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# International Journal of Human Computer Studies

Hybridizing food cultures in computer-mediated environments:  
Creativity and improvisation in Greek food blogs

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## **Introduction**

The study of ‘food culture’, often described as the ‘sociology of food’, is a long-standing topic in cultural studies and sociology (Bell & Valentine, 1997; Lindholm, 2008) which addresses issues, such as the origins of national cuisines, the creation of tastes or the impact of migration flows on food culture. Food cultures are broadly understood to be social, hybrid and ever-evolving phenomena (Burke, 2009). Coupling a cultural perspective with the technological attributes of HFI, this study aims to uncover an area of food practice that is hard to explore without the use of digital media: everyday creativity and improvisation by individuals within food cultures. Food blogs and social media contribute to the evolution of food cultures in two ways: they accelerate the exposure and transmission of food practices to a broader audience, while they simultaneously rendering more visible and public practices which had previously been private, as bloggers and users increasingly share information and experiences concerning food (Choi & Blevis, 2011; O’Hara, 2012).

This research aims to shed light on the ways in which food blogs become platforms which represent food culture and make it interactive, allowing bloggers and users to participate in culinary experiences and adapt recipes (Deuze, 2006). The main intention of the research is to understand the ways in which a national cuisine can be represented in computer-mediated food cultures, while identifying the ways in which food blogs allow bloggers and consumers to interact with each other and develop hybrid food practices (Burke, 2009).

The key argument of this paper is that food blogs mediate the evolution of food cultures, accelerating the exchange of information and knowledge about food, while also broadening the spectrum of hybridisation and interactivity. On the one hand, food blogs provide a platform for the sharing of original versions of food practices, while on the other hand, user participation and interactivity (O’Hara et al., 2012) enable the hybridisation of food practices based on structured improvisation (Hebdige, 1987) and bricolage (Deuze, 2006). This has also been described as ‘mass innovation’ (Leatbeater, 2010) and collaborative creativity (Choi & Blevis, 2011).

This distinction between representation and interactivity has been addressed in new media studies using the concept of ‘remediation’, which explains how ‘transparency’ and ‘reflectivity’ lead to the evolution of new media forms from older ones (Bolter & Gromala, 2005). In the context of food blogging, ‘transparency’ refers to the effective representation

and communication of certain recipes and culinary practices through digital media which give little room for improvisation, while ‘reflectivity’ shows users’ interactivity and improvisation to be compelling experiences at the interface. Remediation influences food cultures in both cultural and technological ways and intensifies the process of hybridisation.

In order to understand the effects of remediation on the hybridisation of food cultures, we introduce a new analytical framework concerning the ‘cultural effects of HCI’. By reviewing the relevant literature (Foth et al., 2011), we have identified three hybridising effects of remediation: (1) the hybridisation of disciplines: computer-mediated food cultures integrate knowledge and skills that range from programming to photography, videography and writing about food practices; (2) the hybridisation of roles: food blogging is seen to be a hybrid role, while users often blur the boundaries between the expert and non-expert; (3) the hybridisation of practices: in computer-mediated food cultures, food practices and technologies are deeply intermingled, so that food cultures cannot be realised without digital technologies.

Hybridisation provides a novel context in which computer-mediated food cultures arise, while the agency of blending, re-inventing and mixing cultural and technological elements takes place as ‘bricolage’ (Burke, 2009; Deuze, 2006). Interestingly, this transition from representation to bricolage stresses the cultural effects of HCI, as social media provide platforms of cultural integration for culinary practices in cross-cultural, hybrid and interdisciplinary contexts.

We therefore examine three food blogs that deal with the Greek cuisine as well as with the experiences of food bloggers who are mainly Greeks nationals or people of Greek descent living in countries other than Greece. These have been selected as good examples of food-related content in different national settings, which allow the presentation cultural and food traditions, ultimately using the medium to disseminate and re-evaluate them. Greek cuisine has been selected for this research because of its lack of institutionalisation in terms of training systems, rules and grades, compared to French or Spanish cuisines. It represents a case in which the social and cultural dynamics of culinary practices, including internationalisation, depend less on professional chefs, graded restaurants and industry associations and more on the ways in which ordinary people maintain and develop food practices.

The paper is organised as follows: the first part discusses the interplay between originality and hybridisation in food cultures, and then outlines the proposed model of the ‘cultural effects of HCI’. The second part provides contextual background to the field of food blogging, while the methodology explains the research design, method and objectives of this study. We then present the three illustrative cases as a conjoint narrative, while the discussion part analyses the findings in the light of the proposed framework and discusses the implications for future HCI research.

### **Human-food interaction: remediation, hybridisation and bricolage**

Food cultures reflect a fundamental paradox: they express a sense of the ‘collective authenticity’ of national cuisines (Lindholm, 2008) but they are also constantly open to the creative practices of individuals who act as bricoleurs, blending new elements with traditional structures (Deuze, 2006). As sources of authenticity, food cultures accommodate practices and habits that preserve traditions and distinguish national identities, often becoming means of ‘cultural imperialism’ which diffuse elements of a culture to different contexts. For instance, the cuisines of France, Italy and Spain often dominate contexts other than their countries of origin, shaping trends and significantly influencing the cuisines of those other contexts (Steinberger, 2009).

Authenticity can take on different meanings depending on whether it is discussed individually or in reference to collective traditions. Whereas collective authenticity aims to maintain traditions that shape the identity of a nation or region (Lindholm, 2008), ‘individual authenticity’ is often associated with originality and uniqueness, and requires the presence of a creator in a specific time and place (Benjamin, 1969). Food practices that express collective authenticity can be easily reproduced, if one can accurately follow an original recipe, but individual authenticity as a unique and ‘auratic’ experience is not reproducible, while re-versioning erodes it (Benjamin, 1969). Hence, we can identify two definitions of authenticity that apply to food cultures: collective authenticity that refers to traditional food cultures; and individual authenticity that incorporates originality as creativity and improvisation.

An understanding of authenticity as a collective process that preserves food traditions is not only unilateral, but also does not take into account of the hybrid way in which food practices evolve and change over time. Burke (2009) defines ‘cultural hybridity’ as a ‘kind of mix’, a ‘cross-over’, a ‘pot-pourri’, and a process of heterogenisation that departs from and

deconstructs homogeneous notions, such as national or class identity. Often unintentional and sometimes unavoidable, hybridisation is interpreted as a process which has both positive and negative consequences and ‘assists economic globalization as well as being assisted by it’ (Burke, 2009, p.2). Hybridisation sets the conditions for individual and collective creativity, which takes place as a cultural bricolage (Burke, 2009) based on ‘structured improvisation’ (Hebdige, 1987). In food cultures, traditions as sources of collective authenticity form the structures based on which individuals improvise as bricoleurs.

