intangible practices might be safeguarded, viewing preservation as exclusively connected to materiality. Significantly, United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom chose not to ratify the Convention, effectively opting out of the recognition that lived culture is worthy of being considered heritage.

For the thirty states who ratified the Convention by April of 2006, two new heritage lists became available to them for recognizing their intangible heritage: the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The first list is designated for “those intangible heritage practices and expressions [that] help demonstrate the diversity of this heritage and raise awareness about its importance” (Intangible para. 3). On the other hand, the Urgent list “is composed of intangible

elements that concerned communities and States Parties consider require urgent measures to keep them alive” (Intangible para. 2).

## **DIVERSITY AND HERITAGE**

This notion of protecting disappearing heritage has always been a priority for UNESCO. Founded in the wake of the massive and indiscriminate destruction of heritage monuments during both World Wars, the 1945 Constitution of UNESCO argues for promoting the “intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind” in part through “assuring the conservation and protection of the world’s inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science” (UNESCO 1:2b).

UNESCO argues that the protection of this heritage is a measure taken to promote world peace through diversity. UNESCO utilizes a model of ecological diversity in recognizing heritage, believing that, as with biological diversity, cultural diversity should be preserved. In a way, we might see this as a ‘diversity for diversity’s sake’ argument, promoting the preservation of different cultural expressions merely for their own sake; however, this diversity takes on newfound importance when we examine the representational genre used historically by UNESCO to represent this diversity: the list.

Kirschenblatt-Gimblett argues that, through listing, “everything on the list, whatever its previous context, is now placed in a relationship with other” (9) elements. Elements become divorced from their social contexts and transposed into a new context that Michael A. Di Giovine calls ‘heritage-scape’. He claims that this new context produces a unity that is “both cohesive and juxtapositional in nature [and] that even the most unrelated of cultural and natural sites become related” (21). The juxtaposition of elements on the list allows them to be perceived on an equal plane, taking on meaning synchronically, through difference. This relationship of equality

and difference, it is argued, becomes important in producing cultural acceptance between nations.

Although DiGiovine seems to be claiming that the original context, or place, recedes when elements are included on the list, we might also see how place becomes emphasized through inscription. We should take heed of David Harvey's assertions about diversity, in which "heightened inter-place competition should lead to the production of more variegated spaces within the increasing homogeneity of international exchange" (295). Manuel Castells describes a similar process, taking place within world cities to attract business through the development of their cultural resources. He argues that the current strategy is "to have good educational facilities, good nightclubs, good ideas, good places to live" (162). Culture becomes a terrain upon which countries compete.

In this light, we might see these lists as an incentive for the active creation of unique places that will conscientiously differentiate themselves in order to compete in the global sphere of places. Recognition of these places on a UNESCO world heritage list is a way to present such unique cultural identities to the world and may, as a result, be seen as a kind of global cultural capital. Throughout the decades, this notion of distinction has, in many cases, been integrated into UNESCO's heritage instruments through the notion of universal value. As we will see, however, intangible heritage differentiates itself through its denial of universal value. As we will see, this may just be a process of making the explicit implicit.

## **UNESCO AND HERITAGE**

### **A) CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE (1972)**

As mentioned above, the recognition of intangible heritage by UNESCO came on the heels of a number of previous heritage Recommendations and Conventions institutionalizing the recognition of tangible heritage. The 1972 *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, as the first heritage instrument created by UNESCO, recognized the need to protect monuments, groups of buildings, sites, natural features, geological and physiographical formations, and natural sites (UNESCO 1-2) from “destruction not only by traditional causes of decay, but also by changing social and economic conditions which aggravate the situation (UNESCO para. 2).

The World Heritage List, as instituted by the Convention, evaluated nominations based on whether they could be deemed important to the entire human race. Again, this assumed that heritage monuments around the world were in some way comparable and, as such, created a binary between worthy and unworthy heritage. Notably, after its ratification, the World Heritage List saw a proliferation of tangible heritage sites in the West, while heritage designations in the Global South and the East dwindled. In 1978, thirteen properties were inscribed, seven of which were European or North American. The following year, twenty-five out of forty-four were European or North American. In the decade from 1978-1988, over fifty percent of inscriptions were in Europe and North America, over twenty percent in Asia and the Pacific, and around fifteen percent in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Arab States, and African States (Number). The graph in Figure 1.1 and 1.2, taken from the UNESCO statistical website, show the continual domination of Europe and North America on the World Heritage List.

As a result, a number of member states in the developing world argued that the Convention favoured more industrialized nations in Western Europe (Skounti 79). These Western nations had long subscribed to the authorized heritage discourse and already had the

material resources to preserve their monuments and natural sites. In order to balance the distribution of heritage designations, some member states suggested a formal recognition that some cultures “are expressed more in their living form than in their monuments and sites” (Aikawa-Faure 15).

## **B) THE 1989 RECOMMENDATION ON THE SAFEGUARDING OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE AND FOLKLORE**

UNESCO attempted to rectify this imbalance between tangible monuments and lived expressions over a decade later when it adopted the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*. The *Recommendation* still focused on tangible culture through the notion of ‘creations’, defining folklore as “the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community insofar as they reflect its cultural and social identity” (Recommendation A). Still focused on tangible objects, the *Recommendation* was a first step towards recognizing that tangible heritage takes on its value through its relationship with the lived present.

Significantly, the *Recommendation* was just that: a recommendation. As a legal instrument it was fairly toothless due to the fact that Recommendations are not subject to ratification and, as such, are not mandatory for member states (Skounti 79). Instead, member states may choose to adopt these *Recommendations* if it suits them to do so. Skounti also notes that the Recommendation sparked a number of problems concerning modes of conservation, methodological questions, and issues of intellectual property (Skounti 80) that further complicated the issue. With limited expertise on how to preserve heritage that carries with it notions of intangible value, UNESCO called for a series of deliberations and consultations in

order to further explore the issue. These meetings resulted in a draft resolution that posited the notion of humanity's oral heritage, later resulting in the *Proclamation by UNESCO on Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* (ibid).

### **C) PROCLAMATION ON MASTERPIECES OF THE ORAL AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF HUMANITY**

The *Proclamation* was meant to serve as a temporary instrument for UNESCO until such time as a legal instrument could be drafted. The *Proclamation*, adopted in 1999 by the Executive Council, formalized two new forms of heritage: forms of popular and traditional expression and cultural spaces, evaluated on the basis of six criteria (Masterpieces 4). Popular and traditional expressions was defined as “languages, oral literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, costumes, craftwork know-how, [and] architecture” (Backgrounder para 2) while cultural spaces included “place[s] where popular and traditional cultural activities take place in a concentrated manner [...] or the time for a regularly occurring event” (Backgrounder 3). The six criteria included for inscription dictate that the expressions or spaces must possess outstanding value, be rooted in tradition and history, affirm cultural identity, display excellence in the application of skills, “constitute a unique testimony of a living cultural tradition” and be “threatened with disappearance due to insufficient means for safeguarding or to processes of rapid change” (ibid).

### **D) THE ROAD TOWARDS THE CONVENTION ON THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

As a temporary instrument, the establishment of the *Proclamation* served as a kind of experiment that would allow member states to evaluate and consider the properties of a Convention of mandatory character. One of the biggest issues that emerged as a result of the *Proclamation* concerned the notion of universal outstanding value. Some member states took

issue with the criterion of outstanding value, arguing that such a value judgment was extremely subjective. They argued that, “in a domain where the criteria for distinction of one or another cultural expression is as much a question of taste or social position than specific to the intrinsic qualities of this expression [...] distinction [becomes] an eminently political decision” (Skounti 81). For a local expression so embroiled within a particular culture’s identity to be evaluated through seemingly arbitrary aesthetic standards seemed to be against the point. These criteria would explicitly create and value cultural competitions for inscription based upon intensely localized heritage values.

The formulation of a Convention of mandatory character was, consequently, complicated from the very beginning. During the *Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts on the Preliminary Draft Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* in June of 2003, states became polarized over this question. On the one hand, Japan spearheaded the push to create “a list of masterpieces, based on the *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*” (Hafstein 98). This list would retain the criterion of outstanding value. On the other hand, Caribbean countries including Grenada, Saint Lucia, Barbados, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines submitted a proposal for “an inclusive ‘register’ without reference to aesthetic criteria” (Hafstein 98) in hopes of bypassing the competitive and comparative nature of the *Masterpieces* program. The Grenadian delegate pointed out that, should aesthetic criteria be adopted, safeguarding would become a competition that automatically favoured rich countries that had already invested money into safeguarding measures (Hafstein 101).

