From Innovation to Impact

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Translating New Nordic Cuisine into a Nordic food model[1]

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Introduction

This chapter puts forward three approaches – localizing, transposing, and theorizing for universal application – through which New Nordic Cuisine (NNC), an innovation consisting of a novel culinary concept, a set of guiding principles, and related practices, has developed into a Nordic food model that has had an impact on Nordic food culture, international culinary renewal and development, and food policy. First, we highlight the novel ideas and critical milestones in the evolution of NNC that have paved the way to its renown. Second, we provide a brief overview of our theoretical approach, zooming in on core ideas in the organizational literature on translation, and the data that informs our analytical approach. Next, we present and illustrate the three approaches, as well as some connections between them. By way of conclusion, we discuss how an ecology of translation, formed by the energy and skill of translators and the power of traveling objects, such as the Nordic cuisine manifesto and movement, contribute to a Nordic food model in an ongoing development and with a wider impact.

The evolution of New Nordic Cuisine

At the outset of the twenty-first century, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) were enjoying strong recognition of their welfare systems, interior design, crime novels, and films, but little if any recognition of their food. Terms such as Nordic Food or Nordic Cuisine were non-existent and a Nordic model of food was hardly conceivable, whether culturally, socially, or politically. The national cuisines were primarily associated with specific local preparations, such as marinated herring, smoked salmon, or meatballs, and were considered old-fashioned, uniform, greasy, and heavy, 'created as they are for a hard-working rather poor population that for long periods of the year also had to cope with severe cold' (Tingstrøm, 2004; *own translation*). Danish culinary culture, for example, was described as 'uninspired, unenthused, and unhealthy' (Meyer,

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2017). The development and launch of a new regional culinary concept and movement –NNC – inspired a range of culinary, entrepreneurial, policy-making, and research initiatives that communicated and further developed these nascent ideas into practices (Byrkjeflot et al., 2013).

The restaurant Noma (named after *no*rdisk *ma*d, translation from the Danish for 'Nordic food'), founded by gastro-entrepreneur Claus Meyer and chef René Redzepi in 2003, was established with the ambition to 'rebuild' the Nordic cuisine, as Meyer (2006) explained in a chronicle in the Danish national daily newspaper *Politiken*:

> We formulated in Noma's first menu what we wanted: "With Noma, we want to offer a personal, Nordic gourmet cuisine, where typical cooking methods, Nordic ingredients and our common food cultural heritage are exposed to an innovative gastronomic way of thinking. In its extreme consequence, we see it as our challenge to contribute to a reconstruction of the Nordic cuisine, so that it embraces the North Atlantic, and with its taste and regional uniqueness lights up the world."
>
> (Meyer, 2006; *own translation*)

In the same chronicle, Meyer explained that the ambition was to draw 'on both traditional and non-traditional Nordic ingredients…. The wild ingredients from ancient ecosystems should have the most prominent place in our kitchen,' keeping certain purity and simplicity, and avoiding 'high-tech exaggeration.'

These ideas took further shape as NNC formally anchored its meaning in a manifesto. Meyer and Jan Krag Jacobsen, the latter a journalist and vice president of the Danish Academy of Gastronomy at the time, whom Meyer referred to as his 'wingman,' developed the draft of the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto (which would later be also referred to as the NNC Manifesto and the New Nordic Food Manifesto). A group of renowned chefs from the Nordic countries refined, elaborated, and signed the manifesto at the NNC Symposium in Copenhagen in 2004. The manifesto, which was partly inspired by the Dogme 95 movement and the manifesto in Danish film, proclaimed a new culinary movement that aimed '[t]o express the purity, freshness, simplicity, and ethics associated with the region,'[2] affirming its Nordic connotations, and placed the responsibility for unraveling and revealing these values with chefs. The term Nordic in the label of the newly born regional cuisine helped avoid references to the national cuisines it brought together, drawing instead on positive associations with the general Nordic model (Byrkjeflot et al., 2013). The ambition, according to Claus Meyer, was to place the Nordic region on 'the gastronomic world map. It belongs there together with Spain, Italy, and France' (Meyer, 2006).

NNC experienced a fast-paced diffusion and recognition, influenced by different factors and actors (Byrkjeflot et al., 2013; Sundbo et al., 2013),

including – as noted above – a largely supportive and benevolent media (Leer, 2016). In culinary circles worldwide, the restaurant Noma became an exemplar of the movement and the new cuisine, receiving recognition as The World's Best Restaurant in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2014.[3] Another strong influence was Redzepi, Noma's coowner and head chef and the recognized leader of 'a culinary revolution that focused on time and place and celebrated the produce and cooking techniques of the Nordic region' (Porter, 2015: 44). In 2016, in the wake of Noma's success, Michelin's Nordic Guide awarded Denmark's first three-star designation to the Geranium restaurant and 30 stars to 20 other restaurants in Copenhagen (Ooi and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2017). Within a short period of time, and in the absence of formalized leadership, organization, and identity, which may have allowed for a more coordinated interaction by different players, the Nordic culinary movement was 'spreading at lightning speed at all levels,' 'like a benign virus' (Wolff, 2011), and was 'suddenly everywhere' (Signer, 2017).