On closer examination, the evolution of food cultures is more usually a story of hybridisation within and between national contexts. At the high end, *haute cuisine* radically invents and re-invents culinary practices, as chefs become bricoleurs, blending materials and concepts in novel ways and transferring elements from one context to another. For instance, ‘nouvelle cuisine’, a movement in French gastronomy between 1970 and 1997, hybridized classical cuisine and re-shaped French culinary identity (Rao et al., 2003). It was surpassed in the late 1990s by the Spanish ‘nueva nouvelle cuisine’, which signified ‘how Spain became the New France’ (Svejenova et al., 2007). A generation of Spanish chefs trained in Lyon took over the French gastronomic legacy and transferred knowledge and practices from France to Spain, while also radically re-inventing the Spanish cuisine (Svejenova et al., 2007; Steinberger, 2009). While such chefs exercise individual creativity by re-inventing dishes, their food practices quickly become institutionalised or largely acknowledged as characteristic of their particular cuisine.

Nevertheless, French or Spanish cuisines largely owe their uniqueness to institutionalised practices, such as the training, grades and affiliation of the chefs concerned (Rao et al., 2003), elements which are almost absent in cuisines such as the Greek. In contrast to the French and Spanish cuisines, in which key actors or institutionalised practices act as gatekeepers for authenticity, Greek cuisine has been shaped mainly by cultural and social dynamics in local communities which maintain certain food traditions<sup>1</sup>. However, a process of intensive hybridisation, which has taken place since Greece’s entry to the European Union in 1992, has resulted in significant changes to Greek cuisine, including the introduction and progressive integration of products and ingredients from other European countries, such as parmesan

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural and social factors refer, for instance, to Greek culinary practices which have emerged out of necessity, such as the lack of ingredients during World War II, or by the hybridisation of culinary practices following population flow in the Balkans, Asia Minor and the countries around the Mediterranean Sea (Yiakoumaki, 2006).

cheese from Italy, which have extensively penetrated the Greek market and are used in local dishes, especially salads (Yiakoumaki, 2006).

Transnational food migration is the most common source of the hybridisation of food practices, following global population flow. Möhring (2008) describes the ways in which Greek migrants to West Germany during the 1960s hybridised restaurant menus by placing traditional Greek specialities next to German dishes. This is a good example of migration flows shaping a hybrid context for the creation of food cultures. Significantly, Möhring (2008, p.132) posits restaurateurs as bricoleurs, as they blend German and Greek cuisines, while developing dishes which ‘were often adapted to each other or fused, bringing forth a new, transnational cuisine’.

Similarly, ‘fusion food’ which first appeared in the UK in the 1960s following the ‘translocation’ of Italian, Indian or Thai migrants, among others, has introduced and blended different cuisines in a country that has largely assimilated ‘exotic’ taste (Chiaro, 2008). In the 1990s, this trend was adopted by retailers, such as Sainsbury’s or Tesco, which launched hybrid products such as ‘tikka masala pizza and curried chicken kiev, truly British versions of ‘fusion food!’’ (Oddy, 2003, p.118 in Chiaro, 2008, 199). Therefore, bricolage in food can be seen not only as a creative process in the hands of experts, but as one which penetrates commercial activities, which in turn influence the public’s taste towards hybridised products.

While these practices refer to the consumption of food cultures, urban agglomeration and the emergence of multi-ethnic communities have brought a variety of exotic materials into the local markets of metropolitan centres such as London or Sydney, influencing the production of food cultures (Canclini, 2006; Duruz, 2005). Everyday practices from food shopping and cooking to eating blur the boundaries between the ‘traditional’ or ‘local’ and the ‘exotic’, introducing elements that renegotiate the ‘meanings of home, ethnicity, and belonging’ (Duruz, 2005, p.51). Interestingly, the intensified hybridisation and ‘creolisation’ that takes place at local markets is likely to inspire private food practices, as the consumers of local markets become producers and bricoleurs who improvise at home (Burke, 2009).

As a result, the distinction between traditional and hybrid food cultures is not always clear. On the one hand, traditional national cuisines can change over time due to a variety of social interactions and cultural flows which are often unpredictable (Lindholm, 2008). On the other hand, hybridisation cannot exist in the absence of tradition, which acts as a structure and point

of reference that blends with new materials and concepts (Hebdige, 1987). It is therefore crucial to understand the ways in which authenticity and hybridisation influence each other and negotiate the evolution of food cultures.

Food cultures become less visible and less exposed when the bricoleur is an individual, and are generally fuelled by practices which are visible to the public in gastronomy, restaurants or publishing. Nevertheless, digital technologies play an important role in exploring the creativity and interactions of food cultures at the level of individuals and everyday practices. Digital technologies intensify the hybridisation of food cultures and accelerate information delivery across different platforms, while providing more opportunities for users to interact and shape content on-line. An interesting aspect of digital technologies in food cultures concerns the concept of the 'user', who can be a food expert, a consumer or an amateur enthusiast.

This significant turning point in the evolution of food cultures resulted from the emergence of the digital economy (Tapscott, 1996), as information and communication technologies (ICT) have accelerated the exposure and hybridisation of food cultures, paving the way for a new landscape of exploration and creativity. Chiaro (2008, p.197) argues that 'a positive side of globalization is that digital technology and cheap, high-speed transportation have led to the discovery of gastronomic difference'. In addition, the effect of technological media has been much broader than simply accelerating the discovery of difference: they have provided a novel context for the creation, revitalisation and evolution of food cultures, blending actual food practices with dynamic sharing of information and knowledge, multi-source content creation and interactivity. Digital technologies have intensified and accelerated information exchange about food cultures, and at the same time, they have made individual creativity visible, connected and accessible, increasing its importance in the evolution of food cultures.

Throughout the last decade, digital technologies have systematically embraced food cultures, giving shape to human-food interaction (HFI) as an emerging field within HCI. Early research in HFI demonstrated the enhanced ability of digital media to share and search for information about food practices. For instance, 'social navigation' applications considerably improved users' access to information about food, people and places, enabling on-line shopping for rare food materials, as well as providing rich information about local markets as physical spaces and enabling them to be explored (Svensson et al., 2001).



