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From culinary modernism to culinary cosmopolitanism: the changing topography of Beijing's transnational foodscape

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ABSTRACT

In the early 1990s, foreign foods were reintroduced into the everyday life of ordinary people in Beijing. As the city ascends to the top on the global hierarchy of urban places, its transnational food practices have evolved drastically. Proposing "co-bricolage" as a useful framework to rethink transnational culture, this article examines the changing modality of trans-local foodways in Beijing from the 1990s to the 2010s, and identifies a transition from culinary modernism to culinary cosmopolitanism. Whereas in the 1990s the foreign-local relations were perceived through a structural contrast between modernity and lack thereof, cosmopolitanism of the 2010s is underpinned by an eclectic disposition that considers the global and the local to be affinal and combinatory. The discussion demonstrates the potential of "co-bricolage" to historicize the global-local processes move beyond the dialectical model for understanding trans-local connections and dynamics.

KEYWORDS

Transnational food practices; co-bricolage; culinary modernism; culinary cosmopolitanism; Beijing

1. Introduction

I arrived at the Sanlitun SOHO around noon. The sunken plaza of this high-end commercial business complex was already covered by olive green tents, under which food stalls, all covered with spotless off-white table clothes, stood in rows and clusters in an orderly manner. I made it through the entrance with my "early-bird" e-ticket, and immediately found myself caught up in an ambience of conviviality with a prominent "transnational" undertone. With the jolly and uplifting music beating in the background, a young Asian American was introducing his tacos to a Chinese girl, after she just walked past the stall where the Chinese crew of a sushi restaurant in the area carefully opened up a fresh sea urchin. Laughter and cheers were coming from another corner. There the Australian owner of a cafe specialized in American-style pies seemed to be having a good time with his newly-met friend from New Zealand, co-founder of a "culinary incubator" in Beijing. He was there to support one of its star projects, Aloha Poke Bowl, a modern interpretation of the traditional Hawaiian cuisine "diced raw fish" that had become trendy in the 2010s. The atmosphere was further enhanced as the two friends were cheering over craft beer, which was brewed locally in the old town of Beijing by a group of enthusiasts from Europe and North America. Scenes like this saturated the plaza and extended all the way into the spacious exhibition hall of the office block, where

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> pizza and paella, kebab and weisswurst, taiyaki and crepe, Vietnamese spring rolls and Guilin rice noodles, filter coffee and matcha, wine and kombucha were being prepared and enjoyed by people of various nationalities.

This was the "Woodstock of Eating" Spring Feast in Beijing that went on for 3 days in April 2016. In many ways, it is a miniature of the broader transnational foodscape in Beijing today. Since the 2010s, transnational, multicultural food and foodways have become a mundane, vernacular facade of the city. "Culinary bricoleurs," (Montefrio et al. 2020) like those featured in the vignette above, draw upon and tinker with various resources at their disposal, to undertake different tasks, to fulfil disparate aspirations, and to carve out distinctive subjectivities. Some of them explicitly seek to create niche markets for exotic culinary experiences, some are driven by the fascination with particular foods and foodways, while others take a more playful approach to their gastronomic endeavors and run the operation less as a business but more like a hobby. Beijing's transnational foodscape is, then, a collective oeuvre co-produced by heterogeneous bricoleurs, each with their distinctive histories, resources, and aspirations inscribed into their idiosyncratic bricolages in a style of "making do." It is, in short, a "co-bricolage."

This article provides an ethnographic palpation of Beijing's transnational foodscape, with the focus on how its topography has shifted over time. Through the framework of "co-bricolage," which sees transnational foodways as immanent to the heterogeneous bricolages and the connections among them, I identify in Beijing's transnational foodscape a transition from culinary modernism during the 1990s to culinary cosmopolitanism since 2010. While the former configures the global-local dynamics by the structure of contrast between modernity and lack thereof, the latter features an eclectic approach to the local and the global which are perceived to be affinal rather than antithetical. Building on these findings, I show how transnational food culture is a process constantly folding, unfolding and refolding, projecting different topographies at different temporal junctures.

In this regard, the article proposes "co-bricolage" as a useful framework to rethink transnational culture and the global-local dynamics. The discussions on these phenomena, practices, and processes have largely been dominated by the dialectical structure of the local and the global (Giddens 1991, 22). From the debate between homogenization and diversification, cultural imperialism and cultural hybridity (Featherstone 1990; Tomlinson 1991, 1999; Ritzer 1992; Ritzer and Malone 2000; Miller 1998; Watson 1997), to the notions of creolization, glocalization (Hannerz 1987; Robertson 1995; Cohen 2007), and to the model of "repetitious drama" (Wilk 1999), these conceptual constructs, "once important yet increasingly unproductive" (Klein 2014, 16), either seek essentialist enunciation of or impose a transcendent structure onto the open and unfinished process that has no inherent precept or underlying law. By contrast, "co-bricolage" highlights the processual and contingent dimensions of transnational culture. Thus instead of posing questions of "what," co-bricolage makes the question "how" as primary to the investigation. It prompts historical mapping of the changing layout of co-bricolage and also attends to the gaps, tensions, frictions, incongruities as productive forces. Moreover, the concept also underscores the immanence of transnational culture to the idiosyncratic

bricolages, pushing analysis to go beyond the global-local dynamics by giving primacy to the individual becomings that orchestrate and emerge from multiplicitous and heterogeneous bricolages.