Restaurants, cookbooks, new products, and culinary festivals in the region proliferated. While Copenhagen was the movement's epicenter and 'culinary trend-setter' (Allagui, 2010), Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki, and Reykjavik also became important gastronomic destinations (Ooi and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2017), with some of the most celebrated restaurants located outside the capital cities, in remote locations. Importantly, not only did foodies start coming to Norden, but also the cuisine itself traveled, getting in closer contact with other culinary approaches, techniques, and ingredients. For example, Noma and its head chef Redzepi 'popped up' in London in relation to the Olympics (Forbes, 2012), Tulum in Mexico (Rao, 2016), Tokyo (Abend, 2015a; Warwick, 2015), and Sydney (Freed and Ruehl, 2015), while Claus Meyer opened a Nordic restaurant in New York's Grand Central Terminal (Mullen, 2014). NNC was also showcased at events, ranging from those offered by Nordic diplomacy to cultural events, such as Nordic Kitchen Party (2012) at the Cannes Film Festival (Rosser, 2015).

Beyond praise and recognition, however, NNC has been criticized for serving 'polemic on a plate' (Booth, 2015), being elitist, nationalistic, and ethnically excluding (Gravdal, 2008; Holm, 2011; Leer, 2016), as well as failing to include female chefs at its inception (Leer, 2019). Some have concluded that NNC 'is no more' and 'has run its course as a global food movement' (Booth, 2015). Its initiator, Meyer, affirmed that change has already happened and NNC is 'the new normal'; '[we] should just move on, talk less about the New Nordic Cuisine…. Not cling to it as a sort of successful brand to preserve for 200–300 years, having to find budgets' (Meyer, 2015). It has been suggested that Copenhagen-based chefs that have been associated with NNC 'are loosening their ties to the New Nordic pigeonhole' (Trimble, 2017) and 'applying that culinary knowledge and expertise to ethnic food' (Porter, 2015: 42). Noma's head chef, Redzepi,

was quoted as objecting to claims that the New Nordic label had become more a marketing means than a meaningful signifier, stating: 'I don't have a problem with "Nordic," … [i]t's the only way to give a sense of place. But the "new" in front of "Nordic" should be erased, buried. I am so sick of that term' (Abend, 2015b). Redzepi closed the original Noma in 2017, relaunching Noma 2.0 with a new concept in 2018, 'on the premise of being in and of nature, physically and conceptually with a menu based around what he says are the three distinct Nordic seasons' (Porter, 2018: 55), thereby still emphasizing core Nordic principles like seasonality, nature, and simplicity.

Thus, chefs who had originated and promoted NNC have abandoned the label and sought to distinguish their own cuisine as something unique, which is characteristic of innovators when they are categorized together by audiences (Slavich et al., 2020). In the meantime, rather than vanishing, NNC ideas have transformed into a Nordic food model with wider impact. This translation from innovation to impact is important for the making and circulation of Nordic models, yet insufficiently understood. This chapter sheds light on three approaches to this translation. Below we outline our theoretical and empirical approach.

Theoretical framing and data

An important research stream in organization studies has focused on the circulation of ideas and models about management and organizing, seeking to explain the emergence of novelty in these processes. It has taken two main directions of analysis – diffusion and translation – each with their historical development and variants (Wæraas and Nielsen, 2016; Djelic, 2008), yet also with certain overlaps and connections. The primarily North American literature has investigated the *diffusion* of forms, concepts, and practices (e.g., Tolbert and Zucker, 1983; Fligstein, 1985, 1991; Baron et al., 1986; Meyer, 2002). Later studies have examined how what diffuses may change along the way (e.g., Ansari et al., 2010; Drori et al., 2014).

In particular, European institutional literature (e.g., Djelic, 1998; Mazza et al., 2005; Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson, 2006) and Scandinavian Institutionalism have focused on *translation* processes (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996) that are 'stubbornly material' and has argued that 'to set something in a new place is to construct it anew' (Czarniawska and Sevón, 2005: 8). As noted by Czarniawska and Joerges (1996: 47), 'the concept of translation is useful to the extent that it captures the coupling between arising contingencies and attempted control, created by actors in search for meaning.' This stream of research has argued that ideas spread successfully when they are linked to eminent societal norms and values, as well as to authoritative legitimizers (Røvik, 2002). The energy needed for ideas to travel comes from users or creators as 'willing political agents' (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996),

as well as skillful and/or interested theorists (Strang and Meyer, 1993) who shape and reshape these ideas as they flow (Behrends et al., 2014; Røvik, 2016). These various users in the circulation of ideas 'energize an idea any time they translate it for their own or somebody else's use' (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996: 23). Further, they strategically reframe and locally ground them, especially when they collide with prevailing practices in the receiving context, as was shown with US diversity management adoption into Denmark (Boxenbaum, 2006).