In the end a compromise was reached, although it was one that left many questions unanswered. The Caribbean’s open-ended register proposal was rejected, as was the language of

masterpieces and treasures (Hafstein 101); instead, the selection criteria came to contain references to the value imposed on these traditions by the communities involved, as well as a strong human rights imperative that would preclude any elements from being included that in some way promoted discrimination or strife. The importance of communities within the Convention, for Blake, marks a transition between seeing heritage as high art to a definition that is more anthropological (Blake 46) in the sense that it recognizes that heritage and its valuation may only really be evaluated relative to that community. Nations, through the consent of their communities, become responsible for determining which cultural manifestations are important to their nation.

This extreme cultural relativism is a double-edged sword for world heritage. Although, on the one hand, doing away with universal value may promote the recognition of heritage practices in the developing world, the implication that only those within the host nation have the tools to appreciate their own heritage perhaps prevents these cultural forms from being experienced by outsiders. We may see how this may have the effect of embedding these cultural forms within the nation and dissolving the historically juxtapositional impulse of UNESCO that promotes an outward looking comparative gaze.

With members finally agreeing on this point during three meetings of an intergovernmental panel of experts in 2002 and 2003, a draft proposal was adopted at UNESCO's 32<sup>nd</sup> General Conference in October 2003 (Skounti 81). The Convention recognizes "oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, knowledge and practices concerning the nature of the universe, and craftsmanship" (Convention 2:2) and places value on the performance of culture as a way to continue national historical traditions.

For member states who have ratified the Convention, of which there are currently over a hundred, the nomination process requires that all member states submit intangible heritage inventories that “identify and define the various elements of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory” (Convention 11b). These inventories are meant to serve as registers, taking account of all intangible heritage elements seen as valuable to each member state. Out of these inventories, member states may choose to nominate elements for inscription on either list.

For intangible heritage to be inscribed, nominations must be submitted to the *Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, a committee consisting of eighteen member states elected by the General Assembly of State Parties every four years (Convention 6). The nomination process includes two main forms: a nomination form and document proving the consent of all of the communities and stakeholders involved. The nomination form requires the state to identify and define the element and its corresponding community, explaining how the recognition of the element will contribute to intercultural dialogue, proposing safeguarding measures, and describing how the consent of the community was established for this element. Once these documents are submitted, the *Committee* evaluates whether or not the element will be inscribed.

### **FROM THE TANGIBLE TO INTANGIBLE: HERITAGE AND MATERIALITY**

In order to elucidate why UNESCO had such issues in attempting to recognize intangible heritage, it is helpful to recognize that tangibility, for UNESCO and within the ‘authorized heritage discourse, has always been synonymous with permanence (Ruggles & Silverman 4). Tangible heritage, viewed in this capacity, is literally a physical manifestation that provides proof of some kind of historical continuity. The recognition that intangible expressions of culture could endure without material evidence of that historical continuity is one that many countries

have had a hard time recognizing. Intangible cultural expressions are, unlike tangible monuments, sporadic in their appearance, subject to different manifestations throughout the years, at times composed of different components, and are perceived to be gone once they are performed until the next performance should take place.

Conversely, the recognition of tangible heritage in the 1972 *Convention* professes a straightforward view of heritage, based on the literal survival and protection of historical traces from a different time. Through the physical rootedness of monuments and sites within place, the tangible monument serves as a mark that has never disappeared. The immovability of such a site provides testimony to the public that there does exist a narrative of history, which has been witnessed by the monument. We may understand the value of such tangible monuments through Stewart's work on souvenirs. He argues that the souvenir is a palliative measure, meant to provide proof of "events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative" (135). Stewart argues that such souvenirs serve as a metonym for the past, "reduc[ing] the public, the monumental, and the three-dimensional into the miniature, that which can be [perceived] by the body" (138). As fragments of the past, tangible heritage becomes fetishized for its age value, serving as material proof of endurance and permanence in an age of ephemerality.

Pierre Nora extends this argument, claiming that the reliance on tangible monuments and objects in order to remember signals a tearing of memory. This tearing is the result of what he calls "the acceleration of history," the "increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good [giving us the perception] that anything and everything may disappear" (Nora 7). Through the process of modernization, ephemerality has become a cultural force, constantly pushing us forward. This has resulted in the sense that the past is disappearing, no

longer neatly organized by historical narratives. He claims that the result of this has been an increasing reliance on memory prosthetics, arguing “the less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through exterior scaffolding and outward signs” (Nora 13). While tangible heritage provides us with such an outward sign, intangible heritage risks falling prey to this rapid slippage.

Choay, arguing for a same kind of mnemonic crisis, argues that the cause of this has been the “proliferation of mediations and screens between men and the world and between men and themselves” that allows us to escape our own territorial space, “short-circuiting bodily experience of the physical world and direct contact” (167). Left rootless, we require a tangible and physical object to provide us with material proof that history has happened and that we are still rooted in our physicality. Tangible monuments, in this light, provide us with a solid narrative of origin, rooted within a specific place, assuaging our anxieties about change and assuring us that tradition continues.

That physical heritage preservation may be engender anxieties about our ability to remember has very specific implications for the recognition of intangible heritage. Intangible heritage, having no permanent souvenir or trace that assures us of its continuity, becomes problematic. Performed sporadically, in a way that is rarely ever documented, intangible heritage may be seen as constantly slipping into an indeterminate past. Although it is a fallacy to assume that such traditions, because they are immaterial and inconstant, will disappear, the anxiety over this might incite a project to render them more tangible and less ephemeral. The process of documentation and inscription may be seen in this light.

## **DESCRIBING THE NATION: POETIC WORLD-MAKING**

These documents, especially those sections dealing with describing elements, are especially important due to the fact that these definitions are being institutionalized and accepted as representing reality. Considering that the inscription comes with no guarantee or promise of pecuniary reward or international aid, the significance of these symbolic representations becomes of primary importance.

The process of inscription is the first of many ways that UNESCO's Intangible Heritage List seeks to render cultural expressions permanent and material. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett argues that "the list is [...] the most visible, least costly, and most conventional way to 'do something' – something symbolic – about neglected communities and traditions [...] confer[ring] value on what is listed" (9). Even more importantly for our purposes, Di Giovine argues that, "in the mind, nothing becomes something when a narrative is affixed to it; abstraction is concreted when it is inserted into a narrative" (120). Within these documents, the ephemeral and intangible becomes defined and solidified through their definition and description.

We must be careful not to see these documents as objective mirrors of society. They are conscious social constructions submitted by the State. The State exists as the primary node of agency within the structure of these heritage nominations through its role as creator of inventories. Although the State must prove the consent of communities within the nomination forms, these nominations cannot happen at all without the support of the State. Keeping this in mind, we might be tempted to see the descriptions of the intangible cultural heritage as top-down invented traditions, which "seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour" (Hobsbawm 1) prescriptively. Mazatan-Paramo makes this argument in his analysis of the first submission for *Mexican Traditional Cuisine*, arguing that inscription is a form of soft power that is meant to counteract "changes of political sovereignty threatened by the state of global interconnections [in

order to] regain control over [...] national governance” (136). He emphasizes the falsity of the original construction, noting that, continuing the trend of 18<sup>th</sup> century nationalism in Mexico, “national unity demanded cultural homogeneity” (35) despite the extreme diversity of the Mexican nation. The rejection of this first nomination was premised on the fact that Mexico, in reality, could not be said to be homogenous.

With the successful inscription of the French gastronomic meal, and Mexican Traditional Cuisine, our framework must be a little more nuanced, acknowledging agency at both the level of the community and of the nation. Smith’s work on the construction of the nation is useful in this regard and pays credence to the mutually constitutive nature of national identity. He proposes that the nationalist takes on the role of the political archeologist, working towards “rediscovering and reinterpreting the communal past in order to regenerate the community [acknowledging the presence] of certain criteria” (18). In particular, Smith argues that nationalist narrative constructions must “be consonant not only with the ideological demands of nationalism, but also with scientific evidence, popular resonance and patterning of particular ethno-histories” (ibid). Overall, then, we may see intangible heritage as a nationalist project that draws upon pre-existing social, cultural, and political ideologies and mythologies. The component of community consent assures us that the value of such cultural expressions is not just imposed by the state, but recognized by communities as well, portraying a vision of negotiated meaning between the community and the State.

The inscriptions are formal recognitions that the nation may have a number of texts that have the ability to speak to all members of the nation at the same time. The process of making these texts visible through inscription may have as its goal the creation of a public, or imagined community. Calling upon Anderson’s work on ‘imagined communities,’ we might see intangible

cultural heritage, in most cases, as texts similar to Anderson's newspaper. The reading of this newspaper by communities "happen[s] independently, without the actors being aware of each other or what the others are up to" (33); nevertheless, the newspaper, for Anderson, is part of a mass-ceremony that unites a community. Making this mass-ceremony explicit promotes the unity of the nation, in which "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members [...] yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 6).