In the following, I first delineate the notion of "bricolage" and elaborate "co-bricolage" as an analytical framework. Then, I provide a retrospection into Beijing's transnational foodscape during the 1990s, and sketch out the topography as it is shaped by culinary modernism. The next section maps the contemporary transnational foodscape in Beijing through two ethnographies, and points out that culinary cosmopolitanism has become the main feature of the transnational topography of the 2010s.

2. Bricolage and co-bricolage

Bricolage, derived from the French verb "bricoler" – to tinker – refers to the act of "making do" with what is at hand. It was deployed by Lévi-Strauss (1966) in discussing how "The Savage Mind" thinks through bricolage, drawing up *ad hoc* responses to the environment from an extensive and heterogeneous repertoire. The concept is then picked up in cultural studies, education, public health, entrepreneurship research, and more recently in food studies. Most research frames bricolage as a practice of the individual bricoleur – be it a person, a group, or an organization, etc. Bricolage is often applied to cultural and social practices under post-modern conditions, pointing at highly individualistic forms of "playing" with extensive and excessive signs and meanings, which are invested by consumption and globalization. Therefore, it is "understood as evidence of empowerment of playful and culturally skilled individuals who craft their own lifestyles, religious systems and identities" (Altglas 2014, 479). However, bricolage is also used to describe how bricoleurs – e.g., small enterprises (Baker, Miner, and Eesley 2003) and AFNs (Grivins et al. 2017) – navigate the resource poor environment for sustenance and success. In such scenarios, bricolage entails not a single solution but a continuity of solutions, since the bricoleur has to constantly reorient strategic improvisation and experiments, according to the changing environment and based on what is and becomes available. In this regard, bricolage is unstructured, unfinished and open-ended – it is an ongoing process.

Another strand of research situates individual bricolage in the broader context of cultural processes and power dynamics. This stance therefore highlights the multivariate and heterogeneous connections that bricolage builds and builds upon. Cultural theorists are especially attentive to these power-laden connections. They understand bricolage as subcultural style (Hebdige 1979), the "artisan-like inventiveness," "the poetic ways of making do" (de Certeau 1984, xvi–xix), underscoring the tactics among subaltern groups to resist and subvert hegemonic cultural norms. Meanwhile, Knepper (2006), mindful of the potential pitfall of romanticizing bricolage, points to how subaltern bricolage may be forced and passive responses to the loss and deprivation of power, culture, and necessity. She therefore points out that bricolage can also be instrumentalized by the dominant group to establish and maintain its hegemony. This, however, should not be conflated with the claim "we are all bricoleurs[1]: each with his little machines" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 1). For Deleuze and Guarttari, bricolage is an ontologically primary process, "a continually producing production" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 7). While

cultural theorists see bricolage as conditioned by the power-laden connections among two camps of bricoleurs, Deleuze and Guattari see these connections as being produced and reproduced through and by bricolage.

Building on these understandings of bricolage, I propose "co-bricolage" to capture the co-practice of "making do" of multiple individual bricoleurs. The notion emphasizes that bricoleurs do not work in isolation, but rather alongside and/or against other bricoleurs. They run with and into one another. They may share the same stock of materials, experimenting with them in ways that are at times collaborative and yet conflicting at other moments. They may also draw on each other's bricolages,[2] thus mutually interfering while remaining self-subsisting. What "co-bricolage" denotes is precisely this "layout" of multiple bricoleurs – each with their own objectives and repertories – as well as how the connections among them are established by their bricolage. In this regard, a case of "co-bricolage" is equivalent to an assemblage (Nail 2017): there is no essence, precept or a prior structure; it is immanent to the multiplicitous, contingent and indeterminate bricolages, a collection of connected differences and differentiating connections constantly folding, unfolding, and refolding.

"Co-bricolage" thus challenges the dialectical model that governs the discussion over transnational cultural practices and the global-local dynamics. The debates between cultural imperialism and cultural mixing, homogenization and diversification, globalization and glocalization, etc., in fact impose the dialectical structure onto the layout of multiplicitous and heterogeneous bricolages and their connections, which flow in multiple directions with breakdowns and breakthroughs. "Co-bricolage" on the other hand, frames globalization and transnational culture as an immanent and contingent process fraught with tensions and incongruities. It sees no essentialist enunciation nor transcendent structure to organize the layout of differentiating and connected bricolages. It rethinks transnational culture and the global-local dynamics by reformulating the question of "what" into the investigation of "how." On the one hand, "co-bricolage" encourages a "sectional" view of how idiosyncratic bricolages emerge and connect into multitude facades and planes, of which Montefrio et al. (2020) provide an illustrative case. "Co-bricolage" also supports a historical approach that looks at how the process of globalization folds, unfolds, and refolds over time and how it takes on specific morphologies at different historical moments of a particular social context, which this research builds upon.