Scholars have also captured the application of managerial practices across dissimilar fields through transposition (Boxenbaum and Battilana, 2005; Mazza et al., 2005). As Boxenbaum and Battilana (2005: 358) found, to 'become an innovation, a transposed managerial practice needs to be translated into a truly new form.' In other instances, they are universalized and claimed as 'panaceas' (Mazza et al., 2015; Örtenblad, 2015); that is, 'tools that work successfully in all kinds of organizations' (Røvik, 2002: 126). At times, they also involve 'politics of meaning' (Slavich et al., 2020); that is, negotiating meanings in the public domain. Despite significant research on translation, further investigation is needed on its dynamics, capturing different approaches to purposefully translating an innovation into a model with wider impact. Theoretically, we seek to enrich the organizational literature on translation, which has predominantly focused on the travel of management concepts and models, such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Balanced Scorecard, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), or diversity management (Røvik, 2002; Alvarez et al., 2005; Boxenbaum, 2006), with a focus on cultural concepts and models.

The circulation of concepts and models associated with cultural practices, such as food, has been a topic of interest for scholars in history and the humanities, yet originally focused mostly on the spread of culture from hegemonic nation states, such as the United States to the periphery (Stephan, 2005). Later interest has been directed toward studying cultural exchanges, in some cases employing rather loosely the concept of circulation (Gänger, 2017; Poole, 2020). Cultural spheres, such as food, are generally quite ambiguous in terms of practices, as they tend to be characterized by authenticity that is materially and emotionally anchored in the originating context. In order to understand such processes, we zoom in on ecologies of actors that circulate and disseminate ideas (e.g., Djelic, 2017; Westney and Piekkari, 2020) and not just those who edit them at adoption (Wedlin and Sahlin, 2017) and also the roles that different types of actors play in translating ideas (Spyridonidis et al., 2016). Doing so enables us to get further insights into processes of translation as proactively sought (Røvik, 2016).

In this chapter, we put forward some theoretical insights on translation by drawing on the case of NNC and its subsequent translations into a Nordic food model. NNC is a particularly informative case, as its ideas and

practices have traveled widely since its creation in the context of a globally recognized general Nordic model of welfare state and society. Our understanding draws on a wide variety of sources, such as semi-structured interviews with gastro-experts (chefs, gastro-entrepreneurs, and restaurant owners) and influential figures (political advisors, food program directors, and food scientists) associated with NNC. We gathered data between 2010 and 2020. The first round of data collection was concerned with acquiring an understanding of the emergence and meaning of the NNC phenomenon and the role of Noma as an exemplar restaurant and a model for the ideas behind NNC, whereas the second round was directed toward understanding the model's circulation. A comprehensive Infomedia and Retriever search in Danish and Norwegian was supplemented by a search in English in Factiva to gain a deeper understanding of media depictions of the historical background, current situation, and circulation of NNC within and beyond the international culinary field. Sources in Spanish were gathered and analyzed to unravel the depiction of NNC's role in developing Bolivian cuisine (more on this below). Within the limited scope of this book chapter, we selectively highlight aspects of the collected and analyzed data to illustrate our argument on approaches to translation of NNC into a Nordic food model aimed at a wider impact. The rest of the collected data has been used as a background, shaping our overall longitudinal understanding of the trajectory of NNC.

Next, we delve into and define three approaches to translating NNC into a Nordic food model.

Approaches to translating New Nordic Cuisine for wider impact

Our study unraveled three distinctive approaches to translating NNC from an innovation to a model with wider impact, which we have labeled localizing, transposing, and theorizing for universal application. The first approach, *localizing*, is about elaborating and expanding the NNC ideas within the originating (Nordic) context through initiatives creating an impact on Nordic food culture. The second approach, *transposing*, involves adapting aspects of NNC and Nordic food culture to new contexts with distinctive and different challenges, with impact on culinary renewal and international development in the receiving context. The third approach is *theorizing for universal application*; that is, developing a template of universally applicable ideas and practices, drawing on NNC, Nordic food culture, as well as transpositions to other contexts, with impact on food policy. We briefly introduce and illustrate these three approaches below and suggest how they may contribute in different ways to the making of a Nordic food model. Table 12.1 provides a comparison of the three approaches to translation in terms of their focus and translation agents, objectified ideas that travel as well as their influence on and potential drawbacks for the development of a Nordic food model.