In the context of food heritage, this negotiation may be seen as taking the form of calling attention to banal practices. Billig posits that, at times, nationalism disappears, taking on everyday forms that are rarely ever considered nationalistic. He further argues that national traditions "can be simultaneously present and absent, in actions which preserve collective memory without the conscious activity of individuals remembering" (186). Food is a perfect example of such banal nationalisms, taking on a mundane aspect through the everyday requirement of making choices about what to eat. Food consumption and the practices associated with such consumption, often occurring in the privacy of one's own home, further distancing it from the realm of consideration as nationalism.

Nevertheless, through these choices we display culturally constructed tastes. Lucy Long makes this argument, claiming that preferences for certain foods navigate the realms of palatability, edibility, and acceptability, the construction of which is "based on our individual histories and personal tastes as well as on the collective cultural experience and the generally accepted culinary aesthetic" (32). As such, food practices expressed by individuals may refer back to collectively embedded notions of cultural acceptability and taboo, rooted within specific cultural contexts. Roland Barthes, for example, discusses the role of steak and fries in constructing French nationalism, arguing that in France steak "is an edible metaphor for the

national family, offering a symbol of consensus across the social classes, figuring ‘in all the surroundings of alimentary life’ (Ashley 5-6). This universal appreciation, when made explicit, may serve to construct an imagined community through its interpolation.

In recognizing that these inscriptions may serve to draw upon existing banal practices to create a sense of nationalism, we may also say that these texts are also creative. As Warner argues, the public is created through interpolation, “com[ing] into being only in relation to texts and their circulation” (50). As Warner argues, not only do texts attempt to call up a public, but they also specify the kind of public they hope to create, only after verifying the existence of such a public through citation and circulation (82). In this light, we may see that meaning is being co-produced and that nationalistic constructions will not catch on if they do not already describe an existing public that recognizes it as such.

In recognizing that nationalism is both rooted in and created for national publics, we avoid overdetermining the agency of the state. For this reason, perhaps the most significant assertion of power by the state is not what it describes but what it chooses to forget. This paper will, however, focus on the positive content of such constructions, attempting to make explicit the view of the nation that is inherent within the construction of the French gastronomic meal and Traditional Mexican cuisine as mediation between communities and the State. The recognition that publics are interpolated also requires that this analysis pay attention to the characteristics of the publics as constructed through these submissions. Where are their boundaries? Who do they include and exclude? What realms of circulation are open to these culinary texts? In the case of the French gastronomic meal and Mexican traditional cuisine, these questions become particularly important.

## **THE FRENCH GASTRONOMIC MEAL: AN EMBEDDED NATIONALISTIC PRACTICE**

### **A) THE FRENCH SUBMISSION: CONTEXT**

The social, political, and cultural climate of these nations becomes particularly important when we start to consider how such nations are constructed discursively. The general climate within each nation will provide important hints about why such submissions were deemed necessary and about what characteristics each element should have in order to combat certain threats. For France, we may look towards important political and economic changes that have impacted France's ability to remain sovereign and the state's ability to make decisions in relation to this sovereignty.

France, as argued by Gordon and Meunier, has always had a dirigiste political economic system. In the past, they argue, the French people have been used to "looking to the state to provide jobs, redistribute incomes, protect against unwanted imports, and promote prestigious industrial sectors and perceived national interests" (23). France's government has always played a large role in the regulation of the political, economic, and cultural realms. In recent years, however, France's sovereignty has been compromised in each of these realms, both internally and externally.

First of all, France, having one of the most socialist governments in Europe, has had their power to make decisions about their own country compromised through its membership in the European Union. Sophie Meunier argues that Mitterand agreed to join the European Union in order to consolidate France's power within Europe, "giving France an opportunity to find a new world role as the leader of the opposition to globalization" (106). She argues that France has,

historically, positioned itself as anti-globalization and anti-trade liberalization and the European Union provided an opportunity for France to create a united front against such forces.

With the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the European Union was established, composed of twenty-seven European states. The Maastricht treaty established a common market, allowing for free trade and free movement across national borders for European Union citizens. In addition, the European Union has extensive political power. The Union has exclusive legislative power when dealing with customs, competition rules, monetary policy for countries with the Euro, common commercial policy, and the conservation of marine biology (EU Article 3). The European Union shares the legislative competences with the state of regulating the internal market, social policy, economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and fisheries, the environment, consumer protection, trans-European networks, energy, freedom, security and justice, and common safety concerns. With this shared capacity for legislation, the member state may only legislate where the European Union has not (EU Article 4). In addition, the European Union may support or supplement legislation dealing with industry, culture, tourism, education, and protection of human health (EU Article 6). Within the European Union, then, the power of the State to legislate economic issues has been severely compromised.

France is also part of the World Trade Organization, founded in 1994 during the final Uruguay GATT round of negotiations. The World Trade Organization has as its purpose “to help trade flow as freely as possible – so long as there are no undesirable side-effects – because this is important for economic development and well-being. That partly means removing obstacles” (WTO). The World Trade Organization exists as one of the centerpieces of neoliberalism, a paradigm that serves allegedly to promote “free market policies that encourage private enterprises and consumer choice, reward personal responsibility and entrepreneurial initiative,

and undermine the dead hand of the incompetent, bureaucratic and parasitic government” (7). Neoliberalism, bringing with the trends of privatization, deregulation, and tariff-free borders, opens the doors to imports from other countries, transnational corporations, and flows of culture.

It has also subjected French culture to the global market. France was particularly concerned about its culture during the Uruguay GATT rounds in 1993, out of which the World Trade Organization was founded. Frau-Meigs discusses the antagonism that developed between the US and the European Union during these talks that focused specifically on services and intellectual property. In particular, there were two contrary positions: those who wanted free trade and favoured deregulation and what Frau-Meigs calls “exceptionists who wanted maintenance of national industries without sealing borders” (4). France was at the helm of the exceptionist camp, advocating for the ability to protect local film and television industries. The influx of Hollywood films in particular was seen as threatening and, as a result, France argued for the ability to protect these areas. The perception that culture should be, in some way, a protected realm aligns itself well UNESCO’s heritage designations. Although these inscriptions are purely symbolic, they demarcate a specific realm of culture that requires protection from globalizing forces.

This may also be seen in the context in which the World Trade Organization has allowed sanctions against France for refusing to import certain goods. In spring of 1999, the World Trade Organization made a number of rulings against Europe that prevented them from regulating the inflows of goods, more specifically of food. In the first case, the United States was permitted by the WTO to institute \$191 million in trade sanctions against the European Union for refusing to alter banana-importing rules. The existing rules favoured small Caribbean producers, many of which were former European colonies, over banana producers in Latin America run by

American-backed corporations (Denny). Similarly, the United States called on the EU to lift a 10-year old ban on hormone-treated beef imports (Beams para 1), arguing that it was safe “as long as scientific evidence could not attest to danger” (Meunier 108). When the European Union refused, citing studies pointing to possible risks, the United States decided to heavily tax symbolic products of French gastronomy like foie gras, truffles and Roquefort cheese” (Martigny 47).

The ability of the World Trade Organization to punish countries, in this case those in the European, for making decisions about what can and cannot be imported promotes the sense that “France has no control over what comes across its borders, meaning that without protection this could include hormones and genetically modified food” (Gordon & Meunier 32). The inability to make decisions about the integrity of foods coming across the borders is one that has compromised the power of France, in particular, to protect its food cultures.

Within this context, a number of new legal instruments have been and are being created in order to protect local food and food cultures, the oldest of which is the *Appellations d’origine* system. Based on the notion of terroir, which assumes that “food and drink from a certain place are thought to possess unique tastes” (Trubek 18), food become inextricably connected to the place it is grown and produced. In the form of a legal designation, according to Gade, terroir “guarantees the place of origin and plays out a set of production requirements for that bounded space identified with quality” (849).

The first legal recognition of this connection came in 1935 when the *Institut national des appellations d’origine* (INAO), under the French Ministry of Agricultural and Fishing, was established, in charge of promoting place-specific foods through geographic indication. This program, the *appellation d’origine controlee*, serves to protect and regulate local production,

ensuring quality through a connection to specific territory and integrity of production methods. The *appellation* program was originally established to designate wine products but has since been expanded to include dairy, spices, cheese, meat, fruit, fish, among other products. The names of these products become proprietary to producers within specific regions, effectively preventing producers from elsewhere from attempting to replicate and sell their own versions. This, essentially, is an artificial monopoly produced in order to anchor specific foods to place.

The European Union adopted this line of thinking in the *Protection of Geographical Indications and Designations of Origin*, passed in March of 2006. Unlike *appellations d'origine*, the *Geographical Indications* program relies on EU food labels to tell consumers where their food is from, providing a “link between the characteristics of certain products and their geographical origin” (EU). A successful designation of *Protected Geographical Indication* or *Protected Designation of Origin* allows food products to utilize an EU symbol on food labels in order to market their food. There are two different indications available to producers: the *Protected Designation of Origin* label that “describe[s] foodstuffs which are produced, processed and prepared in a given geographic area” (Protection para 4) and the *Protected Geographical Indication* which signifies a link with an area in at least one stage of production (ibid). The Designation of Origin label is the most coveted label and functions to assure consumers of the entirely local nature of these food items.