An important breakthrough in the digitalisation of food cultures has resulted from the emergence of new media platforms, such as YouTube and food blogs, which have actualised new ways of creating and communicating content by and to users, as they broadcast and share individual experiences (Hartley, 2009). Progressively, photography<sup>2</sup> and videography have uncovered visual aspects of food cultures (O'Hara, 2012; Patel et al., 2009), while social media platforms have increasingly enabled users to express their self-identity by sharing and discussing their food experiences (Barker, 2003, p.221; Foth et al., 2011). As a result, new media hybridise food cultures, fusing media characteristics with actual food practices and experiences, while blurring the boundaries between 'internal' (individual creativity) and 'external' (existing food practices) cultural influences (Barker, 2003).

Grimes and Harper (2008) shed more light on the ways in which food cultures are related to the cultural and technological aspects of new media, studying the "space of interactions with and around food", while providing a bundle of implications for HFI. They argue that digital technologies in HFI can be either 'corrective technologies', which aim to resolve undesirable effects during the cooking process, or 'celebratory technologies' that address the positive and successful aspects of food experience (see Table 1 below).

### **Table 1 here**

Corrective technologies aim to provide information and knowledge about methods of making established practices and traditions more effective and efficient (Barker, 2003). In contrast, celebratory technologies use digital media to present the aesthetic, social, cultural and emotional experiences of food cultures. Corrective technologies therefore popularise the production, communication and consumption of food cultures, accelerating the diffusion of external cultural influences, while celebratory technologies indicate the motives and behaviour of users which underlie the hybridisation of food cultures, with digital media acting as platforms to broaden the integration of internal and external cultural influences.

Although this distinction between corrective and celebratory technologies provides rich information about the ways in which new media influence users' experience, it considers technology to be relatively stable. Instead of assuming that users' experiences are only mediated by technological media, and ontologically separating food cultures from media, we

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<sup>2</sup> The photographic medium has also been used by chefs in concept development, to capture the appearance of the final dish (Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2007, p.451).

aim to highlight and explore an additional dimension, the fusion and co-evolution of food cultures and technological media, questioning how digital media influence the evolution of food cultures (from technological practice to culture), as well as the ways in which computer-mediated food practices use, develop and shape new media (from cultural practice to technology).

Nevertheless, we do not underestimate the importance of mediation, but argue that a shift of emphasis is required in order to understand the ways in which the evolution of mediation introduced new characteristics that redefined the relationship between users and technology, ultimately shaping technologies and novel cultural practices. Crucially, this shift places interface at the centre of analysis in order to understand the relationship between the evolution of technologies and that of food cultures.

Bolter and Grusin (1999) introduce the theory of ‘remediation’ in order to explain how new media forms emerge from older ones. They define *immediacy* as the representation of older media forms in new ones, and *hypermediacy* as an interactive experience that takes place on the interface. An example of immediacy is the migration of information about recipes from books or magazines to websites. However, the increasing sophistication of new media has enabled hypermediacy in the form of new ways of interacting with new media platforms, such as identity expression through photographing and sharing food experiences (O’Hara et al., 2012), or the possibilities that food blogs and indymedia offer for mass innovation and collective creativity (Deuze, 2006; Leatbeater, 2010).

Bolter and Gromala (2005) later refined and expanded the theory of ‘remediation’ in order to address its technological, social and cultural effects. In particular, they argued that remediation, as a defining characteristic of new media, takes place in terms of two opposing interface design strategies: ‘the strategy of transparency’/immediacy and ‘the strategy of reflectivity’/ hypermediacy (see Table 2 below).

### **Table 2 here**

‘The strategy of transparency’ (transparent remediation) considers the interface as a transparent medium that aims to capture, display and deliver information to users with clarity, accuracy and efficiency. The interface is a ‘*window*’ on the ‘real world’ because it is invisible to users, allowing them to access reality by looking through it. In contrast, ‘the strategy of reflectivity’ (reflective remediation) considers the interface as a reflective medium that creates

a ‘compelling experience’ for the users (Bolter & Gromala, 2005, p.67). Emerging as an alternative to transparency, this strategy encourages users to “enjoy the medium or the process as an experience” (Bolter & Gromala, 2005, p.66). Instead of making the medium invisible, reflectivity invites users to look at the interface, which is a *‘mirror’* that reflects the users’ physical, social and cultural context (Bolter & Gromala, 2005, p.27).

The key argument in their thesis is that by focusing only on transparency we assert a technologically deterministic role of new media, as they effectively deliver information. In contrast, reflectivity demonstrates the technological, social and cultural effects of remediation: new media are experiments in interface design, while users interact with them and reflectively redefine their use and meaning (Bolter & Gromala, 2006). However, Bolter and Gromala (2005, p.67) stress that transparency and reflectivity are not mutually exclusive, but that all interfaces share both transparent and reflective aspects.

In the context of food cultures, transparency intensifies representationalism (Bardzell, 2011) of food cultures, effectively delivering information about certain food practices, while reflectivity broadens the spectrum of hybridisation to, at least, three directions. The first regards the conditions under which interfaces of food cultures are created and remediated; the second refers to the possibilities that remediation offers for a revisited role of users and non-users in food cultures; and the third considers the effect of remediation as a co-evolution of technologies and food cultures. Remediation of food cultures incorporates certain elements mediated to future practices, while at the same time, it stimulates an interactive context of the hybridisation of food cultures.

In addition, the remediation of food cultures stresses new points of engagement. According to Choi and Blevis (2011), there are three types of ‘engagement’, which are critical in understanding the relationship between food cultures and digital technologies: “engagement across disciplines, engagement with and among users (and nonusers), and engagement for sustainability, or rather, ‘sustained usability’” (Choi & Blevis, 2011, p.78). While they apply this framework to sustainable food cultures, which are “environmentally, socially and healthwise sustainable” (2011, p.78), they highlight multidisciplinary, the roles of users and non-users roles, and sustainable practices as the three key dimensions that reinforce a cultural/technological perspective of HFI.

Based on Choi and Blevis's (2011) framework, we engage with these three fundamental issues, focusing on the three effects of remediation on the hybridisation of food cultures: (1) the hybridisation of disciplines (multidisciplinarity) that determines the conditions of interface design and evolution; (2) the hybridisation of roles between users and non-users; and (3) the hybridisation of food cultures as remediating practices.