Conceptualizing the transnational culinary practices in Beijing through "co-bricolage," below I provide a close examination of two "snapshots" of Beijing's transnational foodscape, and delineate how its topography has shifted over time. The first one features the fast food fever of the 1990s, and is pieced together through secondary resources, especially existing ethnographies on the topic. The second snapshot, taken in 2010s, is based on first-hand ethnographic data collected during a 13-month fieldwork in Beijing from September 2015 to October 2016.

3. Culinary modernism

The transnational foodscape in Beijing during the 1990s, as in many other cities, was dominated by American-style fast food (see Caldwell 2004; Matejowsky 2008; Abbots 2014; Grosglik and Ram 2013; Watson 1997). A robust body of ethnography has been

produced on the "fast food fever" that swept Beijing and beyond. Here I do not intend to re-iterate these studies, but seek to build on their ethnographic contents for a revisit to the phenomenon in light of "co-bricolage." I argue that the fast food fever was a co-bricolage as multiple bricoleurs – transnational fast food corporations, the Chinese state, local restaurateurs and consumers, etc. – mutually drew upon each other's bricolages for their multiplicitous purposes. At the core of this co-bricolage is culinary modernism. While Laudan (2001a) coined the term Culinary Modernism to explicate how the industrial modes of food production has presented unprecedented choices in food and proffered them to all in an egalitarian manner, focusing particularly on the material aspects, I use culinary modernism to elucidate the semiotics of such "industrialized" food. In the post-socialist Chinese context, industrialized foods, especially Western fast foods, provide a contemporary but more subtle form of "power cuisines" (Laudan 2001b), one that is registered on the structural contrast between the other and the self, the global and the local, with the latter being pinned to the position of inadequacy. As I shall demonstrate, the bricoleurs amid the fast food fever all recognized a lack of "something" in the local foodways thus mobilized the global resources to address that lack.

Transnational corporations, often acknowledged as the drive behind globalization (Phillips 2006), were among the major bricoleurs in the fast food fever. Though their global expansion is pursued in the form of "engineering," it nonetheless entails various localization strategies – that is, bricolage. In Beijing, as in other East Asian cities, transnational fast food corporations had access to an emergent middle class whose increased wealth sought alternative lifestyles as the means of distinction, and a vibrant children-centered consumer culture (Watson 1997). Both of these conditions added to Western fast food tycoons' repertoire of technical tools, cultural troupes and symbolic instruments, and enabled the creation of distinctive cultural bricolages.

The most prominent ones revolved around children, a rising group of new consumers in East Asia. In China, as Watson (2000) observes, "for the first time in Chinese history, children matter not simply as future providers but as full-scale consumers who command respect in today's economy," (126) and they began to presume a more powerful position in the decision-making of household consumption. Both McDonald's and KFC made efforts to actively strategize around this new clientele base, transforming the restaurants into "a place for fun," an "exciting place to eat." KFC especially excelled in this respect. The strategies deployed by local management entailed, first and foremost, the design of a special cartoon character "Chicky" – "youngish, fun-loving and Child-specific" – to replace Colonel Sanders as the face of the brand, because children in Beijing "had problems relating to the Colonel" and "identified him as an elderly and dour grandfather, with his white suite, white hair and goatee" (Lozada 2005, 166). Moreover, a new job position was created whose main responsibility was to provide friendly guidance and to accompany children to ensure the "little friends" had a pleasant and fun dining experience. The physical environment of KFC was reshaped through the children-oriented design. Most restaurants offered a play area, and were equipped with furniture and facilities of smaller scales to accommodate the younger customers. In particular, birthday parties epitomized the bricolage as fast food corporations improvised from the children-centered consumerism. It was a common feature institutionalized into KFC and McDonald's restaurants in Beijing (and beyond), provided to any child who chose to

celebrate their birthdays there (Yan 1997, 2000; Lozada 2005). These variegated tactics and strategies – to convert restaurants for quick meals into the venue for children's birthday parties, to replace "fastness" with "fun" – constituted the cultural bricolage grounded in the *ad hoc* response to changing social environment as companies moved into new local realities.

While transnational fast food corporations have garnered prolific scholarly discussions, the role of the Chinese state in the fast food fever is relatively understated. As I demonstrate below, the state was a "master-bricoleur" that strategically sought to instrumentalize western fast food on both technical and discursive planes. On the one hand, McDonald's and KFC was deployed as a viable model based on which a domestic fast food industry could be developed. While this disposition did not materialize into state policies until the mid-1990, the idea that western fast food may provide a viable means and a crucial marker of modernization was already in circulation among elite intellectuals, a social group that wielded considerable influence on government policies. Some of them pointed out how traditional Chinese foods may deploy the service and management model of western fast food, while others more explicitly called for the development of a domestic fast food industry as "an urgent national task" (Gao 2013).