Terroir and geographic indications recognized by France the EU may soon find a complement in World Trade Organization regulations. Currently, in the Doha Rounds of the World Trade Organization, the Article 22 of the TRIPS agreement concerns *Protection of Geographical Indications*, an article that would provide the legal means for parties to prevent “the use of any means in the designation or presentation of a good that indicates or suggests that the good in

question originates in a geographical area other than the true place of origin” (TRIPS a). In addition, the Doha mandate has debated the creation of a “multilateral register for wines and spirits; and extending the higher (Article 23) level of protection beyond wines and spirits” (Ibid).

Common among all of these geographic designations is the creation of monopolies of production, sheltering local food producers from the global market by asserting their embeddedness in a specific geographical region and their unique production methods. In this way, we might see geographic indications as a way to create a cultural, or in this case culinary, exception. In providing these designations, these products become sheltered from a free market that in a climate of free trade that would allow for other producers to compete.

## **B) THE FRENCH SUBMISSION: HISTORY**

Nicolas Sarkozy officially announced the French nomination for the French Gastronomic Meal at the opening of France’s Agricultural Salon in 2008. This public announcement came after two years of organizing on the part of the *French Mission for Patrimony and Food Cultures* (MFPCA), a group of academics and chefs in charge of assembling the nomination. At the time he justified the nomination, arguing that France should be recognized for having the best food in the world. He also noted that never before had UNESCO inscribed a food tradition upon their intangible heritage list, increasing the distinction that such an inscription would bring.

Although Sarkozy announced the nomination, neither he nor the state played a large part in the process of promotion and construction of the nomination. Instead, a number of academics and self-professed gastronomes lobbied politicians and the public for years, attempting to convince them of the value that such an inscription might bring. The MFPCA was a small organization, founded in 2007 by Francois Chevrier, the director of the *European Institute of History and Cultures of the Diet*. Chevrier at first populated the MFPCA with a number of his

colleagues interested in nominating the French gastronomic meal as intangible cultural heritage. The MFPCA gradually acquired some momentum through the help of a number of highly respected gastronomic figures that included academics, politicians, restaurateurs, and chefs.

The MFPCA enlisted Jean-Robert Pitte, ex-President of the Sorbonne and vice president of the *Society of Geography and Food* to be their director. Pitte, with the help of French restaurateur Jaume Tapiés, was responsible for creating a committee and gathered around four hundred signatures from some of France's most noteworthy chefs in support of the submission (Beaudoin). For their public campaign, the mission positioned Michelin-starred international chefs Guy Savoy, Michel Guerard and Oliver Roelliger as spokesmen. Politically, the MFPCA put former minister of culture Jack Lang and Nicolas Perruchot, a member of the National Assembly of France, in charge of convincing President Nicolas Sarkozy of the value of such an inscription. Chevrier describes the extreme lack of interest on the part of politicians and the Ministry of Culture in an interview with journalist Anne-Cecile Beaudoin, for the Paris Match. He was reportedly scoffed at by the Ministry of Culture, asked if he really thought that tete de veau sauce could represent humanity's heritage in the same way as the Mont-Saint-Michel (Beaudoin para 3).

This comment again elucidates the inability of Western Europe to rectify intangible heritage with the dominant mode of heritage that emphasizes tangibility and exceptional value. It must be remembered that France has long proclaimed itself as a kind of culinary centre, the cuisine of all cuisines. In a book called *The Epicure*, written in 1906, the writer asserts that "there only exist[s] one 'cuisine' – la cuisine- invented by France" (64). Amy Trubek's book *Haute Cuisine*, chronicles the rise of French cuisine, emerging from the kitchens of the aristocratic classes after the French Revolution. She discusses the formalization of French

technique and its subsequent spreading throughout Europe and North America, remarking that in 1848 even the King and Queen had French chefs to cook their banquets at Buckingham palace (48). Although other cuisines, in particular Asian cuisines, have emerged on the global culinary horizon, it is significant that French restaurants continue to be some of the most expensive restaurants. That French politicians should not recognize France as deriving its identity, in part, from having been a self-proclaimed culinary dominant for centuries must be considered significant. Again, we must come back to this inability to consider intangible practices heritage.

Although the political support for the project was scant, the success of the mission really hinged upon convincing Nicolas Sarkozy of the value of the nomination. When this was accomplished other politicians eventually fell in line, persuaded both by their leader and by Parisian senator Catherine Dumas. In 2009 she founded the *Club Parlementaire de la Table*, a meeting of three hundred deputies and senators around issues of the French table (Beaudoin para. 5). The press release for the first meeting, announced on May 19 2009, states the purpose of the meeting as the organization of the defense of an important part of the French identity: cuisine, wine, and the art of the table (Dumas para 1). While this meeting did not address the nomination of the French gastronomic meal specifically, Beaudoin reveals that the meetings served to show politicians the relationship between the French, their history, and their culinary arts (Beaudoin para. 5).

That the state did not play a primary role in assembling and organizing the nomination supports the claim that these nominations are mutually constituted. As Vincent Martigny discusses in his work on terroir, there has been a historical decline in the role of the state as the exclusive producer of symbols of national identity (51). Instead, he argues that the state takes on the role of regulator in order to promote French food” (ibid). Gastronomic professionals, chefs,

food experts, and members of the public sphere instead are burdened with the task of creating these symbols of national identity, particularly in this case. A construction assembled by the MFPC in isolation could not be said to represent the nation, either. The MFPC, a group of elite chefs and figureheads, may not adequately represent working-class and everyday conceptions of food, especially considering France's illustrious culinary mythologies surrounding haute cuisine. Some of the media lambasted the French for nominating the gastronomic meal, arguing that it was meant as compensatory symbolic action in the context of increasingly exotic cuisines that have dethroned France's culinary superiority.

When looking at the submissions, however, we can see how emphasis is placed upon popular food traditions, allegedly accessible to all citizens of France, rather than on haute cuisine. It was established fairly early in the process that the submission should be everything but a promotion of the Michelin Star System (Beaudoin para 6). The idea to focus on a populist food practice came from a series of inquests and interviews initiated by the MFPC. A key construct was discovered by Chevrier in his conversation with a grandmother. She argued that gastronomy is for everyone, provided that everyone participates (ibid). Out of this interview, the MFPC decided to focus the submission on commensality and togetherness, manifested at celebratory communal meals.

### **C) THE FRENCH GASTRONOMIC MEAL: DEFINITIONS**

The French submission focuses on the French gastronomic meal, described as “a customary social practice for celebrating important moments in the lives of individuals and groups, such as births, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, achievements and reunions [and] bring[s] people together for an occasion to enjoy the art of good eating and drinking” (MFPC 3).

They submission argues that the gastronomic meal is a universal social practice and that over ninety percent of the French population believe it to be part of their cultural heritage and identity.

The French submission elaborates on the specifications for such a meal, arguing that it involves choosing a menu, purchasing good products, pairing food with wine, following a specific structure, setting a beautiful table, and engaging in “gastronomic discourse” throughout the meal (MFPC 5). All of these components come together in the definition of the gastronomic meal that, the rules of which are passed down through individual transmission and transmission in the continuum of history. The safeguarding measures promoted within the proposal include documenting family and community traditions, establishing archives, and integrating gastronomic education into the school systems.

#### **D) THE FRENCH GASTRONOMIC MEAL: ANALYSIS**

First of all, the submission for the French gastronomic meal elucidates perceived threats to the French gastronomic meal through a number of references to cultural standardization. The MFPC rationalizes the inscription, arguing that it might “show everyone that cultural diversity includes foodways and that their inscription could contribute to the fight against the standardization of lifestyles in the world” (MFPC 6). On the same page, the submission promotes the use of local foods as “such products symbolize non-standardization and quality in terms of taste, nutrition and food safety, the outcome of humans’ intelligent interaction with the environment” (ibid).

The notion of the standardization of lifestyles draws upon the modernization thesis, contending that “growing global interconnectedness leads toward increasing cultural standardization and uniformization” (Pieterse 309). This standardization allegedly degrades diversity, invading cultures and leeching them of their uniqueness. Interestingly, the phrase

“standardization of lifestyles” (MFPC 6) contains within it no agent, nominalizing the verb in a way that fails to attribute agency. This has the result of portraying homogenization as a faceless force invading unique cultures.