Table 12.1 Approaches to translating New Nordic Cuisine (NNC) into a Nordic food model

Approach Characteristics	*Localizing*	*Transposing*	*Theorizing for Universal Application*
Definition (example)	Expand Nordic specificity, translating the culinary innovation to Nordic food culture (e.g., Nordic Council of Ministers' Programs I, II)	Adapt selected aspects of NNC and Nordic food culture into a new context (e.g., Bolivian culinary movement and manifesto)	Create a template for application of Nordic culinary and food practices in global food policy (e.g., Nordic Council of Ministers' Solutions Menu)
Translation focus	Development of a Nordic food culture	Culinary and food culture renewal in non-Nordic contexts	Universal food policy solutions for any context
Translation agents	Chefs, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, researchers, journalists	Entrepreneurs, chefs, journalists	Bureaucrats, policymakers, communication experts
Objectified ideas that travel	New Nordic Cuisine manifesto and movement Story of innovative and award-winning restaurant *Noma*	Manifesto of the Bolivian Culinary Movement (MIGA) Story of innovative and award-winning restaurant and socially oriented food school *Gusto*	Solutions menu: A Nordic Guide to Sustainable Food Policy Multiple stories connected to food policy, from NNC and Bolivian cuisine to food waste, etc.
Influence on the development of a Nordic food model	Sustain and elaborate Nordic distinctiveness as NNC develops into *Nordic food* and *Nordic food culture*	Extend NNC and Nordic food into a *Nordic model for culinary and social renewal*	Extend NNC and Nordic culinary renewal model to *Nordic food policy model*
Potential drawbacks	Lost scaling of impact due to refraining from 'Nordic food' label; keeping distance to big food industry	Critique of post-colonialism, domination. Potential loss of receiving context's authenticity	Critique of lost Nordic identity of the model as it is turned into a universal template

Localizing

Localization has been defined as 'the process by which practices and concepts are modified according to the specific conditions of the locale' (Drori et al., 2014: 17). In the context we study, it is about expanding the local (Nordic) meaning of NNC by translating it into Nordic food, Nordic diet, and Nordic food culture. In that, the high-end culinary innovation is

translated into a wider food movement through energy provided by advisors and policymakers (Nordic Council of Ministers), entrepreneurs (initiators of various food projects), and researchers (for example, Nordic food lab, Nordic food diet). Viewing NNC as location-specific (that is, anchored in and having meaning in the Nordic region, as well as in the respective nation states), this approach to translation seeks to elaborate the distinctiveness of Nordic food from high-end to mass market. The ambition to 'democratize' the new culinary developments was there from the outset, as the following quote by the gastro-preneur Claus Meyer reveals:

> Such initiatives – regardless of the complex and strategic motives behind them – strengthen the diversity of providers and products and generate a wave of enthusiasm at all levels in the category. It causes consumers to seek insight and ultimately leads to the goods that come out of the effort becoming democratically accessible rather than small culinary works of art, reserved for a narrow gastronomic elite.
>
> (Meyer, 2006)

In 2005, a year after the New Nordic Kitchen manifesto was signed, it became the foundation of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Århus declaration and was elaborated into New Nordic Food Programme I (2007–2009) and Programme II (2010–2014). These programs provided direction and DKK 18.5 million in funding for initiatives in the period 2007–2014 in the context of Norden. Further, the concluding activities of the second program included a series of workshops with the theme #NORDICFOOD2024, envisioning a new horizon for Nordic food, which no longer used 'new' in the label and defined a ten-year horizon with possible future directions.

Following the 2006–2014 initiatives in its Programmes I and II, in 2016 the Nordic Council of Ministers presented a more focused programme, which sought to 'democratise good food' (New Focus Areas for New Nordic Food, 2016). It prioritized three areas: food in the public sector, a Nordic food award, and food and tourism and anticipated that 'there will be efforts to highlight New Nordic Food as a policy tool in other areas' (ibid., 2016). In referring to public sector food, there is a clear ambition to develop a 'model':

> The project 'Nordic food in the public sector' examines how a Nordic model for public sector meals can be developed and integrated across borders and across sectors. This year the project is being run by the Copenhagen House of Food and the Swedish National Food Agency in partnership with organisations and stakeholders in public sector food from across the Nordic Region.
>
> (ibid., 2016)

Other initiatives sought to expand the set of meanings associated with Nordic food through research. One of them was the Nordic Food Lab, a

non-profit, open-source organization established in 2008 on the initiative of Meyer and Redzepi to 'combine scientific and humanistic approaches with culinary techniques from around the world to explore the edible potential of the Nordic region' (Nordic Food Lab, 2020: 5). The lab counted on support from independent foundations, private businesses, and government sources. In 2014, it became part of Department of Food Science at University of Copenhagen (KU) and was closed down as a self-governing lab although its activities continued as part of the KU's Future Consumer Lab. A 2010 blog post by the Nordic Food Lab informs about a collaboration with 'Nordgen, the amazing bank of genetic material, to evaluate the gastronomic potential of bygone varieties of Scandinavian produce' (Nordic Food Lab, 2020: 10). Another blog post from 2011 gives a glimpse of another role of the lab that of disseminating the NNC ideas: 'The Nordic Food Lab was honored to be invited to an EU Parliament session on innovation… to introduce the concepts of the NNC, and hopefully disseminate the inspiration we find in the Scandinavian culinary momentum' (ibid.: 11). A later article by two of the lab's members affirms: '[we] are committed to Nordic cooking not primarily because of its value as a cultural export, but because of its value as an exploration of our own identity… in an increasingly globalized world culture' (ibid.: 266). This reveals the interest in influencing not only Nordic food but also food culture and identity in the region.