Multidisciplinarity explains the ways in which digital technologies allow different disciplines to simultaneously shape food cultures. In food blogging, for instance, writing, photography, videography interact and converge in a single practice (Jenkins, 2004). Multidisciplinarity can have broader applications to HFI, enabling HCI experts, chefs, scientists or artists to collaborate. In addition, it is critical to identify a possible shift from the multidisciplinary view of the contribution of separate disciplines to food practices, to an interdisciplinary view of food cultures that ontologically integrates diverse disciplines into an emerging practice (Barry et al., 2010). Multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity provide a hybrid context, while bricolage transfers elements between disciplines and progressively leads to their integration into one practice. 'The Experimental Food Society', an organisation founded in the UK in 2010, is an example of the hybridisation of disciplines in food cultures that brings together culinary experts, scientists and artists who create a spectacular annual exhibition and banquet, as well as a series of events and talks<sup>3</sup>.

The engagement of users with non-users is of exceptional importance in our study, as the dividing line between practitioners/food bloggers as users and non-experts/consumers as non-users continues to blur (Deuze, 2006). Food blogs provide a hybrid space in which bloggers, experts and consumers can interact and create meaning, remediating existing structures for food cultures, such as magazines and other food-related publications. Food blogs in particular, allow consumers to add comments and to shift position from consumers to bloggers by generating content without requiring institutional accreditations. For instance, Anderson (2012), in a study of the use of language in American food blogs, identifies six amateurs/consumers who initiated highly-ranked food blogs on subjects such as personal diaries of everyday cooking habits and anecdotes, the experience of starting cooking from scratch, and successful and unsuccessful attempts to barbecue. As a result, the distinction between user bloggers and consumers becomes less visible, while the hybridisation of roles

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<sup>3</sup> The Experimental Food Society is described as "an awe inspiring assemblage of food magicians, jellymongers, sonic food artists, cake sculptors, gastronomic tailors, culinary cabaret troupes and one-of-a-kind dining conceptualists to name a few, society members are joined in their love of food and their desire to push it to new levels often fusing it with other forms such as science and art" (Source: [www.experimentalfoodsociety.com](http://www.experimentalfoodsociety.com)).

challenges the diffusion of food cultures from single sources of information, enabling a dynamic, collective and random creation of meaning and practices (Leatbeater, 2010). The interface becomes a hybrid context that enables multiple bloggers to become bricoleurs and shape the final outcome.

In addition, we aim to question sustained usability from a cultural perspective. We ask whether digital technologies mediate food cultures, promoting representationalism and the maintenance of certain traditions (Bardzell, 2011), or engage with remediation which evolves using hybrid practices, through which interfaces sustain a pattern of technological and cultural evolution that constantly negotiates food cultures as aesthetic, emotional, cultural and social experiences. Hybridisation of practices signifies that the very action of exploring food practices simultaneously incorporates the remediation of the interface itself. The hybridisation of disciplines regards food cultures and digital technologies as being indistinguishable, and so remediation influences the evolution of food cultures.

As a result, the hybridisation of disciplines, roles and practices as the effects of remediation set the conditions for 'bricolage', which is the creative process of "remixing, reconstructing, and reusing of separate artifacts, actions, ideas, signs, symbols, and styles in order to create new insights or meanings" (Hartley, 2002, in Deuze, 2006, p.70). While hybridisation shapes the context for the evolution of food cultures, bricolage stresses and acknowledges the importance of creative agents, who operate in a hybrid space without being aware of the totality of concepts, tools and methods available, but use 'the means at hand' (Lévi-Strauss in Derrida, 1970, p.229), creating based on 'wild thought' (Lévi-Strauss in Burke, 2009, p.93).

In the context of remediation, bricolage is not a simple reassemblage of materials and/or ideas, but a creative process involving agents who simultaneously change technologies and food cultures. In an increasingly hybrid environment, the bricoleur has more options because of the acceleration of information, and also because there are possibilities of sharing, interaction and collaboration in the creation of food cultures within the digital framework. Crucially, remediation proposes that both food cultures and technologies change and evolve within a hybrid environment, and therefore that the role of bricoleurs as agents of change and bricolage requires more attention.

Bricolage, as "the movement of de-contextualization and re-contextualization", is both the driving force and the outcome of remediation, which takes place not as a grand gesture of

“radical departure from the past, but [as a] small operation of re-collecting existing bits of projects and concepts, reusing, recycling, reinterpreting, rethinking; the ‘re-’ stands at the heart of the design” (Yaneva, 2009, p.103). The hybridisation of disciplines and the blurring of boundaries between users and non-users, who participate and engage with the making of making, both contribute to and shape the ‘re-’ factor, ultimately introducing a new paradigm of creativity through structured improvisation (Hebdige, 1987), in which HFI is an outstanding example that makes the evolution of technologies and cultural practices wilder and more challenging than ever before (see Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1 here**

### **The emergence of food blogging**

Blogging, together with other branches of new media, such as forums, online journalism and indymedia, emerged in the beginning of this century as a result of “the popularity of networked computers, multiple-user software, and Internet” (Deuze, 2006, p.63). Deuze (2006) defines blogs as the online, usually public, personal or professional websites that publish posts chronologically, allowing other users to leave comments under each one. Characterised as ‘do-it-yourself’ journalism, blogs are distributed more widely, although the information within them is generated by single sources. This contrasts with indymedia which are unified platforms, where multiple users can contribute and manipulate content, or with forums that include discussions of topics by multiple, usually anonymous, users.

A blog, or and weblog, can be defined as “a webpage where a blogger ‘logs’ all the other web pages she finds interesting” (Barger, 1997 in Du & Wagner, 2006, p.790). The popularity of blogs derives from four key characteristics. They are: (1) *personalised*, as individuals, groups or even multiple users can design them in a personal and usually informal manner; (2) *web-based*, so that they can be updated frequently; (3) *community-supported*, as they can link to other sites and social media, “stimulating knowledge generation and sharing between bloggers”, and (4) *automated*, as bloggers develop their content “without the hassle of writing HTML code or program” (Du & Wagner, 2006, p.790).

Food blogging is the practice of publishing food-related posts on a blog. These posts can encompass recipes and food experiences, including those from restaurants or festivals. Food blogs usually include pictures in addition to text, and some food bloggers choose mainly to concentrate on photography while others produce videos of their recipes and/or experiences.

In addition, many professional magazines have included food blogging in their electronic versions, while food blogging attracts a diversity of experts and public figures, such as professional chefs, as well as amateurs and enthusiasts (Senyei, 2011).