This statement plays upon a motif present within French discourse of the “malbouffe”, or junk food. French activist Jose Bove utilized a similar argument after his arrest for the destruction of a McDonalds in Milan in 1999 in the context of US sanctions. In an interview, he claimed “la bouffe [est] de nulle part, pas meme issue de la culture americaine” (Martigny 48). This translates roughly as ‘junk food is from nowhere, not even coming out of American culture’. Similarly, French anthropologist Marc Auge argues that fast food restaurants are ‘non-places’ (Inglis & Gimlin 25). He differentiates between place and non-place, arguing that “if a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place” (Auge 77-78). Furthermore, he argues that ‘supermodernity’ has a tendency to produce non-places dedicated to “the fleeting, the temporary and the ephemeral” (78). Being set up within this discourse are the binaries of something/nothing and somewhere/nowhere.

To deconstruct these binaries further, George Ritzer’s work on something and nothing within the context of globalization is helpful. He argues that the main trend in the world today is the grobalization of nothing, grobalizing being the growth of imperialistic corporations and countries who try to impose themselves on others and ‘nothing’ being “a social form that is [...] centrally conceived, controlled and comparatively devoid of distinctive substance” (195). He argues that there has been a worldwide spread of “weightless products with no cultural designations and [that are] easily transportable” (Inglis and Gimlin 25). To counter this trend of spreading nothingness, ‘something’ is “indigenously conceived, controlled, and comparatively

rich in distinctive substantive content” (195). Indigenously embedded traditions, within this binary, have more substance than more standardized fare disconnected from geographic place.

Although intangible cultural heritage may, circumstantially, be present in one specific location, we cannot say that it is immovable. Unlike food with a defined terroir, intangible heritage cannot be said to exist only within one specific place. Intangible practices can be fairly easily duplicated within different cultural contexts. As such, we might see that perceived threats to foodways are emerging, not just out of a fear of the imperialistic forces of nothing, but also out of the threat that French food, when represented on a transnational scale, might become weightless, moving along the continuum towards ‘nothing’.

In utilizing the framework of terroir, in which food must come from a particular place, we might see these inscriptions as an attempt to root intangible culture, making it immovable. We may see that the submission hints at the notion of terroir itself through the contention that local foods “have a high cultural value” (MFPC 9). In addition, terroir is also recognized through a reference to the *Inventaire du patrimoine culinaire de la France* (MFPC 6) as a previously initiated safeguarding measure. This initiative, enacted on behalf of the *National Council for the Culinary Arts*, has produced twenty-two guidebooks on the different regions of France, describing the different products and recipes originating from each region. As a tool for those performing the gastronomic meal, the *Inventaire* promotes specific recipes and ingredients according to the French region in which it is being performed; consequently, we might see how the inventory promotes discrete representations of different regions, naturalized through references to the characteristics of each territory and the products produced there. As such, local food traditions become anchored within specific geographical regions.

The *Inventaire*, and terroir designations in France in general may also be seen as referring to a pastoral vision of agriculture and craft production. According to Amy Trubek, “even though there are fewer and fewer French peasants, the idea of the peasant looms large in the cultural imagination” (14). The mythologizing of the rural French worker is actually a part of INAO regulations, codified in the assertion that only rural workers may apply for *appellations*. In this light, terroir designations and the importance of local food may be seen to hearken back to a simpler time, placing the rural French peasant as the ideal producer. This French myth also asserts a certain kind of historical continuity that allows the French, in the context of the French gastronomic meal, to celebrate and support the myth of the French peasant, connecting present practices with a past ideal. In this sense, it might be argued that, in the context of this submission, reference to local food and terroir serves to anchor highly transportable food practices (namely dinner parties) through reference to terroir and the weight of a national myth, rooted in history.

The submission argues that the *Inventaire* safeguards the French gastronomic meal through “ensuring the viability of a rite involved in the gastronomic meal, namely, choosing the right product” (MFPC 7). Interestingly enough, the right product does not necessarily need to be prepared in a way that is distinctly French. The gastronomic meal is characterized as the “product of social and cultural mixes, regional plurality and contributions by immigrants” (MFPC 2). The submission also notes that a menu selection should be taken “from a constantly growing repertoire of recipes” (MFPC 5). This would suggest that cooking and menu selection may involve a diverse range of cultural influences and that the French gastronomic meal is open to change and adaptation. In this way, the French gastronomic meal seems fluid and flexible.

Nevertheless, this fluidity is contingent upon a few factors. First of all, the public addressed by this nomination is very specific. The submission asserts that the French gastronomic meal is “also enjoyed by French people living abroad [and] has spread to many countries through geographic proximity [...] migration and population movement” (MFPC 2). Noticeably absent from this equation is the potential for transmission to take place horizontally across space between different nationalities through media representation. The discourse seems to be arguing that, in order to enjoy the French gastronomic meal, one must either be connected in some way to French territory, or to be French in origin. Excluded from this list are those wishing to enact the French gastronomic meal outside of France, as cultural outsiders

In addition, the transmission methods emphasize kinship ties and historical continuity. On the one hand, the promotion of vertical transmission, in which heritage is “handed down informally to family and friends from generation to generation” (MFPC 5) emphasizes traditional kinship ties to family and local community. Perhaps even more importantly, the second transmission method, ‘transmission in the continuum of history,’ argues for the recognition that “the gastronomic meal reminds the French of their history and thus gives them a feeling of continuity” (MFPC 5-6). Significantly, then, we might see how membership within this public is prefaced upon national, and historical, belonging. For someone to feel the weight of this cultural tradition, they must feel themselves to be a part of the nation’s history. This has the effect of potentially excluding newer immigrants from feeling this historical weight.

The French gastronomic meal also presupposes a social support system that would allow families and communities to gather together in times of celebration. The ability to enact such a meal, then, depends upon how embedded an individual is within a particular community and how accessible and readily available family members are to participate. That these groups should be

able to gather together to celebrate and to eat assumes is in fact reliant upon the geographical proximity of friends, family, and neighbors. As such, we may see that these meals are heavily rooted in kinship ties that promote connections to those through proximity.

The codification of the appreciation of local terroir, citizenship, and distinctive 'somethingness' as described in the submission serves to construct an anchor for an extremely intangible and transportable practice. Through connections to kinship, terroir, and history, the French tradition is portrayed as an endogenous cuisine, a text that circulates within the borders of the nation, enacted by those of French descent both at home and abroad. That French political borders become so important within this submission works to naturalize these boundaries and reifies the state as a unique place with its own culture and identity.

Last but not least, we must take into account the fact that this intangible heritage element is organized for the purpose of eating. Bell and Valentine argue that food is a liminal substance, bridging the divide between nature and culture, the human and the natural, the outside and the inside" (44). Through the consumption of local foods, ordered in a very specific way, we may see how a French national tradition may literally become incorporated into the physical body, the ultimate transformation of culture into nature. In recognizing terroir, we may see the land, and the nation, may become part of one's identity. Through the process of interpolation of publics, the process of preparing the French gastronomic meal becomes a nationalistic endeavour and the consumption of such signifies not only commensality between members of a family or a community; it also means the literal and symbolic consumption of nationalistic ideologies.

## **MEXICAN TRADITIONAL CUISINE – ANCESTRAL, ONGOING CULTURE, THE MICHUACAN PARADIGM: UNITY IN DIVERSITY**

### **A) THE MEXICAN SUBMISSION: CONTEXT**

Mexico's economic and political sovereignty has also been severely compromised in the context of globalization, a result of the Latin American debt crisis. Mexico had borrowed huge sums from international creditors in order to build up infrastructure but the recession of the 1970s and 1980s made it more difficult to repay their debts. This, along with plummeting exchange rates left the Mexican government owing much more. In 1982, Mexican finance minister Jesus Silva-Herzog declared that Mexico had defaulted on its loans, unable to make the due-dates for repayment. In response, Mexico procured a loan from the International Monetary Fund, coming with extreme conditions and structural adjustment programs. These structural adjustment programs were export-oriented and "effectively dismantled the public welfare system, privatized agencies, and eliminated subsidies" (Lind & Barham 56).

This financial instability was also coupled with the fact that Mexico entered into the *North American Free Trade Agreement* in 1995, severely compromising Mexico's agricultural prowess. Lind and Barham discuss the effect that NAFTA had on corn production, a primary crop that they argue is deeply connected to the Mexican identity. NAFTA, according to them, put Mexico in a position to be "exposed to the global market where cheap US corn swamped Mexican producers" (Lind & Barham 56), putting Mexican corn producers out of business. The agricultural model that does survive only does so because farmers hold other jobs to subsidize farming, raising corn yields through adapting modern farming techniques and lobbying for government aid (Malkin 2). Without a protected national industry, NAFTA opened borders and subjected Mexican production to the vulnerability of the global market.

