

## SSAS INTERDISCIPLINARE 2021/2022

### GROUP "SOCIETY AND IDENTITY"

Fellow coordinator: **prof.ssa Silvia Piconese**

Student coordinator: **Alberto Testa**

#### INTRODUCTION:

As it can be inferred from the title of our thematic, the research investigates the role of food in the relationship between individual and society. With the help of sociological theory, the attempt is to understand not only how much food influences the construction of the personal identity, but also how decisive it is in defining the position the individual assumes within social dynamics.

The research investigates some elements, which we intend as phenomena for a sociology of food and follows a trend that goes from the particular to the general.

The first subject is coffee: one of the elements that encodes Italian belonging. Coffee is analyzed both considering its personal perception (and also the biological effects it produces on the human body) and as an element of identity in which a national community recognizes itself.

The second subject is Made in Italy: a brand that has been designed specifically to protect Italian quality; a quality that hides an identity which recognizes itself in the products of its own territory, a cohesive social group that has felt the need to defend itself from what is threatening it, foreign imitation products.

These first phenomena are closely related to each other, in fact they collaborate in the construction of the same "Italian" identity even if they present differences: coffee is a single phenomenon of what Made in Italy represents in a sociological sense, moreover, the latter has a protective role that is external to every single specific food.

Thirdly, we decided to investigate an even broader phenomenon, which concerns an identity that is built not in the national background, but in the global environment, and which is particularly interesting because of its modern implications: vegetarianism, the keystone of a new modern subculture, whose members adhere at different degrees, but are certainly united by the same nutrition and ethics.

#### GROUP I: "Coffee for Everyone"

Speakers: Giulia Gigliotti, Alessandra De Canio, Alberto Testa, Edoardo Biccirè, Alice Cicarelli

When we first started thinking about how food could be involved in the definition of our identity and our society, we immediately identified coffee as a strong definer of these two concepts. The title "coffee for everyone" implicitly contains both individual and collective features: everyone enjoys their own coffee, while this drink creates opportunities for meeting and socializing. Coffee marked historical events in the past: despite the initial distrust on the part of the Catholic world, which saw coffee as a potential weapon of spiritual corruption, in a short time coffee spread successfully throughout Europe. Indeed the Café has the function of a social center, being the place where the bourgeoisie develops new cultural and commercial forms. Nowadays, coffee has reached the private sphere, becoming a domestic drink. We analyzed how people approach the purchase and consumption of coffee, taking as examples Starbucks and Lavazza. We then compared the two brands, by defining their distinctive characteristics, and by identifying their target buyers. Moreover, nowadays caffeine is the most consumed psychostimulant in the world, and there is great inter-individual variability in caffeine consumption and its positive and negative effects on the human body, including the impact on the cardiovascular system, studied through heart rate and cardiovascular risk assessment. Coffee has a crucial role among Italian products of excellence, and regarding the discipline of the "Made in Italy" trademark of origin, it is necessary to briefly refer to the existence of different regulatory levels, on the international level, with the Madrid Agreement, with the Euro-Union legislation, and last but not least, with national laws. Finally, we asked ourselves how much taste is culturally conditioned and how much it depends on genetic factors. Taste is therefore certainly

responsible for the distinction of different substances with a precise evolutionary and nutritional purpose. However, cultural and cognitive elements also come into play. To empirically complete this theoretical research, we submitted a survey to a group of foreign students to investigate their habits in coffee consumption: The results of this survey strengthen the idea that coffee consumption has a strong cultural and social conditioning .

## **GROUP II, “Do we know what we eat? A deconstruction of "Made in Italy" between the myth of tradition and new unknowns”**

Speakers: Valerio F. Addis, Emanuele Capozziello, Chiara Giammugnai

In this work, we have developed the theme of "society and identity" starting from the analysis of a phenomenon close to our territory, that is “Made in Italy” in the field of food. This brand is a synonym of quality for many people, and brings to mind an ideal authenticity of food, as well as a model of sustainable production and consumption close to tradition. Starting with some definitions, and after recalling the current legislation on the mark of origin, we have dealt with what it represents for our country and how it is seen in the rest of the world. In particular, we have divided our work into the main stages that bring food from the raw material to people's homes: production, distribution and marketing. So, we decided to deconstruct some myths and beliefs related to Made in Italy: we focused on the problem of false indications of origin; we addressed issues related to the exploitation of labor, and a production model that does not always comply with expectations of sustainability; we analyzed the effects of large distribution on local production, considering the gap between "low prices" and "fair prices". We have deconstructed the image of safety, discussing the difference between product safety with worker safety. We deconstructed some myths in the field of distribution and marketing considering the theme of identity. In doing so, we have taken into consideration linguistic and literary aspects. This, by accompanying the work with examples and case studies related to the individual aspects dealt with. In particular, we studied the relationship between Made in Italy food and the Italian language, and how the Italian language is used and perceived abroad. The aim of the work is to overcome some conventional ideas and highlight the existence of some "unknowns" related to Made in Italy and its use.

## **GROUP III, “Cibo e religione”: Vegetarianism between religious practice and food ethics**

Speakers: Maddalena Capoferri, Marco Brau, Marco Lotti, Giulia Drago

The starting point of the following research is the idea that the food habits of vegetarianism present some aspects related with its original conception as a religious precept. The aim is to investigate not only how vegetarianism is linked with its origin, but also how the phenomenon of vegetarianism impacts on the social and political background.

The presentation will be articulated in four sections.

The first section will provide an analysis of the concept of vegetarianism starting from its origin, i.e., a religious prescription with its own specific configuration. In this phase this food habit will be investigated within some of the main religions as Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism and Christianity; in particular, the last part of the first section will be dedicated to Christianity and to the reaction the Church has had to this new food trend.

The second section will focus on the concept of vegetarianism in the secular background, considering how and why it originated and which are its components as an ethical choice. At this point a comparison will be drawn between vegetarianism as ethical choice and as a religious precept, to identify similarities and differences between the two notions.

The third section of the research will relate vegetarianism to some economical, juridical, and social aspects, trying to show how this food habit impacts social life, determining changes in the ideas and behavior of the people who practice it and in the way marketing and justice adapt to the phenomenon. In conclusion, the sociological theory of subcultures will be considered, starting from the definition of Cohen, with the aim of verifying whether the patterns (Benedict) of the ethical concept of

vegetarianism are relevant elements to consider this food habit the keystone of a new modern subculture.

## **SPEAKERS:**

### **Gruppo I: "Coffee for Everyone"**

Speakers:

Giulia Gigliotti

Edoardo Biccirè

Alberto Testa

Alessandra De Canio

Alice Cicarelli

### **Group II: "Do we know what we eat? A deconstruction of "Made in Italy" between the myth of tradition and new unknowns"**

Speakers:

Valerio F. Addis

Emanuele Capozziello

Chiara Giammugnai

### **Gruppo III : Vegetarianism between religious practice and food ethics**

Speakers:

Introduction: Maddalena Capoferri (2 min.ca)

I part: Marco Brau (7 min. ca)

II part: Marco Lotti (7 min. ca)

III part: Giulia Drago (7 min. ca)

Conclusions: Maddalena Capoferri (7 min. ca)

## **SEQUENCE OF EXPOSURE:**

Group I, "Mood and food": **"Coffee for Everyone"**

Group II, "Tradizioni culinarie": **"Do we know what we eat? A deconstruction of "Made in Italy" between the myth of tradition and new unknowns"**

Group III, "Cibo e religione": **"Vegetarianism between religious practice and food ethics"**