In fact, local restaurants already began the practice to incorporate fast food technology and management even before the advent of western fast food. In 1984, two Chinese-owned food companies and enterprises started Western-style fast food operations by introducing from Hong Kong and the US the updated, standardized food preparation method and technology (Lozada 2005, 170–71). However, it was not until McDonald's and KFC yielded enormous success that the domestic food sector stroke to compete on a greater scale. The foodscape in Beijing for a while became a "battlefield" of the "war of fried chicken" (Yan 2000, 201), as local restaurateurs launched various culinary pastiches of the two fast food tycoons. These attempts were set back by the lack of market interest in mock fried chickens, which prompted many local culinary entrepreneurs to experiment scientific management and efficient service on traditional Chinese cuisines. The "roast duck fast food," launched in early 1994 by the famous Chinese restaurant Quanjude, was a telling indigenous bricolage building on McDonald's modern, scientific system of preparation and hygiene (Yan 1997). Similar strategies were widely adopted beyond Beijing in many provincial cities where restaurants of indigenous cuisines enjoyed prosperity by operating on the western fast food model (Zhu 2006). "Roast duck fast food" and alike may purport to be the "McDonaldization" of local food cultures (Ritzer 1992; Ritzer and Malone 2000); however, they nonetheless stand as bricolages of indigenous restaurateur-bricoleurs who appropriated the new technological tools brought by transnational food corporations.

Such bricolage gained further momentum from the state policy agenda. From the mid-1990s, the Chinese state showcased a more salient power in promoting the domestic fast food industry. Expert knowledge was gathered and produced at an annual national conference organized by the Ministry of Domestic Trade. Insights were translated into policy instructions over the standardization of meal preparation through scientific design and technology. The development of local fast-food industry was even written into the eighth five-year plan for scientific research in 1995, followed by Guidelines on Developing the Chinese Fast Food Industry, which more explicitly called for the combination of Chinese culinary tradition and the managerial and technological experiences of western

fast food as the pathway to a modern and internationally competitive food sector (Gao 2013). These state-led initiatives point to how the Chinese state sought to instrumentalize western fast food corporations into the model based on which a domestic version of modern, standardized, and technology-intensive fast food sector can be developed.

More crucially, the state appropriated western fast food in the discursive process of legitimating the market reform, which was especially prominent at the beginning of the fast food fever. The news story with which Yan Yunxiang opened his ethnography of McDonald's (1997) exemplifies this disposition. Under the headline "Forty-Four years: from *tu* to *yang*,[3]" the story delineates how an elderly couple, upon their revisit to Beijing in 1993, witnessed the drastic changes in the nation and in their life from 1949. Attesting to the experience of change are two family photos, one taken in front of Tiananmen Square in 1949, and the other 44 years later in front of the Golden Arch. The juxtaposition of the old photo, one of meagerness and scarcity, and the new, projecting affluence and confidence, "demonstrates how McDonald's and its foreign food have become synonymous with progressive changes that make life more enjoyable in contemporary China" (Yan 1997, 41).

This was the common theme of media reports on western fast food in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party *People's Daily* took the lead in embracing – or more precisely defining and deploying – western fast food as the indicator of China's development. The coverage on the grand opening of KFC's first store in Beijing (and in China) in 1988 highlighted its top-ranked sales worldwide to underscore the improvement of livelihoods brought by the market reform and opening-up policy (Ji 1988). When McDonald's reached Beijing consumers in 1992, a similar rhetoric was reproduced: "Beijing welcomes McDonald's because today's Beijing is more open and more pragmatic" (Pi 1992). Therefore, in the state discourse, western fast food was readily domesticated as soon as, if not before, it staked a physical presence in China's urban foodscape. McDonald's and KFC were framed as a metonym of the adequate life under market economy, a thumbnail image of a modern city after opening-up, and a trophy testifying to the success of the market reform. In this way, the Chinese state produced a discursive/ideological bricolage to justify its legitimacy in the reform era.

Another key group of bricoleurs in co-bricolage of fast food fever was consumers. To think of consumers as bricoleurs is to regard consumption as a form of "continually producing production" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 7). The co-bricolage of the Chinese state and western fast food companies gave rise to a powerful cultural symbolism whereby McDonald's and KFC stand as the metonym of and the metaphor for modernity. Chinese consumers made use of this symbolism in various ways to carve out their class-based lifestyles and identities. For instance, the high-income "yuppies" of Beijing frequented McDonald's and other western food places as an important part of their lifestyle, a way to participate in the transnational cultural system, and an avenue to define themselves as middle-class professionals, while parents took children there to "learn more about American culture" as part of the cultivation of "modern" subjects (Yan 2000). Similar practices were observed in Starbucks and western restaurants in general in Beijing and beyond. Chinese consumers were especially adept in drawing on the material and semiotic elements in the fast food outlets, producing multivariate bricolages such as modern and fashionable individual status (Maguire and Hu 2013), distinctive *xiaozi* lifestyle[4] (Henningsen 2012), an ethos of self-development (Hsu 2005).

Moreover, Beijing's consumer-bricoleurs also appropriated fast food restaurants into an especially attractive venue of sociality: "When consumers stay in McDonald's or KFC restaurants for hours, relaxing, chatting, reading, enjoying the music, or celebrating birthdays, they take the 'fastness' out of fast food" (Yan 2000, 220). In so doing, they embraced and enjoyed individuality and private desires, inscribing a post-reform sociality into these market-organized public spaces. Such appropriation of foreign fast food restaurant space was not exclusive to Beijing. For instance, the elderly in Guangzhou would move their traditional tea-drinking practice into fast food restaurants to enjoy the air-conditioned, spacious, and quiet environment (Klein 2006); while "idling seniors, chitchatting youngsters and playing children" in Nanjing creatively made diverse uses of McDonald's and KFC spaces for their own agenda (Zhang et al. 2014). This is perhaps the most resilient bricolage of western fast food. Even after the fast food fever faded after the 1990s, the social space is continuously exploited, especially among the younger customers, as the now ubiquitous fast food restaurants provide an inexpensive, clean, and fairly comfortable space where they can hang out and socialize with friends away from the constraining formality and parent control over their food which are often characteristic of family meals (Tsao 2012). Despite the diminishing symbolic efficacy, the sociospatial functionality of western fast food restaurants persists and continues to enable new forms of bricolage.