In addition, Elisabeth Malkin of the *New York Times* notes that free trade has made redundant many domestic industries, instead importing cheaper goods from abroad. While in 2008, Mexico's imports quintupled to \$292 billion, she notes that half a million Mexicans are

also exported, seeking out better job opportunities in the United States (Malkin 1). The rise of China as a cheap manufacturer has also weakened Mexico's economic position, having been for many years the cheap alternative to American and Canadian manufacturing. The position of Mexico within the context of globalization can be seen as one of vulnerability and instability. Unlike France, whose biggest problem with globalization seems to be an issue of cultural sovereignty and survival, Mexico's problems are primarily economic; consequently, we must see the Mexican inscription as not just a method of reigning in the cultural meaning of food, but also as potentially spurred on by economic incentives.

## **B) THE MEXICAN SUBMISSION: HISTORY**

The Mexican submission is one that has been in progress for a number of years and has taken on a number of different forms. Proposed at the first *Conference on Gastronomic Heritage and Cultural Tourism* by restaurateur and journalist Yuriria Iturrigia in 1999, Mexico's attempt to earn itself an inscription has been long and arduous. The nomination has had three versions. The first nomination was submitted to UNESCO prior to the 2005 round of inscriptions and was returned with feedback. The second submission, based off of this feedback, was rejected at the 2005 meeting of the UNESCO *Intergovernmental Committee*. The final, and current, proposal was submitted for the 2010 round of determinations in Nairobi, Kenya, and was accepted and inscribed on November 16, 2010 under the title *Traditional Mexican Cuisine – Ancestral, Ongoing Community Culture, the Michoacan Paradigm*.

The *National Cultural Heritage and Tourism Coordination* (CCHT) has been responsible for all three submissions, existing as part of the *National Council for Culture and the Arts* (CNCA). The CNCA is a subsidiary agency of the Mexican Ministry of Education. As part of the Ministry of Education, the CCHT's mission statement is to work towards "linking government to

national and international public and private organisms in order to guarantee the appreciation and protection of Mexico's heritage in the execution of a responsible and sustainable tourism" (EM para. 1). Mazatan-Paramo chronicles the history of the CCHT, arguing that it was developed in the 1990s with the goal of developing niche heritage tourism capitalizing on the trends of eco- and gastronomic tourism (10). Up until that point, Mexican tourism had consisted of beachside vacations and archeological sites, neither of which took full advantage of Mexico's lived culture.

At the helm of the CCHT was Gloria Morales, the former Director of UNESCO Regional Office of Culture for Latin America and the Caribbean, located in Cuba. In order to explore the possibility of promoting culinary tourism, Morales organized a series of five conferences on gastronomic heritage, taking place annual from 1999 until 2004. Mazatan-Paramo notes that attendees came from a wide range of interests and fields and included chefs, researchers, public functionaries, journalists, tourist and marketing experts, and restaurateurs (102). These professionals discussed Mexico's vast culinary heritage and came up with the idea for the submission in 2002, citing the desire to "pair [...] the centrality of Mexican food in the life of Mexicans with an affirmation of pride about it (Mazatan-Paramo 102).

Notable about Mexican cuisine is that it was an exclusively endogenous cuisine until the 1980s (ibid). According to Lind and Barham, Mexican cuisine failed to migrate into restaurant kitchens in part because of a hierarchy of tastes during Spanish colonialism that jettisoned local peasant foods, favouring instead imported foods like wheat (54). Jeffrey Pilcher, similarly, argues that "regional, ethnic, and class divisions frustrated the emergence of a national identity" (530) in Mexico and defines the primary division as existing between Spanish wheat and Native American corn. This rift prevented the consolidation and formalization of a uniquely Mexican cuisine that could be codified in restaurants.

The first proposal played up the fact that Mexican cuisine has been primarily enacted within the kitchens of its residents through its argument that traditional Mexican food serves as a mode of social reproduction in the lives of its citizens. The proposal concentrated on the “orality of the transmission of rituals, ceremonies, feasts, agricultural practices, cosmological conceptions, utensils, and cooking technologies” (Mazatan-Paramo 16). As the first proposal submitted to UNESCO concerning food traditions, UNESCO excluded food on the same basis as they excluded language. For UNESCO, while languages are important to preserve, “it is [the] oral expressions themselves and their performance in public that best help to safeguard a language” (Oral Traditions para. 4). In the same vein as this argument, UNESCO suggested that the nomination should focus upon particular rituals and performances involving food. In concentrating on particular performances and manifestations, we might judge that intangible practices become more visibly identifiable. They take on a more tangible form when enacted by a physical human body. In addition, the list demands that certain criteria and characteristics be laid out in order to define and identify intangible heritage traditions. Without specific characteristics, practices cannot be codified and rendered tangible.

The CCHT reformulated their proposal for the 2005 round of deliberations in light of these recommendations, focusing specifically on the relationship of corn to the Mexican identity. The proposal was entitled *People of the Corn. Mexico's Ancestral Cuisine. Rituals, Ceremonies and Cultural Practices of the Cuisine of the Mexican People* and attempted to homogenize the national culinary culture through asserting the universality of corn.

The motto for the proposal was ‘We Are Corn’ and was based upon a Mayan myth of creation in which “the gods gave human beings a soul by planting a grain of corn in them” (Mazatan-Paramo 104). The Mayans believed that their very humanity was prefaced upon corn.

Discursively, the Mayan civilization was painted as the basis upon which all other Mexican cultures had been built, problematically ignoring the extreme diversity of Mexico's population and subsuming this diversity under a homogenizing cosmological view of Mexicans. Mazatan-Paramo argues that this desire to homogenize the Mexican population is a historical discourse within Mexico, arising out of nineteenth century nationalisms in which Latin American countries gained their independence and "aimed at consolidating their sovereignty right" (5). The country had been under the reign of the Spanish for three centuries and was struggling to develop a sense of political legitimacy and cultural membership.

Currently, Mexico is "one of the 18 megadiverse countries of the world and also has a high density of indigenous population (around 12 million), with 62 languages officially recognized" (18). The assertion of cultural homogeneity, especially within this context, is extremely problematic. Coming out of the conferences, Gloria Lopez Morales noted "the combination of backgrounds and interests of the attendees was hard to organize and resulted in a high level of disagreement about the topics and perspectives to be privileged (Mazatan-Paramo 106).

It is noteworthy that, in order to assemble these fragments, the CCHT and Lopez Morales referred to an ancient past, before colonialism. The proposal took the form of a construction of the "Meso-American past [as] distant and mythical [...] whereas the indigenous people have been perceived and treated as remnants of the past who, by merit of their presence, negate the mythical narration of the Mesoamerican myth" (Mazatan-Paramo 68). The creation of a mythical and idealized past, in which corn is the foundation of life, naturalizes and depoliticizes current socio-economic conditions for present indigenous populations.

Significantly, the proposal also failed to take account of the modern importance of corn to Mexico as a nation. Lind and Barham give us important insights into the significance of corn and the tortilla in the context of NAFTA and globalization. Although they do mention the very same creation myth referred to in *People of the Corn*, they also discuss the significance of corn within Modern Mexico. They reference the ‘tortilla welfare’ state in the 1970s in which the government “provided an infrastructure centered on maize and the tortilla that insured the welfare of the people, integrated campesinos into a protected domestic market, and created a context in which an emerging middle class re-appropriated the tortilla as a symbol of national identity” (55). NAFTA, as previously mentioned, swamped Mexico with cheap US corn and drove farmers, millers, and tortillera owners out of production. The status of corn in modern Mexico as a form of cultural stability that is threatened by global economic forces is one that, arguably, has much more resonance for populations of modern Mexico than the Mayan creation myth. Nevertheless, an idealized past comes to be valued more than a present cultural and economic truth.

The reformulation of the proposal after its rejection abandoned the notion of national cultural homogeneity, opting instead for a heritage paradigm that aligns itself with UNESCO’s ‘Unity in Diversity’ claims. Mazatan-Paramo identities in the new proposal a “re-evaluation of [...] ethno-cultural minorities” (8) and their histories meant to purvey a sense of national wealth and diversity. This wealth and diversity allows Mexico to promote itself as a series of discrete communities and ethnic cuisines that is available for tourists to consume.

## **B) MEXICAN TRADITIONAL CUISINE: DEFINITIONS**

The nomination rests on the importance of three foods, claimed to be universal features of Mexican cuisine: corn, chilies, and beans. The submission qualifies this universal claim, acknowledging that “the extensive variety of dishes communities make is a reflection of the wide

diversity of cultures and geographic biodiversity” (CCHT 5). In doing so, they utilize a universal claim while also retaining cultural heterogeneity. They connect these three ingredients to specific cooking practices, farming methods, and utensils unique to specific territories.

The units to be preserved, within the proposal, are what the CCHT calls “hubs of culinary knowledge” (CCHT 5). The mode of preservation proposed for these ‘hubs’ is the use of the Michoacan model of culinary safeguarding, a model that has been established through the Michoacan Female Traditional Cooks Project. The Conservatory of Mexican Gastronomic Culture and the Michoacan state government organized this project that places (female) community cooks at the centre of process of safeguarding. Once a year, the project organizes a conference for cooks to share information but, otherwise, the project focuses on the transmission of knowledge to younger generations within the community. Concretely, this means drawing up plans for “sustainable marketing of products and training courses given to the tourism sector along culinary heritage routes [as well as] the creation of small food companies” (CCHT 8).