Interestingly, food blogs, together with other food-related media, have made individual creativity more visible than ever before, providing an open platform for bloggers, experts and consumers, to show their practices and discuss them in public. In particular, food blogs incorporate information about recipes and cooking practices, as well as dealing with more specialised themes, such as recipe development and testing (Senyei, 2011). Other food blogs emphasise the aesthetic aspect of food, focusing on food styling (how a dish looks like) and/or prop styling (the setting for food consumption), often including photography and videography. Gabrini (2009) provides good examples of food blogs that demonstrate a diversity of themes reflecting the personal and sometimes professional interests of bloggers (see Table 3 below).

### **Table 3 here**

In addition, various other roles can be performed in food blogs. Perhaps the most common one is that of content writer and editor, which requires skills that exceed simple knowledge of food practices (Senyei, 2011). Nevertheless, food blogs are not only individual and amateur websites, but they can also be the main activity of organisations, and involve roles including managing director, technical director or financial director. Additional roles are those of social media strategist, who determines the diffusion of the blog within social media platforms, and of publicist, who promotes it both online and offline (Senyei, 2011).

Food blogging, and blogging in general, is not only a practice of sharing information, but also a process that reflects social aspects, such as the expression of self-identity in both online and offline environments (McGaughey, 2010), alongside personality attributes, such as common perceptions of language, taste and visual aesthetics between blog writers and readers (Li & Chignel, 2010). Although many food blogs belong to amateur users who consider blogging to be hobby or a 'serious leisure' activity (Cox & Blake, 2011), the commercial dynamics that underpin blogging activities should not be ignored. While many food blogs directly engage with commercial activities, such as providing services or selling goods, blogging platforms allow bloggers to access tools that measure traffic information and statistics about the popularity of their blog (Du & Wagner, 2006). These can include the total number of visits in

a particular time period, geographical information about visitors to the blog, media used to access it, or the number of visits per post. As a result, the popularity of blogs can be measured and used to attract online advertisements.

While we acknowledge the significant barriers to the identification of food practices at an individual level<sup>4</sup>; food blogs provide an unprecedented opportunity to study individual creativity. At the same time, the constant development of new media creates a new demand for an understanding of the dynamics of computer-mediated food cultures, as unmarked patterns of cultural and social behaviour emerge within a hybrid context. We attempt to tackle these issues, by presenting three case studies of food blogs, and then by analysing the findings in relation to remediation, hybridisation and bricolage.

### **Methodological issues in studying human-food interaction**

This paper presents and analyses three instrumental case studies of food blogs in order to understand the effects of remediation on the hybridization of food cultures within the context of HFI (Stake, 2000, p.237). A qualitative approach is appropriate for this research, as we aim to make sense of the complex ways in which practitioners and users engage with the making of meaning, while energising food practices on digital platforms (Adams et al., 2008).

Foth et al. (2011, p.4) provide a conceptual map that frames HFI research according to different food-related activities. They define ‘eating’ “as the direct interaction with food including purchasing produce”; ‘cooking’ “as a process of combining ingredients to a new form to be eaten”; and ‘growing’ “as a process of producing and harvesting food”. This categorisation highlights the spectrum of HFI research, and provides the basis for research at a narrower level. According to this categorisation, we focus on the layers of ‘eating’ and ‘cooking’, including all the relevant activities and practices that users perform in order to access information and materials, as well as practices involved in making and eating the food. In particular, much attention is given to the textual and visual information exchanged by bloggers and visitors, while engaging with food practices.

An additional categorisation emerges from the literature review, as we identify aspects of the hybridisation of food cultures at the levels of the national context (macro), of restaurants and the retail sector (meso) and of individuals’ (micro). Figure 2 shows the scope of our research,

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Duruz (2005) conducted in-depth interviews with two individuals in order to present hybridised food practices in London and Sydney.



which mainly focuses on individual practices of ‘eating’ and ‘cooking’, and provides additional contextual details for each context (meso and macro) as background information, facilitating discussion and deeper understanding of each case study.

### **Figure 2 here**

While individual creativity is the key focus of analysis, the three food blogs in question often share information and respond to questions about their local ‘foodie’ scenes, while the national context and the development of immigrant communities, frequently influences perceptions and stereotypes about food culture. Figure 2 also stresses the limitations of this study. We aim to focus on individuals’ eating and cooking, but it is very hard to know the actual practices of users unless they make them visible on media platforms, bloggers in posts and users in comments. Future research could focus on the impact of food blogs at the meso and macro levels, as well as on the growth of sustainable food cultures at all three levels.

This paper presents and analyses case studies of three blogs concerning Greek food, created by Greek bloggers based in other countries: (1) ‘Souvlaki for the Soul’ written by Peter Georgakopoulos (based in Australia), (2) ‘Kalofagas’ written by Peter Minakis (based in Canada) and (3) ‘Digital Scullery’ written by Sofia Gkiousou (based in the UK). These case studies were selected in order to identify the ways in which the diverse behaviour of bloggers shapes the recipes and culinary practices presented in their food blogs, alongside the sharing by users of enthusiasm, knowledge and creativity in the making and content of production. As the food bloggers in question are expatriate Greeks and/or second-generation migrants, these case studies are expected to produce interesting insights into the tension produced by introducing certain traditions into a context other than their country of origin. Although migration and historical conditions, as well as the shape of the Greek communities in each context, are relevant to an understanding food cultures, these considerations mainly exceed the scope of this research.

Sampling of all three blogs was carried out purposefully to reveal the similarities and differences in the representation and hybridisation of the same cultural background: Greek cuisine abroad. In addition, the fact that food bloggers in question are operating within a context other than their country of origin is expected to provide them with fertile ground for interaction with users who range from Greek expatriates/ migrants to non-Greeks who are less familiar with Greek culture. In addition, the three case studies are comparable as they engage

with similar activities: recipe development and testing, photography and videography. There were two key sources of data collection: firstly, semi-structured interviews with the three food bloggers; and secondly, ‘cyber-ethnography’, which was used as a tool to track users’ behaviour and comments on the blogs themselves and on other platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest (Ward, 1999).

The three blogs in question were examined in detail over a period of six months. This was done by reading the posts and comments, and by observing the dissemination of content via the associated social media tools used by the bloggers. Links to other recipes were followed and read, as well as instances of other bloggers re-creating recipes from the original blogs, or of readers noting their experiences of making the recipe, in comments on various platforms. This observation was enriched by the experience of one of the authors who is a practitioner in this space and offered insights into the processes of setting up a food blog, engaging online, creating and monitoring the use of the content by others.