Surely Beijing's transnational foodscape in the 1990s cannot be reduced to the "fast food fever." Self-initiated culinary migrants also contributed to the making of cosmopolitan food scenes in Shanghai and Beijing – a process Farrer (2019) refers to as "culinary globalization from below" that gathered limited media or scholarly attention. Having said that, there is little doubt that the fast food fever was the most prominent phenomenon – a culinary, cultural but also economic and political one – in Beijing and beyond. While the discussion of western fast food as a cultural institution has been framed by the dialectics of homogenization and diversification, the discussion above conceptualizes the phenomenon as a co-bricolage produced by the Chinese state, transnational fast food companies, and local restaurateurs and consumers.

This co-bricolage is registered on culinary modernism. McDonald's and KFC, as exemplars of such foods, were read as the embodiment of modernity and a model of modernization. The state discourse drew on the modernist semiotics of fast food to showcase the regime's political achievement, foreign food companies capitalized on it to expand the market share, while consumers creatively incorporated it into the post-reform lifestyle politics. Culinary modernism fashions a particular topography of the transnational foodscape, by imposing a topological contrast organized through a structural lack. In other words, it binds the global and the local into an arbitrary dichotomy by defining the latter as fraught with the lack of the former. In Beijing of the 1990s, the transnational foodways were organized and experienced through a series of paralleling contrasts between the Chinese and the American, the local and the foreign, the national and the transnational, and the socialist past and the post-socialist present (and future). Socialist canteens charged by the mentality of "feeding" people hence bad attitudes were contrasted to McDonald's restaurants featuring an ethos of "serving" customers hence a friendly ambiance (Yan 2000), the pressure of hierarchy at Chinese banquets compared against the sense of equality when consuming western fast food (Yan 1997, 2000), and the overall experience of meagerness in the socialist past regarded as contrary to the

proliferation of choices of the post-socialist era (Lozada 2005). In every set of contrast, the western, the foreign, the transnational points out a "lack" in the local culinary field – be it the lack of service, of choice, of global connectedness, or of prospects for individual improvement – and at the same time provides the remedy for that lack. It is in this intricate construction of contrasts that heterogeneous bricoleurs operated and cooked up the taste of modernity.

4. Culinary cosmopolitanism

As the fast food fever faded, Beijing's transnational foodscape saw a gradual move away from culinary modernism. On the one hand, foreign foods are incorporated into the local diet, and transnational foodways digested into the local gastronomy (Yuan et al. 2019; Bai et al. 2014), and on the other, the symbolic efficacy of the foreign as modern has dwindled (Zhang et al. 2014; Zhou and Hui 2003). In this regard, Beijing resembles other "world cities," i.e., Hong Kong (Ho 2020), Manila (Farrer 2011; Montefrio et al. 2020), Toronto and Vancouver (Cappeliez and Johnston 2013), where trans-localness is now integral to the local metropolitan environment. Hence, the (re)emergence of culinary cosmopolitanism, which is often defined by the disposition and the ability to embrace foreign foods and partake in transnational foodways with openness and willingness (Cappeliez and Johnston 2013). This is not an entirely new phenomenon in Beijing: during the 1920s and 1930s, food production and consumption in the city was heavily shaped by transnational influences. However, the open and inclusive attitude today is tinted with a confidence in the strength of local cuisines and cultures, as is the case in other Asian cities[5] (Farrer 2011; Klein 2006). Confident cosmopolitan bricoleurs draw on the global as a readily accessible reserve of inspiring materials and transformative ideas, and experiment with them in combination with local ones. Their bricolage builds on the perception of the foreign and the local as affinal and equal rather than contrasting, and projects an eclectic disposition toward both sets of resources. In the following, I elaborate these features, respectively, with ethnographic materials on two idiosyncratic bricolages.

4.1. "Eat your bagels like a New Yorker"

9 cm Bagel had a little stall at Woodstock of Eating Spring Feast. Two young Chinese were attending to the business: Jie, a petit yet doughty looking girl, and Gu, a guy with a cherubic face and a few silver highlights in his waxed dark hair. They co-founded the bakery in 2015, and were involved in the daily production of bagels. Instead of fervidly soliciting business, they were poised, patient but prepared. The stall setup was quite simple. A glass shelf storing and displaying bagels of different flavors, neatly arranged containers of cream cheese, smoked salmon and capers, a large cutting board and a bread knife were all that could be seen, together with a well-designed menu featuring its catchy tagline: "Eat Your Bagel like a New Yorker."