The proposal creates a hierarchy of priorities, classifying these “hubs of culinary knowledge” under one of three priority levels. Priority A involves “hubs with a high degree of conservation within community life and in need of measures to overcome serious challenges” (CCHT 9); priority B involves “culinary hubs with a good level of authenticity and conservation but in need of recognition and self-assessment through community aid projects, safeguarding of recipes and practices, research and studies of local food chains” (ibid); and priority C involves “sites in need of assessment and rescue measures by means of memory and traditional knowledge recall, research and knowledge transmission” (ibid).

Also worth mentioning is that the proposal also sets out plans for what they call the *Annual Encounter*, during which female cooks and their female family members assemble with

other communities, dress up in traditional garb, decorate their cooking station as they would their own kitchen, and cook traditional meals. This *Encounter* will work to assemble the different ethnic culinary traditions of Mexico, unifying them in display.

### C) MEXICAN TRADITIONAL CUISINE: ANALYSIS

The proposal for Mexican Traditional Cuisine, like France's proposal, also contains references to perceived threats to their intangible cultural heritage. The proposal describes the "invasion of other customs and the battering of the market, which generally breaks down the traditional system without contributing healthy benefits to the community" (CCHT 5), and argues that indigenous culture is "exposed to the risk of losing its culture-specific traits due to globalization" (CCHT 6). In the first instance, we can see how economic issues are foregrounded rather than cultural, although a threat to culture is being positioned as a consequence of free trade.

Relating to food in particular, the submission warns that, without protection, culinary traditions will be "destined to join the ranks of undifferentiated food" (Ibid). Like the French proposal, the agent of this cultural invasion remains unspecified but is characterized as an encroaching, inevitable, and unstoppable force. The notion that food may be 'destined' to become undifferentiated positions cultural homogenization as the norm against which individualized cultures must fight.

These individualized cultures, in the submission, are characterized as 'culinary hubs' that must be individually preserved through the use of the Michoacan model. Although, from this description, it might seem that each hub has been identified based on its unique culinary properties, an interesting sleight of hand takes place in the submission that renders their identification more problematic. In the proposal, when the CCHT lists the culinary hubs to be

safeguarded, it is unclear that the list consists of the names of twenty-nine out of thirty-one of Mexico's states. Throughout the rest of the document, the proposal at various points refers to these hubs as "communities" and "regions". For example, the proposal states "the already fruitful Michoacan model must be applied to other regions" (CCHT 7). Earlier on in the proposal, the CCHT makes the assertion that "traditional cuisine in Michoacan and other communities in the country has been preserved since ancient times" (CCHT 3).

The use of 'community' and 'region' interchangeably within the proposal says much about its goals. We may use Bell Valentine's work on geography and food in order to deconstruct the connotations of each of these words. 'Region', according to Bell and Valentine, is often "centre[d] on an essentialized notion of [...] natural space (152). Connected to the land, the region is often the object of nostalgia and is perceived as "deeply rooted (mired?) in tradition, in repetition" (Heldke 97). Regional foods are often painted as primitive and natural.

Further insights might be gained in considering that, like the French proposal, the Mexican discusses an inventory of the regions accomplished as a mode of safeguarding. Similar to the French inventory, *La Cocina Popular e Indigena de los Pueblos de Mexico* is a fifty-five-title collection that catalogues indigenous Mexican cuisine by region. Such an inventory may be seen as a classificatory mechanism that is used to render different regions more intelligible, while formalizing the different foods being produced there.

We may contrast this naturalized view of the region and regional specialties with the inclusion of 'community'. Bell and Valentine cite Worsley in discussing community, arguing that it may take on two distinct meanings: on the one hand, it may refer to community as locality, "with common delineation of boundaries and a localized identity" (94). It may also signify a community as a network of interrelationships, "often losing spatiality [...] sometimes call[ed]

community without propinquity” (ibid). We may also cite Drache’s concepts of communities of choice and communities of fate (168). When we couple ‘region’, as a naturalized geographic indication, and ‘community’, we can only assume that the community being discussed is Worsley’s community as locality, or a community of fate. Through the discourse community becomes related to region, the result of which is to create a focus on kinship ties and physical presence as a requirement of community.

Perhaps even more problematically, the fact that the state becomes interchangeable with the region and the community serves to naturalize the state, which should be seen as a construct of political will. The state becomes territorialized and rooted through a connection to communities. When we add to this the proposal’s emphasis on “defending the purity of their traditions” (12), what we are left with is a vision of discrete and naturalized regions built up through kinship bonds with unique and essentialized identities. The assertion of some kind of cultural purity in relation to these regions also promotes an ahistorical vision of the state that refuses to appreciate the nature of cultural and culinary flows. As Lisa Heldke argues, “if the notion of an uninfluenced cuisine ever made sense historically, it does not now” (xix). If we consider Mexico’s history as an ancient culture, colonized by the Spanish for three hundred years, and sharing the longest border in the world with the United States, assertions of culinary purity become ridiculous. The notion of purity also obfuscates the fact that, even what we may see as the very essence of a culture, is socially constructed and is the product of negotiated meanings. The vision of the state as a container for pure culinary traditions serves to divide and reify these states.

The notion of authenticity also serves to strengthen this reification of a dehistoricized ideal. The proposal mentions authenticity six times, most notably when it says that Mexican

cuisine has retained its “authenticity – a desire not to falsify the roots -, meaning that communities still prepare food using the time-tested methods” (CCHT 4). The notion that we must continue to do things as we have always done them, utilizing the same methods for preparing food, emphasizes a paradigm of heritage and authenticity that values replication over integration.

Lisa Heldke discusses the tension between replication and adaptability when argues that “a definition of authenticity that emphasizes replication at all costs may violate central organizing principles” (31) of cuisine. In viewing food and foodways as texts, replication prevents the negotiation of meaning and, in a sense, may in fact prevent meaning from circulating altogether. Replication values the past over the present and privileges a mindless adherence to tradition that may have as its consequences the emptying of meaning from these forms. As Wilson argues, “nostalgia for a simpler, ideal lifestyle [can have the effect of] freez[ing] [society] in a pretechnological, changeless existence in which time does not pass, progress does not occur” (260). Instead, living museums are created, constantly displaying the past and preventing these traditions from being taken up in new and relevant ways.

That replication should be more authentic than lived tradition is a significant assertion for a member state to make in reference to its own national culture. For the proposal to even refer to the concept of authenticity invokes a kind of cognitive dissonance if we consider authenticity as the imposition of certain values upon a place by a cultural outsider. Appadurai argues that “quality is typically the insider’s concern, authenticity that of the culinary tourist” (25). Similarly, Lisa Heldke argues that we often identify the authentic as “what is new to us – which may or may not represent what insiders to that culture would generally identify as significant” (27). The argument that authenticity should be judged from outside, based upon extremely

personal and subjective criteria, is troubling in the context of this proposal. We might see how the CCHT examines these traditions as a cultural outsider, evaluating these traditions based on their own values. Lisa Heldke argues that, as cultural outsiders, we must try not to see our own position as the “wallpaper, [...] the default, [...] ground zero” (19) of evaluating culture. Instead, we must explore the biases present within our own notions of authenticity.

An indicator of how we might see the CCHT in relation to the communities and culinary hubs that it seeks to represent and protect may be seen in the many references to ‘development’ within the submission. The notion of development may seem to be at odds with the frozen and pure traditions they have advocated for, however this development is more economic than cultural. Coupled with the touristic incentive present throughout the text, we may see development as the classifying of distinct regions with specific frozen characteristics as a way of making the Mexican tourism-scape intelligible to outsiders. Instead of seeing a country of diverse ethnicities and languages, tourists are able to ascertain the cultural and ethnic characteristics before their visit, mapped out through references to culinary traditions.

If we look at the *Annual Encounter* we may see how this is true. This annual meeting consists of female cooks from each region assembling to perform their various culinary traditions, clothed in traditional garb, working in a constructed representation of a traditional kitchen. This meeting, which allegedly promotes diversity, may actually be seen as promoting these discrete visions of cultural, ethnic, and culinary identity. As with UNESCO’s ‘Unity in Diversity’, these women become divorced from social context and are thrown into a new context of comparison in which equality and intercultural dialogue may take place. Assembling these fragments into a kind of cultural dialogue, the extreme diversity of the country gets portrayed as “a unit” (CCHT 5).