Within-case analysis was used to analyse the data, and the findings of the case studies were compared with key aspects of theory as summarised in our ‘conceptual framework in studying HFI’ (Figure 1; Yin, 1981, p.60). Data analysis therefore took place throughout the process of matching evidence of food practices with the concepts of remediation, hybridisation and bricolage. In particular, the discussion directly tackled the research questions, by pattern-matching the findings of the case studies with our proposed framework, while maintaining a relatively open structure that allowed new patterns to arise, patterns which are addresses as implications for future research (Yin, 1981, p.61).

This study responded to issues of quality, such as construct and internal validity (Yin, 1994, p.36), respectively by using multiple sources of evidence and by conducting careful pattern-matching respectively. Moreover, the external validity of this study was based on analytic generalisation (Yin, 1981, p.36), which was conducted using constant comparison of theory and evidence, while also noting when theoretical saturation was reached (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.545). Finally, the reliability of this research was secured by following a careful and consistent plan of within-case analysis.

## **Case Studies**

**Souvlaki For The Soul** is a food and travel blog, written by Peter Georgakopoulos in Australia. Peter G. states that: “As a photographer, my blog is highly visual and focuses on

food and travel with a big emphasis on my Greek heritage. Along with my camera, I aim to capture the beauty and simplicity of the food we eat and the big wide world around us”. He blogs traditional Greek recipes, as well as some which seem to be new versions of older and more traditional recipes. As a photographer he places great emphasis on food photography.

**Kalofagas** is the food blog of Peter Minakis, a Canadian of Greek descent. Peter M. blogs on Greek food, food events and food news. His website appears quite high in Google search results for “Greek food blog”, while observation during 2011 and 2012 shows that he has an active presence on Twitter and Facebook. Peter’s blog posts feature photographs and he often includes information about the original location of the recipe. He describes the inception of his blog thus: “One day I was looking for some Greek recipes online and I wasn’t really impressed with what I saw on the Internet or how Greek cuisine was being portrayed on the Internet, especially in the English language here in the West. So I found out that you could create a blog for free (...) I had a digital camera and that was the beginning”.

**Digital Scullery** includes blogs in both Greek and English, although this paper deals solely with the English section. The main blogger, and co-author of this paper, is Sofia Gkiousou, a Greek woman who has lived in the United Kingdom for the last ten years. The blog features recipes, news about food and food experiences, primarily those of Sofia herself. She states: “I started blogging in Greek in 2004 about my London experiences and anything that popped into my head really. I always liked writing funny things and one day I made a funny video of me cooking in 2009. People liked it and so I kept making them, eventually moving them to their own space, dedicated to food. Friends came over too and started sending me their own recipes. Later on, when friends in London kept on asking me about the recipes I started translating them and creating new ones in English”.

### Food blogging as a medium

In order to examine the practices and creativity of bloggers, while also presenting examples of their influence and dissemination, it is important to briefly understand their use of social media and of the digital technologies they use as platforms to facilitate the creation and dissemination of content, and to encourage its discussion and remediation. In the first instance, all three bloggers use ‘WordPress’ as a content management system together with a variety of ‘plug-ins’ –additional code which allows the expansion or alteration of the functions of WordPress and allows them to manage the blog. WordPress, and, in particular

the self-hosted version, seems to be a platform of preference for the majority of the top one hundred blogs (Table 4 below)<sup>5</sup>, and it is also specifically recommended for food bloggers<sup>6</sup>.

#### **Table 4 here**

Gkiouso reports that WordPress allows the use of plug-ins and the addition of basic code to alter functions in ways that suit the blogger. In some cases, these plug-ins might be unrelated to food blogging. For instance, Gkiouso uses the Jetpack plug-in to track statistics and allow user subscriptions. In other cases the plug-ins might be food specific, such as Easy Recipe. This is a good example of a tool specifically developed for food blogging which serves a number of functions. Easy Recipe allows recipe entry “with features like cut and paste, auto conversion of your plain text recipe posts, live custom formatting, Google Recipe View formatting and preview button, automatic ratings, conversion from other recipe plugins like ZipList and RecipeSEO (...) recipes will have ratings and print features and most importantly you have a much better chance for your recipes showing up in Google's Recipe View search results”<sup>7</sup>. Even though Google Recipe View is important as it helps bloggers to promote their content, any search engine optimisation tool is beneficial. Such tools prepare the content of the blog for the search engine and promote its content in an attempt to appear further up lists of search engine results.

#### Food blogging and social media strategy

In addition to a basic blogging platform and its associated tools such as plug-ins, all three bloggers use a variety of social media tools to present, promote and discuss their content. Georgakopoulos, Minakis and Gkiouso have their own Facebook pages where links to blog posts are published together with photographs and other updates; this also allows discussion with fans of the page and cross-fertilisation between fans of the page and those of the blog. Similarly, all three use Twitter to connect with other users, discuss content and promote links to other sites, thus creating relationships online and enabling the establishment of the blogs as specialists in Greek food in the eyes of some users. Gkiouso reports, for example, that she is asked about Greek recipes and restaurants in London of which she has never blogged about, purely because users assume that she will know about them. In effect, the use of other social

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<sup>5</sup> <http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/04/11/wordpress-completely-dominates-top-100-blogs/>

<sup>6</sup> Malcolm Bedell “Choosing a Blogging Platform for Your Food Blog”, Pro Food Blogger, 25 September 2012

<http://profoodblogger.com/choosing-a-blogging-platform-for-your-food-blog/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/easyrecipe/>

media platforms helps to reinforce the image of each blogger and their identity Greek food specialists. In turn, they promote the activities of their readers.

For example, a Twitter user described trying one of Minakis's recipes, which was "Quick, easy, and great taste" (see Image 1 below). Minakis in turn re-tweeted this comment to his own Twitter followers, thus perpetuating the promotion. By doing this, he promoted both his Twitter identity and his own reputation as a producer of good recipes; user's tweet did not contain a link to the content but did mention Minakis's Twitter identity, @Minakis. One could argue that Minakis's reputation is perpetuated every time a Twitter user asks him about food in general and Greek food in particular, or engages in a conversation with him about it.