Surely, the tagline is intriguing as multiple layers of meanings seem to be encapsulated in these seven words. Its interpretation, however, should be contextualized in the curious back story of two young Chinese making and selling bagels. It turns out that, before 9 cm Bagel, Gu had already gained extensive experiences of making bagels from a small family-style bakery. The workshop was set up by a Jewish American who came to reside in

Beijing during the 2000s. Gu worked as an apprentice and learned the recipe from the owner-baker. At first, bagels were made in a home kitchen, and sold by online and telephone orders. Their bagels soon became popular among the "expats," who often felt nostalgic for properly made bagels that had been so difficult, if not impossible, to find in Beijing. To keep up with increasing orders, the bakery relocated to a small shop in Sanlitun, and the business got even better. Despite the prosperity, the Jewish American owner was planning to shut it down as he was leaving China. This is when Gu decided to take over the business. Jie came on board with her expertise in PR and marketing. Both of them were very confident and optimistic about the future of their bagels, and set their minds to making bagels that would "appeal to the Chinese appetites."

The succession of 9 cm Bagel from the Jewish American bakery provides a telling case of how co-bricolage manifests as "bricolage upon bricolage." The migrant culinary entrepreneur initiated the bakery by putting together the culinary tradition of bagels with the material labor resources in Beijing and "making do" with the home kitchen when professional facilities were not available. The bakery then became appropriated by Gu into a new bricolage, which is intended to fulfil a distinctive purpose to "appeal to the Chinese appetites." The 9 cm Bagel is best described to be a "bricolage upon bricolage," highlighting how culinary bricolages fashioned by the globalization from below expand the repertoire of materials and ideas locally available to domestic bricoleurs.

Moreover, the backstory reveals that Gu and Jie understood bagels in terms of both transnational and national cultural idioms. For one thing, the tagline reads a claim of "authenticity." They underscored that their bagel recipe came from a Jewish American from New York city and "hence could be regarded as authentic." The reservation in the tone was from their knowledge of bagels being a culinary tradition among the Jewish communities in Poland and only later taken to the US and popularized from there. In highlighting in the tagline the linkages with New York City rather than the Jewish tradition, Gu and Jie consciously appropriate the imagery of culinary modernism but with a cosmopolitanist twist: "Eat your bagel like a New Yorker" suggests that with a bite of the bagel one can embody the "New Yorker" persona, positing their bagels as the gateway to a transnational voyage, the access to an imagined and desirable "cosmopolitan" lifestyle.

In the meantime, the 9 cm Bagel duo also aimed to make bagels less "transnational" so that they could "appeal to the Chinese appetites." After all, bagels were not that "transnational" for Gu to begin with:

> "I fell in love with bagels the first time I ate it. It's amazing. It tastes just like *mantou* (Chinese steamed bun), but much more flavorful. There is a hint of sourness, then sweetness, and the chewy texture just makes you want more. Then I thought, if we Chinese like *mantou*, how can we not like bagels."

The affinity that Gu identified between the "national" *mantou* and the "transnational" bagel is intriguing. If the tagline promotes bagels as a sensory novelty, the foundation of Gu's career aspiration is the sensory familiarity: it is in reckoning bagels as affinal to the national taste that Gu decided to plunge into the business. Moreover, he was actively seeking to make bagels even more "national" so that more Chinese would find them enjoyable. When I met him and Jie at Woodstock of Eating, which was 6 months into their business, they were already working hard to develop new recipes. They reckoned

that the classic bagel with smoked salmon and cream cheese would be too "foreign" for most Chinese eaters, hence they had to come up with more varieties. To do so they did intensive research on bagel recipes from all over the world. The salt beef bagel of Brick Lane, London, was one of the inspirations that Gu gathered online. Though he never had the chance to actually taste it, Gu nonetheless considered it to be a useful reference for their own beef bagel. He was confident that the concept would work because "the salt beef looks very similar to the traditional Shanxi braised beef." Once again, the indigenous culinary category was conjured up to make sense of a foreign food.

Two weeks after Woodstock of Eating, I saw 9 cm Bagel at another food market approximate to a high-end residential community. This time they presented a special new item – pork and peppers bagel. Gu created this recipe by himself, taking inspirations from a common Chinese dish *qingjiao chao rousi* (stir-fried pork and peppers). Instead of thinly sliced pork, he used steaks pre-marinated in a special Chinese-style sauce. When serving, he cooked each steak with fresh peppers on the grill, then tuck them tightly inside the bagel, which was readily sliced into halves and toasted. The pork and peppers bagel, testifying to the confidence with which the bricoleur drew on atomic elements from both the global and local culinary repertories, was an imminent success, making 9 cm Bagel one of the most popular stalls of the market.

Culinary bricolage like pork and peppers bagel and 9 cm Bagel itself record a changing topography of transnational food practices in Beijing especially since the 2010s. The bakery conceptualized bagels as both transnational and national, both "exotic" and "familiar," so that the food culture can be put to different uses to grow the business. To inspire the transnational aspirations among potential patrons, bagels become "transnational," an integral part of the cosmopolitan lifestyle; to cater to the Chinese appetites, bagels have to be "national," providing familiar sensory experiences that are easy and pleasant to digest. Practices as such are common among ethnic restaurateurs, who, as culinary bricoleurs, seek to present ethnic cuisines as both authentic and "within the bounds of cultural expectations" (Lu and Fine 1995, 535). What is worth noting here is the shifting dynamics between the foreign and the Chinese: in recognizing the familiar profiles in bagels and the "salt beef," Gu experienced, conceptualized and approached foreign food cultures as naturally affinal and no superior to domestic culinary traditions. In other words, distinctive from the structure of contrast in culinary modernism, culinary cosmopolitanism perceives, presents and produces the global-local dynamics through affinity. Moreover, it also prompts a confident and eclectic disposition among bricoleurs toward resources from home and abroad, which I shall elaborate with Lige's story below.