Through comparison, however, the differences between each region become emphasized, solidifying a sense of identification for these women and their cultures. Although this may seem like an empowering experience, we must also face the reality that this process risks “transform[ing] [people] into signs of consumption [making] them not valuable for what they make or do, but for passively ‘being them’” (129). The objectification of these groups and their culinary traditions constructs sanitized and purified visions of diverse populations of Mexico united around their embeddedness within specific regions. That these performances so blatantly favour exact replication, in the aesthetic sense, serves to value pastness over present use. These women, then, become signs of an idealized and dehistoricized past available for consumption by tourists.

This may also be seen in the prescription made by the CCHT to impose the Traditional Michoacan Cooks model on other culinary hubs. This model promotes the participation of female cooks in the safeguarding practices. Mazatan-Paramo argues that “the figures of the mother, the grandmother and the cook, are traditionally endogenous/domestic and have a great weight in the Mexican imagination about food” (92). In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mexican women were “traditionally confined to the domestic universe, where the kitchen is central and cooking represented the most significant function of women as keepers of family and home” (87). Consequently, we can see that this proposal plays on the popular national myth of the woman as protector of culture. The propagation of this myth is promoted through the structure of *Annual Encounter*. As with the French culinary tradition, community and transmission is located within the realm of kinship, passed down from mother to daughter, giving these traditions an almost genetic feature. The performance of the traditional past, both at the *Annual Encounter* and in the culinary hubs, may be seen as a way to transport tourists into the past

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through these reassurances of the historical continuity of these culinary traditions passed down through the generations.

The ‘development’, or reification, of these diverse regions serves to create a kind of cognitive map, allowing each diverse element Mexico to have its own assigned place. The submission also promotes the performance and display of defined and dehistoricized culinary identities, promoting an exoticism that might serve to attract the culinary tourist interested in consuming new flavours and new cultures. We must acknowledge that this process risks portraying these diverse food regions, and the people who are a part of them, as forms of amusement for tourists. In this light, although UNESCO privileges the importance of community identification with the intangible heritage element over universal value, the relationship between the element and the tourist outsider becomes privileged over the relationship between the cultural enactor and the element. In this way, the symbolic closure that the CCHT creates is one that precludes the flexibility and changeability espoused by UNESCO in favour of discrete frozen and replicated cultural and culinary identities put on display for the cultural outsider.

### CONCLUSION

Revisiting our stroll down Bloor Street, with so many restaurant options open to us, we come back to the question of whether these ethnic restaurants, taken out of their social contexts, are in any way threatening to their place of origin? Food, as previously stated, is a particularly mobile medium. According to Jennie Germann Molz, “unlike [a] foreign language or other cultural processes or rituals, food is accessible to outsiders and therefore makes cultural difference accessible” (66). What happens, however, when representations of national and regional food traditions begin to circulate outside of their original publics? As Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson argues, culinary texts become “liberated from culinary place into a broader cultural

space [...] circulat[ing] freely” (Ferguson 21) and are no longer confined to a specific country or ethnic group. That meaning should escape the control of the original context of circulation is perceived, within these submissions, as threatening to the original, the authentic, and the real. Representations risk one day becoming more real than their referents, as Baudrillard would argue.

The French submission worries that culinary practices may move along the continuum towards a form of global nothingness, disconnected from French roots. Similarly, the Mexican submission expresses concern about an encroaching force that will soon render all culinary expressions ‘undifferentiated’. In both cases, a concern about the ability of their own culinary cultures to survive is expressed and, in both cases, projects to reassert the historical narratives of these culinary practices are undertaken. This may be seen as a reigning in of meaning by the nation in order to provide and enforce the privileging of certain meanings over others.

In both submission, food that risks becoming dis-placed embeds itself within a particular “presence in time and space, [a] unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (Benjamin 3). Temporally, the French gastronomic meal refers back to the mythologized rural peasant, the community feast, and a dehistoricized and naturalized vision of terroir, all of which provide a sense of historical continuity. On the other hand, Mexican traditional cuisine asserts this historical continuity through a focus on replication of indigenous culinary traditions by women who participate in the same rites as their ancestors. In spatial terms, the relationship to place in both submissions is reasserted through referencing inventories of terroir, local foods, and place-based communities. The geographical and temporal embeddedness in both cases works to counteract so-called place-less food, perceived as being in some way lacking, a bastardization of some mythologized ‘original’ that can longer traced.

Pragmatically, the focus on local and national foods is one that may prove useful to those advocating for food sovereignty and local food movements. After all, the maintenance of the historical narrative does prevent the commodity fetish from depriving these traditions of their social histories. On the other hand, we must consider that these kinds of constructions may promote a different kind of fetish, one discussed by Cook and Crang as concerned with “certain place constructions or knowledges, such as those about ‘origins’” (Bell & Valentine 192).

We must not fall into the trap of assuming that local and national food cultures should be maintained merely for the sake of diversity. We must also consider how they are to be maintained and where the boundaries are being drawn. In both submissions there are positive and negative consequences. For the French gastronomic meal, the submission allows for flexibility and adaptability in the choice of recipes, but defines its public as connected to French territory and genealogy, preventing outsiders from participating. Mexico, on the other hand, welcomes outsiders but creates a vision of a Mexico with discrete states, each with its own fixed but unique cultural and ethnic identity. In the first case, we might view France’s discursive construction as neophobic. Mexico, on the other hand, might be accused of exoticizing and Othering its own indigenous populations. In both cases, food becomes deeply embroiled within the construction of the nation. For this reason, UNESCO’s newfound acceptance of foodways as intangible cultural heritage is an interesting development for food scholars and cultural studies scholars alike who may glean insights from the examination of these case studies as they emerge.

Thus far, we have seen that territory, place, and the nation become foregrounded in the name of anchoring highly transportable and horizontally transmittable cultural elements.

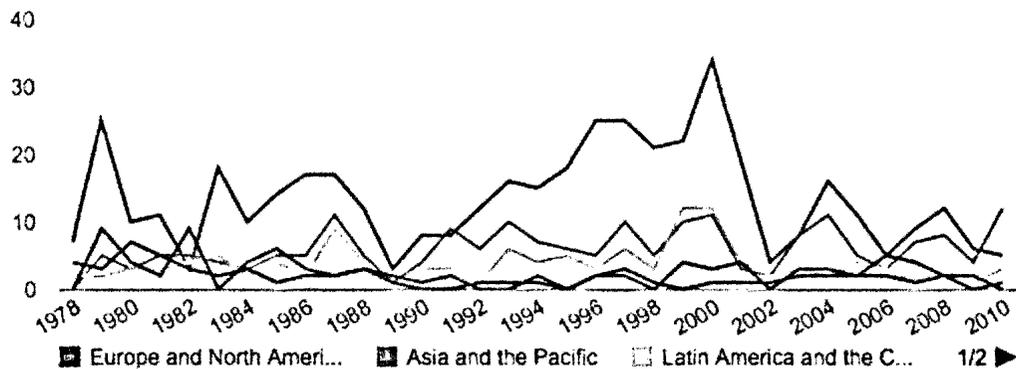
Through references to *terroir*, both traditions assert the uniqueness of their cuisines. Through references to history, both submissions try to counteract visions of ephemeral culture. Through

references to kinship ties and community, both submissions make arguments about the importance of place in the organization of our social ties. Finally, both the French gastronomic meal and Traditional Mexican cuisine espouse a vision of culinary nationalism that is to be found in the kitchens of its citizens rather than in the ever-expanding sphere of food texts and restaurants.

Within these kitchens, the submissions describe the location of authentic and real culture, passed down through the generations, set upon tables behind the closed doors of the nation's citizens. Such a private realm comes to be seen as untouched, unique, and uncommodified in contrast to fast food and restaurant chains that conscientiously attempt to attract culinary tourists and consumers. Instead, interacting with these localized and indigenous traditions comes to be seen as somehow more real than dining out, giving us the sense that we are connected to something bigger: to ancestors, to physical communities and territories, and even to the history and imagined community of the nation. Through the recognition of that culinary heritage is connected to history, territory, and community, as well as through its ability to be classified and described, moveable and potentially ephemeral practices become anchored and material, taking the form of souvenirs that assure us of our place in the world.

## APPENDIX

Figure 1.1. Number of World Heritage properties inscribed each year by region



Source: United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. World Heritage List. "Number of World Heritage Properties Inscribed Each Year by Region."

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/stat#s5>

Figure 1.2. Number of World Heritage properties inscribed each year by region (1978-1988)

Year ↓	Number of Properties Inscribed	Europe and North America	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America and the Caribbean	Arab States	Africa
1978	13	7	0	2	0	4
1979	44	25	5	2	9	3
1980	27	10	3	3	4	7
1981	26	11	5	3	2	5
1982	24	3	5	4	9	3
1983	29	18	4	5	0	2
1984	22	10	3	2	4	3
1985	30	14	5	4	6	1
1986	29	17	5	2	3	2
1987	41	17	11	9	2	2
1988	27	12	5	4	3	3

Source: Ibid.

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