

Foreword

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Foreword

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This "second episode" of studies on food hosted by *Italian Sociological Review* examines the issue of the symbolic meanings of food. The communicative and symbolic importance of food is so strong that it becomes a plot of resonance of almost all the topics and the socio-cultural processes that are increasingly relevant in the social scene. From immigration to health, from tourism to economy, from social recognition to memory. Especially in this time of economic crisis, the food takes powerfully the center of the stage as an area of symbolic mediation *tout court*, and it is through it that most of the dynamics that previously were expressed in different ways are retranslated. It is unavoidable that in a time of economic crisis, the food gains a symbolic centrality, well expressed by the stream of programs dedicated to it in the media: from the national-popular to the radical chic, is all a virtually fill the belly, perhaps for fear of having to "tighten the belt". Of particular interest is the paper of the Spanish colleagues focused on the blurring of the concept of citizenship and of food: certainly a prerequisite for individual liberty, but now detached from the usual third world issues of world hunger (usual but always relevant and important), also to widen the theme of information and consumerism. This is to emphasize that, even talking about food, the distance between the "fat" consumer of economically developed countries and the starving one of the "hungry world"; between those who have the problem of the diet and those who are hungry, can shorten significantly under the influence of the geopolitics of food. The concept of citizenship can be a useful link between the private behavior and the public and the political one. Moreover, this concept is a useful tool to compare consumer problems of the "rich" countries with those of the populations of less developed countries.

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Suggesting the problem of food as a common ground for a transnational and transcultural encounter, under the umbrella of the concept of citizenship, appears a very good proposal.

A second strand, which is strongly developed here, is the topic that connects the food to the body and to health. Interestingly, this association remains strong even when medical research is working in cutting-edge areas such as genetics. Even in this case, modifying the characteristics of food becomes the main tool to act on the body. This aspect is the key to interpreting the importance of food, its fusional nature qualifies it as the main channel to modify the body: each feature, real or symbolic, embodied in food can be transmitted, through its consumption, to the bodies. The differences are mainly about the ways this happens. Recipes, medical research, biological research, type of cultivation or farming, product origin, the rituals of preparation or consumption, etc.. Anyway, almost magically, what we put in the food, when it is eaten, shapes us. Therefore we are what we eat, not only from a physiological point of view but also from a moral and political one. Compliments to the chef!

Verona, July 8th, 2014