### **Image 1 here**

This is a further example of blogger-user conversation: another user asks a question and engages in a conversation. Some of her followers see this and remember Minakis as an expert (see Image 2 below). Some of Minakis's followers see this too and remember him specifically as a Greek food expert.

### **Image 2 here**

For Minakis, his social media presence is important as a way of receiving feedback from users, but more so as a way to leading users to his food blog: "I have the usual presence on the other parts of the blog like Instagram, I have a Tumblr [page] where I just put up quick photos, Twitter, there's a Facebook fan page...I use all that as a funnel to take everything back to the site. That's my goal. I want everything to come back to my actual site itself, those are just extensions". While recognising interaction with users to be a 'helpful' and 'satisfactory' element of his practice, he nevertheless admits that engaging with social media is not his ultimate purpose: "it is sometimes more important to spend more time in the kitchen experimenting with new recipes and ideas", instead of "spending all of my time commenting on social media"<sup>8</sup>. He reports that since he reduced the time he spends on commenting and put more effort into experimenting with recipes, the actual traffic of the food blog has increased, and he concludes that: "traffic and comments are irrelevant"!

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<sup>8</sup> In our interview with Minakis, he illuminated an interesting social aspect about making comments on social media. He distinguishes 'genuine' comments that really "have something to say" from 'obligatory' comments, which are mainly made to maintain relations; "because I left a comment at someone else's blog [i.e. that of another food blogger], he/she feels an obligation to leave a comment on mine." He admits that "I don't find it necessary."

### Food blogging and photography

In general, each blogger has a different approach to the content of the blog and its presentation, and uses a variety of media (such as photography, video and storytelling) to express comparable content, and utilising specific technologies (see Image 3 below). In addition each blogger includes elements of Greek culture or Greek heritage in the food blogs while operating in an environment that is not Greek.

#### **Image 3 here**

Souvlaki For The Soul is a good example of using the blogging platform in ways that facilitate an aesthetic experience. As a photographer, Georgakopoulos presents professionally produced food, does not by representing the method of the recipe pictorially, but by illustrating the final result and symbolising the pleasure of eating the finished product. Photographs can be easily shared online and do not require as much time from the reader as a recipe or a blog post. In effect, they encourage a quick glance and act as attention grabbers, enticing the viewer to look further and to read the blog post. Georgakopoulos increases the dissemination of his photographs by using Flickr and Pinterest (see Image 4 below), while simultaneously talking about his interests and content on Twitter and the blog's Facebook page. This shows how a blogger can interact with social media, integrating different media forms with an emerging food culture.

#### **Image 4 here**

Georgakopoulos has also been sharing his knowledge and experience of food photography. For example, he has taught at least one master class on food styling, and has written an associated –and popular– blog post. While sharing his knowledge, Georgakopoulos also acknowledges that his style has developed through experience and through learning online: “Over the last few years I’ve learnt a lot online especially through reading other blogs and being particularly active on Flickr. I’ve made a few friends through this passion and it was great to receive feedback about what was and wasn’t working. I like to think I developed my style mostly by “accident”. And this is what I encourage you to do. Work on your own style and practice as much as you can” (Georgakopoulos in Souvlaki For The Soul, 2012).

### Food blogging and storytelling

Minakis also includes aesthetically pleasing photography in his blog posts; however, his main medium is text, which he uses for storytelling and to present the methods of the recipes: “Greek cuisine is based on quality ingredients, taking advantage of what’s in season and therefore the dish shines and the quality ingredients sing. Another aspect of Greek cuisine is that it is going through some change: some good and some bad, some old and some modern, some wholesome and some laziness. The part of Greek cuisine that I want to share is the food eaten in our (Greeks) homes, the food eaten at tavernas, cafes, estiatoria, the food some of Greece’s contemporary chefs and some of the dishes few know about.” (Minakis in Kalofagas, 2012)

Minakis explains the background of the recipes as well as writing a few words about the region of Greece of each recipe or the tradition that is associated with it. In effect, he diffuses certain culinary practices, even though, as the extract above shows, he is aware that they are changing. It is telling that he chooses a more ‘authentic’ or ‘standard’ version of Greek food to share and disseminate, particularly as his experience is based on a diaspora environment. Minakis identifies part of his work to be exploring Greek traditions which are not as well known, but still worthy of attention, and showing them to others. His stories about ‘authentic’ Greek cuisine may come from remote places in Greece, such as Florina or Kastoria, and his future plans include the exploration of food cultures in Thrace. As he states: “In some cases you have to defend Greek cuisine versus how it’s been morphed, sometimes in a bad way. Like the iceberg lettuce addition to a Greek salad. I still cringe. You see that. And unfortunately we have ourselves to blame, the Greek restaurateurs that do this. And this can be a stereotype that’s very hard to dispel...I try to tell people what’s authentic in Greece versus what’s out there”.

Even though Minakis likes to blog about traditional recipes, he also suggests alternative ingredients when those used in the original recipe cannot be found. Readers are also aware that they can ask such questions and do so under his blog posts. Sometimes Minakis will answer these questions, and at other times a reader will suggest an alternative, for example in the comments under a recipe using peppers from Florina (see Image 5 below).

**Image 5 here**

Food blogging, videography and interactive recipe-making

Digital Scullery includes a variety of text, photographic step-by-step recipes and video recipes, as well as recipes by writers other than Gkiousou. As the blog is better-known and more visited in Greece than elsewhere (according to Google Analytics statistics), even though Gkiousou blogs from the UK, the majority of recipes are contributed by users from Greece. Gkiousou includes these recipes in her blog and also translates them for the Greek version of the blog. In her translations, Gkiousou also includes explanations of aspects of Greek culture to a foreign audience, explanation which are not required when blogging for a Greek audience. Interestingly, some of the recipes submitted from Greece are changed within the blog into “UK versions”.

For example, a user’s recipe for the traditional Easter soup magiritsa requires intestines. Gkiousou subsequently adds another blog post, explaining the tradition of Greek food at Easter and giving a version of the soup without this ingredient which would be difficult to obtain outside Greece. Gkiousou also gives advice on accessing ingredients or getting them more cheaply. For example, she recognises that extra virgin olive oil can be expensive and so notes as part of recipe which uses a lot of it: “Here’s a handy tip for olive oil and being Greek I know what I am talking about. Avoid super markets. You can get virgin olive oil (you shouldn’t be buying anything else really, it beats the purpose) for extremely reasonable prices in small off licenses. Any area with Greek, Cypriot or Turkish population will see you through. 3 litres for about 18 pounds now that’s what I call a bargain. For London check out North London, areas such as Wood Green, Palmers Green, Green Lanes, Southgate etc. Not Bayswater”.