4.2. Trinity Farm: Daoism, Natural Farming and the Whole Foods Market

It was at one of Beijing's most popular farmers' markets that I met Lige. He is one of the so-called "urban new farmers," a group of culinary bricoleurs that emerged as a response to widespread food safety hazards in China (Cody 2017; Pang 2018). Lige was amicable, always wearing a cheerful grin on his naturally tanned face. In 2009, he founded "Trinity Farm," located 60 km to the east of Beijing. Lige used to be a chemical fertilizer sale representative and made a good living out of it. It was also through the job that he witnessed how much chemical substances went into farm produce, so much that he could

not help shuddering at the thought of his own daughter feeding on "stuff" like that. Trinity Farm, where he eclectically experiments with farming ideas from home and abroad, is a bricolage for self-protection.

My fondest memory of Lige was the summer peaches from his farm. Those humble-looking fruits were the most flavorful, "peachy" thing that I had had in a long time. Being amazed, I asked Lige what he had done to them. Lige laughed. Then, with pride and confidence, he said, in his distinctive accent:

> "We did nothing! There are a few trees on the farm, but we don't pay much attention to them. They grow and ripen on their own. The fruits fell off. Livestock, chicken and geese would eat them. When there is too much, we would collect them. You are eating what was left behind by our animals! But you have to know that we must not be selfish. We shouldn't claim all the fruits. We have to leave some to birds, and even to worms. In this way, the balance of nature is sustained."

Soliloquies like this often took place at the farmers' market, and also featured on his social media. He posts a lot, almost excessively. Most of his posts are about their fresh farm produce, but he is also keen on sharing inspirations, comments and personal reflections regarding farming and being a farmer. These posts elucidate his farming philosophy, and also showcase the extensive conceptual resources that Lige dabbles into. From Chinese philosophy, to Natural Farming, then to the Whole Foods Market (WFM), Lige takes an eclectic approach and confidently put together different resources into the Trinity Farm.

The central tenet of Lige's farming practices is to minimize human intervention and respect non-human factors in agricultural production. This is informed by his reading of Chinese philosophy, a recurring theme on his social media. The Daoist doctrine of "inaction" and the Confucius value of "harmony" are frequently discussed and in great length and depth. Moreover, the principles are inscribed into the farm's nomenclature. "Trinity" is my translation of the Chinese name *San He Yu Shun*. Lige picked up the four characters from classic canons. According to him, *San* refers to the trinity of heaven, earth and human; it emerges from Dao and nurtures the "ten thousand things" (as everything in the world). *He*, the harmony among the three elements, emphasizes the respect for non-human factors and their distinctive Dao. *Yu* is rain, nourishing everything and all lives quietly hence crucial to agriculture. *Shun*, is to go along with the natural flow of Dao and Reason rather than against them. *San He Yu Shun* aptly encapsulates the value of harmonious, mutually beneficial relations among human, nature, and other living beings, structuring the backbone of Lige's bricolage.

"Natural Farming" is another crucial component of Trinity Farm as a bricolage of self-protection. It is an ecological farming approach established during the 1930s by Masanobu Fukuoka, a Japanese farmer-philosopher, who took inspirations from Daoism. In the 2010s, Natural Farming is reintroduced to China and popularized among urban new farmers who, like Lige, appropriate the nonintervention farming principle to grow safe and healthful foods for self-consumption. On social media, Lige circulates information of Natural Farming initiatives in Japan, Taiwan, and other Chinese cities, and discusses it in relation to his own farming practice. Moreover, Lige

further turns the inspirational stories of Natural Farming's leading figures into self-affirmation. In a post on September 22, 2017, he wrote how he was "determined to be China's Akinori Kimura":

> A man spent his whole life trying to prove to the world that his method is right, hoping that other farmers and farm produce consumers would accept his view. In order to gain trust, Masanobu Fukuoka took 24 years in total. How many 24 years does one have in a lifetime? Akinori Kimura started Natural Farming practice for his wife! I started Natural Farming practice for the food safety for my children and family!

As Lige attached personal affection, admiration and aspiration to them, he turned their legends into the principle of rational actions for himself. Not only did he assemble Natural Farming into the strategy of self-protection, but also weave it into his own unique subjectivity as a caring father.

Beyond East Asia, Lige sought actively to incorporate CSA, agriculture crowd funding, farmers' market, and permaculture, etc. to help Trinity Farm survive and thrive. In this light, Lige's more recent interest in the WFM is particularly worth noting. For food scholars, this might seem alarming since the WFM is a quintessential example of corporate institutions capturing alternative initiatives and subsuming alterity under consumerist interests (Johnston 2008; Johnston and Szabo 2011). But for Lige, the WFM provided an example – a quite successful one – of building consumer trust while profiting from organic produce. The WFM was used as a potential instrument to build a "sustainable operation and management system" for his farm, which seemed particularly urgent at that time, when his fellow urban new farmers and friends were fraught with an operational crisis in their own alternative farming initiative.