These initiatives have broadened the impact of NNC by developing novel ideas and understandings related to Nordic food and Nordic food culture:

> The focus in recent years on New Nordic Food has brought about meaningful and significant changes in food culture in a number of the Nordic countries. The trend also underlines some of our basic values: sustainability, creativity, quality and purity.
>
> (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2014)

Overall, localizing allows sustaining and elaborating the Nordic distinctiveness in relation to food, paving the way for ideas of Nordic food and Nordic food culture. However, it could be argued that some potential for scaling up impact has been lost, as the main actors involved in these translations have refrained from involving big industry interests in order to create and enforce a 'Nordic food' label and standard for mass markets.

Transposing

Transposition is about applying a practice from one field into another, which involves adaptation and possibilities for further innovation (Boxenbaum and Battilana, 2005). However, as Meyer (2014: 81) affirmed, 'meaningful items cannot be transported "wholesale" from one cultural context to another … they have to pass through a powerful filter of local cultural and structural constraints to also gain legitimacy in their new local context,'

resonating with it. An example of the transposing approach is Claus Meyer and the NGO IBIS' export and adaptation of ideas and practices from the Nordic culinary field; that is, rich welfare states seeking to develop Nordic food culture and identity, to a highly dissimilar context of Bolivia, one of the poorest countries in the world, seeking to create a sense of pride through cuisine and recognition as a culinary destination. These efforts were not intended to expand NNC to Bolivia, but rather to enable the development of own, locally embedded cuisine there, resonating with the local needs of a socially conscious culinary model.

In August 2010, Meyer established the Melting Pot Foundation as a 'not-for-profit with the mission of spreading social uplift through the culinary arts and traditions.'[4] When we interviewed Claus Meyer in the winter of 2010, he explained that he had been exploring whether the model could travel if one replaced the word 'Nordic' with any other (regional, national, etc.) location. While different sites were considered with both transferability potential and social purpose in mind, Bolivia was chosen because, among other possible reasons (for example, it had been a priority country for Danish development aid since 1994, with an Embassy opened in La Paz in 1995) on the grounds of its biodiversity:

> If you have access to a large diversity of products, unknown to foodies, then you have a strong chance of coming up with something that could have global interest. Bolivia may have the most interesting and unexplored biodiversity in the world.
>
> (Meyer, in Stocker, 2013)

In that it constituted an opportunity for wider impact: *If we succeed, this will mean more to the Bolivian nation than Noma and new Nordic cuisine has meant to anyone* (Meyer, in Stocker, 2013).

The Bolivian project was initiated in collaboration with La Paz local authorities and Oxfam IBIS (Smedegaard Jensen, 2011) and support from Danida, Denmark's development cooperation, which is an area of activity under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (Udenrigsministeriet DANIDA, 2013). This project involved the creation of the gourmet Restaurant *Gustu* (inaugurated on April 4, 2013), Cafeterias and Schools Manq'a, and Gustu Training Center. The Gustu School sought to train young underprivileged Bolivians in the areas of kitchen and bakery.[5]

The First Bolivian Gastronomic Meeting took place on October 12, 2012, through a Symposium entitled 'Tejiendo el Movimiento Gastronómico Boliviano' (Weaving the Bolivian Gastronomic Movement) and involved discussions of MIGA, the Manifiesto del Movimiento Gastronómico Boliviano (its manifesto). Both Meyer and Jan Krag Jacobsen participated with presentations and Gustu provided the food for the event. Further local resonance was sought in collaboration with core local actors, such as 'chefs, academics, farmers, and community leaders to collaborate on a new cuisine

to celebrate the country's possibilities' (Meyer, 2017). The team of translators also included the Danish chef Kamilla Seidler, who had experience with NNC and exposure to New Spanish Cuisine through an apprenticeship at the restaurant of leading Basque chef Andoni Aduriz. Aduriz and another Venezuelan-Italian chef Michelangelo Cestari, a close collaborator of Seidler from their time with Aduriz, were tasked with creating a leading Gustu restaurant and a culinary school for underprivileged youth.

Gustu was expected to become the new cuisine's leading exemplar, similar to the role played by Noma, whereas the culinary school was an addition to the NNC model, an innovation that fitted the context, to fulfill the social purpose of the project and ensure culinary talent for the new Bolivian cuisine. As Seidler explained in Price (2016),

> Bolivia right now is like a very young version of the New Nordic movement. Young people who studied abroad are coming back and opening restaurants. We're seeing a very fast-growing middle class, which is where the restaurant boom becomes a reality.
>
> (Price, 2016)

Seidler recollected that the purpose of the Bolivian initiative was 'to start a pride about their food culture and their food to raise tourism and thus the economy in the country' (Hartmann Eskesen, 2017). Gustu earned recognition as best restaurant and Seidler as Best Female Chef in Latin America (Price, 2016), but perhaps more importantly, for her efforts to connect with the local context, she was given the unofficial name *The Dane of the Andes*.

As Cestari noted (León, 2014; authors' translation), 'The restaurant is the tip of the iceberg of a series of projects that seek to generate a whole model of commitment with society.' In a 2017 article entitled *Food for All Manifesto*, Meyer elaborated on the importance of 'incorporating community control in our organisational structures, with the eventual outcome being complete community control of the project.' He further clarified that,

> In La Paz [Bolivia], though, we remain on site as an available resource and – since we reserve certain rights as a funding agent and founding father – we are in the final stages of successfully transferring the Gustu restaurant to Bolivian leadership.

The translation approach in Bolivia extends NNC and Nordic food into a Nordic model for culinary renewal, which also has an impact on international development. A potential limitation of such an approach to translation could be criticism of post-colonialism or domination as well as potential loss of the receiving context's authenticity. However, as also related above, the entrepreneurs involved in the translation have sought to secure local sensitivity as well as ways of transferring the leadership of these culinary initiatives back to local hands.

Theorizing for universal application

Theorizing is about 'generalizing a translation so that it can diffuse within the organizational field' (Boxenbaum and Battilana, 2005: 356). It is a 'discursive process by which concrete forms or practices are turned into types' (Meyer, 2014: 80). Theorizing may also be necessary in order to make transition from formulation to social movement to institutional imperative (Strang and Meyer, 1993). Theorizing could involve creating 'panaceas' with general appeal, independent of context (Røvik, 2002; Mazza and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2015; Örtenblad, 2015) through a quasi-object, such as a label or a manual (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996). An example of theorizing is The Nordic Council of Ministers' (NCM) ambition to 'package' NNC's and Nordic food's principles and practices to enable their wider adoption, across contexts and in relation to different global challenges. In this case, what is 'exported' is a set of policy ideas as a *Nordic Model of Sustainable Food Innovation*, which seeks to involve a wider range of players across a variety of contexts through a 'Solutions Menu' (Halloran et al., 2018). As explained by Mads Frederik Fischer-Møller, Senior adviser, Nordic Council of Ministers (interview, 2017): '[T]hat's also about packaging this, being better to tell this story, being better to show this as part of a food policy tool case that others can take inspiration from … as Nordic model on sustainable food innovation.'

The Nordic Council of Ministers has systematically supported the development of NNC (Byrkjeflot et al., 2013) and further pursued the circulation of Nordic food ideas, opening up new contexts of application through its programs, providing resources for these extensions, and legitimizing these efforts at the level of regional policymaking. It has also embarked on packaging of ideas and related policies, given the growing international interest in replicating the 'model.' The following quote depicts this approach:

> [P]eople are looking at the Nordic region, … combining their view of the Nordic region as sustainable, then they see the Nordic food revolution, then they think "there must be some policies behind it"… What they see is a blueprint of a policy, but actually is there one policy behind, is there ten policies behind? What's actually behind this? … We can then give an outline on all the policies that have enabled the Nordic region to go from a developing country culinary-wise to a developed country culinary-wise. And that's a project we are undertaking these years and then finishing in 2019.
>
> (Interview with Mads Frederik Fischer-Møller, August 2017)

As the NCM's senior advisor acknowledged:

> "Nordic" as a label is not necessarily that interesting within the Nordic region but it's very, very interesting outside of the Nordic region, so

> that's why we are focusing on networks between the actors that have internalized the principles… outside we say, "the Nordics!" and we are financing a food festival in New York called the "Nordics".
>
> (Interview with Mads Frederik Fischer-Møller, August 2017)

The Nordic Council of Ministers employs a number of mechanisms in pursuing more visibility for the Nordic food ideas, some of which involve resourceful use of connections and opportunities.

> … it was very, very fashionable in policy to think about "what are then the next businesses? Where are the next business opportunities?" and try to see "what can be the next?" and then … we decided, "okay, food and creative industries". Sometimes … it's also a matter of funding. If there is somebody doing a program on creative industries and we could say food and creative industries and then fund part of our project with that. We've believed in food and creative industries, but we also liked to double our funding so that's one way of doing it. Then food and public diplomacy … was a core idea by Claus Meyer and he has been critical of the way food business operators, but also governments, were using, or not using, food to communicate the values of the Nordic region. So it was just an idea exactly on this, we need to be better to use food as a means of communicating our values when we are representing the Nordic region internationally or just when the Danish minister is having a meeting, the topics of the meeting should be communicated through "what's on the plate".
>
> (Interview with Mads Frederik Fischer-Møller, August 2017)

Overall, theorizing for universal application involves a high level of abstraction to ensure sufficient generality of the principles advanced (Strang and Meyer, 1993). This higher level of abstraction may lead to removal of certain Nordic specificities to enable a wider appeal.