In order to provide family with safe and healthful food, Lige has built a bricolage using a wide range of philosophies, principles and practices both local and global in his farming practice. Especially worth attention is the eclecticism with which he approached each resource. He turned to different resources for different tasks – Chinese philosophy and Natural Farming for agricultural production, permaculture for an esthetically and productively sustainable farm, and the retailing model of the WFM for a strategy of sustainable farm operation and management. These alternative foodways, converging but also differentiating, were orchestrated by the pragmatic logic on the farm to address specific needs, resolve concrete problems and ultimately substantiate transformative visions of food provision and ways of living. Lige's eclectic disposition, which I also observed among other urban new farmers, also reveals the reconfiguration of the global-local dynamics under culinary cosmopolitanism. The transnational and the foreign no longer wield the symbolic efficacy by virtue of its foreignness, but is appropriated for its potential practical value for specific, idiosyncratic purposes such as self-protection.

Culinary bricoleurs in Beijing nowadays display much greater confidence as they draw upon transnational culinary resources and create distinctive bricolages such as 9 cm Bagel and Trinity Farm. They take an eclectic approach to both foreign and Chinese foods and foodways, identifying the commonality among the heterogeneous resources readily at their disposal. Beijing's transnational foodscape is a collection of such idiosyncratic bricolages: it is a co-bricolage emergent from various endeavors that eclectically put together local and trans-local resources to achieve particular objectives, e.g., personal aspirations and self-protection.

5. Conclusion

I have offered an analysis from the framework of co-bricolage of what Beijing's transnational foodscape looks like if the culinary practices of foreign foodways were to be perceived as an ongoing, open-ended process of co-bricolage, of making do with what is available. As demonstrated through the revisit to the fast food fever during the 1990s and the depiction of the heterogeneous bricolage since the 2010s. This imagery of the global and the local as affinal contrasts with the modernist dichotomy that prevailed in the previous decades. There has been a general shift away from culinary modernism toward culinary cosmopolitanism in Beijing's transnational foodscape. Under culinary modernism, the global-local dynamics were perceived and experienced through a structural contrast between the modernity and the lack thereof, whereas culinary cosmopolitanism reconfigures the global and the local as affinal and of no hierarchical differences and encourages idiosyncratic appropriations of both national and transnational resources.

The account of the shifting topography of Beijing's transnational food practice historicizes the dialectical model for understanding the global-local dynamics. An exemplary version is the "repetitious drama" where "the contrast of seductive globalism and authentic localism" is "played out in many permutations" (Wilk 1999, 248–49). The model effectively replaces the essentialist notion of "a uniform drama" with the processual concept of "a unifying drama," but still prescribes a closed system – "an eternal struggle" where "players … are actually locked in a dance" (Wilk 1999, 248). The dialectical framework was adept at a time when the structural and structuring forces of globalization and the agentive capacity of the local cultures constituted and molded life experiences and cultural practices. However, it is increasingly unproductive due to the lack of reflexivity over its own historicity. Using the notion "co-bricolage," I emphasize that the global-local process is an "open play" with neither unifying theme nor organizing script; it metamorphoses as bricolages are constantly made, unmade, and remade. Bricoleurs are not players "locked in a dance," but scriptwriters who perform idiosyncratic plays within a play. In other words, the global-local *dialectics* is not the underlying structure that "governs" translocal relationality, but rather a particular form in which the global-local dynamics manifest at a specific historical moment and in a specific social context.

Therefore, I propose "co-bricolage" as the framework to rethink how culinary and cultural practices and places are connected, related, and mutually influenced. The notion understands the global-local processes and transnational culture as immanent to the myriad bricolages produced and co-produced by heterogenous bricoleurs, and rejects the subsumption of the open and dynamic process under any essentialist underlying structures. It provides a productive conceptual tool for empirical accounts of how certain territories of connections fold, unfold, and refold, as well as nuanced examinations on the different roles of heterogeneous bricoleurs in such processes.

Notes

1. The English edition translates "bricoleur" into "handyman."
2. I use "bricolage" to denote the act and practice of "making do" with what is at hand, and the plural form "bricolages" for the products of such practice.

3. *tu* means earthy, local, and implies backwardness, while *yang*, meaning foreign, denote the trendy and the fashionable.
4. *Xiaozi* is the Chinese term for "petit bourgeois", developed in the post-reform period (1978–present) to refer to the lifestyle pursuing modern tastes and esthetics.
5. Historically, the acceptance and appropriation of foreign foods in Asia was strategized as a means of self-strengthening in the face of colonial power expansion. The openness and willingness toward foreign foods was forced by the colonial predicament and underpinned by the recognition of one's inferior position in the structure.

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Chenjia Xu is an anthropologist whose research expertise lies in anthropology of food and sensory studies. Her previous research projects examine how people navigate the power-infused social fields in contemporary China through the everyday practices of food and eating, paying special attention to the sensorial dimensions of these practices and processes.

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