Developing Nordic cuisine and food into a template for wider impact, independent of the context in which it is applied, could raise concerns about loss of authenticity. For example, Evans and Astrup Pedersen (2015) from the Nordic Food Lab have cautioned that 'any cuisine which gains an audience outside of its birthplace' is destined to become 'essentialized, tokenized even, emptied of its historical context, rendered internally consistent and packaged neatly for foreign consumption,' which comes with 'precocious exporting.' Yet, while such concerns are valid and need to be accounted for in processes of translation, they refer to the cuisine itself rather than to an overall food model that 'packages' a wider set of ideas and practices, particularly those involving food policies, that, despite being conceived in Norden and with Nordic values, can have wider appeal. Hence, while theorizing for universal application is the approach that can potentially have the widest impact due to its abstraction, it needs the other two translation

approaches – localizing and transposing – to support the authenticity and social consciousness of the Nordic food model. Below, we briefly discuss this connectedness between approaches.

Developing a Nordic food model across translation approaches

Each of the three approaches discussed in the previous section, along with NNC itself and the overall Nordic model, contributes in different ways, by providing different value, to the shaping of a Nordic food model (see Figure 12.1). NNC, with its creativity and innovation, and its ongoing interest for external, non-Nordic audiences, provides visibility for a Nordic food model. The localization gives it a wider local grounding and is a source of (Nordic-based) authenticity. The transposition shows how Nordic culinary ideas can travel to and have an impact in a context that is distinctively different from the originating one, yet resonates with NNC's core ideas of a locality-based culinary renewal. It adds versatility to the Nordic food ideas and to the model in which these ideas are encapsulated. The theorization reveals how localized and transposed ideas can become of relevance to policymaking and have a potential global impact if abstracted and packaged together by skillful translators, thereby contributing universality to the model. In addition, Figure 12.1 suggests that the overall Nordic model is also relevant for the shaping of a Nordic food model, providing it with legitimacy, as well as with some of its foundational values.

Neither NNC nor the overall Nordic model or any of these three approaches alone are sufficient for transforming an elite cuisine into a food model with wider impact. Rather, the making of such a model needs these

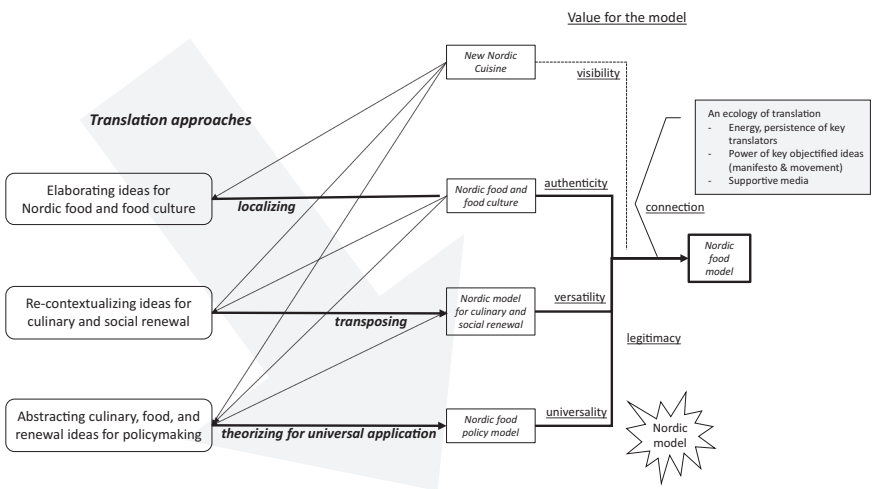

Figure 12.1 Developing a Nordic food model across translation approaches.

and possibly other approaches to connect and operate in a distributed way across contexts and audiences through an ecology of translation 'of continuously interacting translators, translations, and idea variants' (Wedlin and Sahlin 2017; Nielsen et al., 2021: 5). These translations make it possible to bring together the different innovations and make them visible as a Nordic food model, thereby extending the impact of the original culinary, food, and food policy ideas. In addition, each of these approaches tends to bring further innovation through their local translation, as revealed in the case of transposition (Boxenbaum and Battilana, 2005).

In particular, the ecology of translation (Wedlin and Sahlin, 2017; Nielsen et al., 2021) that supports the traveling of these ideas involves three key elements. The first is *committed translators*, such as gastronomic entrepreneurs like Claus Meyer, or bureaucrat entrepreneurs, such as those from the Nordic Council of Ministers, whose energy and creativity sustain and continuously generate new instances of Nordic culinary, food, and policy translations. In that way, they ensure an ongoing stream of translation attempts that keep the ideas in motion and thus keeps them current, associated with continuously relevant concerns. The second is *powerful artifacts* – key objectified ideas – such as the Nordic cuisine manifesto and Nordic food movement that are used to give meaning and legitimate the translations. They continuously appear in the background in all three approaches and are continuously invoked across translation attempts: as an ideology to guide food practices locally, as a tool to emulate in the renewal of the Bolivian cuisine, and even as element of support in food policy. Further, *highly visible exemplars*, such as Noma and Gusto, provide concrete practices to emulate and powerful stories that travel but also to make the impact of Nordic food ideas highly visible, especially as such exemplars attract strong international media attention. Last, while the objectified idea of a Nordic food movement is diffuse and not easily visible, it gives energy to translation by pointing out that it is a movement and not a model.

The third is *the supportive media* that ensures attention to the different aspects of the model, connects them, and gives sense to the diverse and disperse ideas. As the communication manager of the New Nordic Food Program II, Lindfors (2015: 14) acknowledged in the program's final report: 'New Nordic Food has created a strong network of Nordic and international food journalists and bloggers. This is supported by communication cooperation with Nordic Council of Ministers, national food actors, and the media.' Overall, '[w]hat the New Nordic movement is trying to export is not a single cuisine, but an all-encompassing philosophy of food' (Morris, 2020).

Concluding remarks

At the outset of this chapter, we asked how a new culinary innovation became a Nordic food model in the process of its translation, 'reshaping the food world' (Morris, 2020). What we outlined and illustrated in response to

this question were three distinctive approaches to how NNC was translated and, in that, contributed to the shaping of a Nordic food model with wider impact in relation to food culture, culinary renewal, international development, and food policy. These approaches are by no means exhaustive of the complex diffusion and translation dynamics of NNC. Other approaches to translation may be unraveled – and are worthy of further exploration – for example, in contexts translating NNC from a regional-level culinary concept to national food models (such as Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish) that also involve agriculture and the food industry.

Further, an account of the translation of NNC and its evolution into a global culinary trend (e.g., Moskin, 2011; Petruzelli and Savino, 2014; Khaire, 2017) and a food model cannot be complete without accounting for the role played by an increasingly visible and popular general Nordic Model. Although this Nordic Model is still mainly associated with labor and welfare, in the period that NNC developed (2004–2018), it continued expanding its meaning in a range of cultural contexts, such as design, literature, TV, fashion, or lifestyle (illustrated, for example, by a variety of exhibitions and media publications referring to 'Nordic cool'). This was also a period when the Nordic Council of Ministers established programs for regional branding; the Nordic countries developed their own programs of nation branding when they were ranked as top achievers in different indexes and presented as supermodels in international meetings and media (World Economic Forum, 2011; The Economist, 2013). Einar Risvik (2015: 9), the chairman of the working group New Nordic Food II, connected the 'innovation force' of the food sector and food culture to the future of the overall Nordic welfare model:

> The complete value chain for food is already the biggest value-creating sector in all Nordic countries, and with an increasing turnover, the number of employees will help to secure a strong contribution to the welfare of the countries. The consequence is that we need to see our food sector and our food culture as a major innovation force, worth maintaining in order to afford the future of the Nordic welfare model.

Our study suggests that the general Nordic model not only provides a source of initial values and meaning to the specific (culinary) innovation, as well as legitimacy to it and to the Nordic food model, but also gets enriched and reinvigorated by this culinary innovation, as the latter expands and consolidates into a Nordic food model in translation.

Of course, one may question whether the popularity of a Nordic food model, along with other specific Nordic models, is just a passing fashion or has a staying power. It could be argued that as long as the Nordic economies are doing well and are seen as examples of a more equal and progressive kind of capitalism, the interest in other aspects of the Nordic countries, such as their cultural models, will prevail. The positive connotations associated

with the term *Nordic*; the still-active gastro-entrepreneur Claus Meyer and the still visible Noma as an exemplar of cutting-edge innovation in Nordic culinary practice; and the sustained promotion by the Nordic Council of Ministers are all clearly important for sustaining NNC's trajectory from innovation to impact. Rather than a coordinated strategic effort, however, it is the distributed and rather loose efforts by these diverse actors involved in translating NNC as a flexible concept on their own terms and imprinting different meanings on it that have shaped it as a Nordic food model, sometimes driving it in different directions. This chapter is an open invitation for further investigation into the role of ecologies of translation in transforming innovative ideas into impactful models.

Notes

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3 'The World's 50 Best Restaurants' home page, available at https://www.theworlds50best.com/previous-list [accessed April 13, 2021]

4 The Melting Pot Foundation home page, available at https://melting-pot.herokuapp.com/ [accessed April 13, 2021]

5 Ibid.

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