#### Blogging about Greek food from abroad: Reputation, interaction and improvisation

It is important to stress that all three food blogs engage at some level with storytelling, photography and videography. For example, Georgakopoulos has blogged about baklava, a dessert considered traditional in Greece, even though it is of Turkish origin. Minakis has presented a new version of the traditional moussaka by creating individual portions without meat. Gkiousou has created food videos that present humorous advice about overcoming shortages of ingredients or lack of time.

The cultural background and current environment of all three bloggers are fundamental to the content they create as well as to the interaction that it invites from readers. In its simplest form this expresses itself in the need to explain how to execute a recipe, its historical and



geographical characteristics, such as how a plentiful product results in a traditional local recipe in a Greek town, and its traditions, such as the fact that magiritsa soup is eaten during Easter. More complex discussions derive from the fact that the bloggers live in countries other than Greece, something that leads to the fundamental challenges of ingredients being unavailable or different. For example, under her video on making frappé, a Greek cold coffee drink (see Image 6 below), Gkiousou engages in a conversation with a YouTube user about the type of coffee used, involving different types which can be found in Greece, in the UK (where Gkiousou lives) and in the United States (where the YouTube user lives).

**Image 6 here**

It is also interesting that blogging in English about a cuisine foreign to the local environment frequently invites comments about and comparisons with other diaspora cultures. This is especially true of blog posts that deal with ingredients which cannot be found in the local shops or need to be explained. By engaging in that explanation, readers will frequently make comparisons with their own food cultures and share their experiences. For example, when Georgakopoulos blogs about hilopites, a type of Greek pasta, a reader of Algerian descent shared information about a similar Algerian pasta called trida (see Image 7 below). Georgakopoulos himself also proposes alternatives to hilopites in this blog post so that his readers based in places where hilopites cannot be found can make the dish.

**Image 7 here**

All three bloggers offer advice in their blogs and on other social media platforms. In fact, their ‘support’ allows other bloggers or readers and social media users to further perpetuate their reputations. Just as Minakis was shown above re-tweeting a message praising one of his recipes are, so both Gkiousou and Georgakopoulos promote the comments of others and invite participation and interaction with their recipes. For example, Gkiousou blogged about roxakia, a sweet and syrupy dough-based dessert, encouraging her readers to submit photos and questions. As a result, another blogger, Stella, sent pictures of her version of roxakia, and responded to Gkiousou’s recipe with a question about the syrup (see Image 8 below).

**Image 8 here**

Gkiousou did not just respond to Stella. She created a new blog post using Stella’s photo and question, adding an answer to the question and thanking Stella for her participation. We are

observing a series of interactions here which promote both food creativity and the creation of content. While Gkiousou creates and publishes content, user Stella responds to it, demonstrating her own creativity. Then Stella submits a picture and communicates with Gkiousou in order to ask questions and further discuss the answers, after which she in turn generated a new post, including all the material received from Stella and an answer to it. As a result, other users can see the interactions as well as the original recipe, arguably prompting greater use of Gkiousou's recipes and the possibility of more people cooking, creating content and communicating with Gkiousou.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

In general, each food blogger has a different approach to content and presentation: Georgakopoulos mainly engages with photography, Minakis with storytelling, and Gkiousou with interactive recipe-development and videography. This consideration forms the basis of our investigation, comparison and discussion, as we analyse the three food blogs in the light of remediation, hybridization and bricolage, while also providing current and future implications for HFI research.

#### The Hybridisation of Disciplines

The three case studies demonstrate that food blogging emerges in-between practices, such as cooking, programming skills, photography, videography and narrative writing. Instead of adapting an automated and transparent version of software (Du & Wagner, 2006), the three food bloggers engage with software customisation through coding, which is a reflective process requiring interaction and modification of interface (Bolter & Gromala, 2005). Customisation serves the purpose of making food blogs visible, searchable and accessible, providing more opportunities for cross-fertilization on different platforms as well as interaction with and between other user-bloggers and the audience (Foth et al., 2011).

The three case studies demonstrate food blogging to be a hybrid multidisciplinary practice that couples programming skills with photography, videography and storytelling. Souvlaki For The Soul is an example of the use of the blogging platform to celebrate an aesthetic experience. As a photographer, Georgakopoulos shows professional food which does not pictorially represent the method of the recipe, but illustrates the final result and symbolises the pleasure of eating the finished product.

By emphasizing the digital and immaterial aspect of food cultures, Souvlaki For The Soul is less related to ‘cooking’ or ‘eating’. The immaterial nature of food cultures has introduced a new set of aesthetics, mainly celebrated on social media as users share their food experience in order to express their self-identity (O’Hara et al., 2012). This form of media convergence exceeds the technical fusion of media, as photography becomes the main medium of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2004). In addition, as the ‘digital’ aspect of food cultures overshadows the ‘live’ and the ‘real’ – a condition termed ‘liveness’ (Auslander, 2008) – authenticity and originality take the form of a fabricated experience that is only realised and ‘consumed’ in a digital medium: the food blog or the social network.

Kalofagas mainly engages with transparent remediation, coupling aesthetically pleasing photography with storytelling about recipes and their context. Bolter and Gromala (2005) content that no medium can be entirely transparent or reflective; on this basis, Kalofagas cannot avoid reflectivity despite the fact that it aims mainly to mediate a traditional notion of authenticity, broadcasting rare information about food cultures. In this case, the hybridisation of disciplines refers mostly to the technical requirements of the Souvlaki For The Soulnd less to the actual experience created online. As a result, the hybridisation of disciplines is not necessarily related to bricolage, as sometimes the intention of food bloggers is to maintain and popularise certain traditions, leading them to acquire a mediating role that both demonstrates and accelerates the diffusion of food cultures (Bolter & Gromala, 2005).

In contrast, Digital Scullery often features recipes from writers other than Gkiiousou, and engages with reflective remediation by inviting the audience to participate collectively in the digital platform (see Table 5 below). In this case, collective creativity and intelligence form the basis of improvisation (Levy, 1997 in Jenkins, 2004; Leatbeater, 2010; Segaran, 2007), as the medium of the Souvlaki For The Soulllows user bloggers and consumers to become bricoleurs. Whereas in Kalofagas, authenticity represents a traditional experience, in Digital Scullery it reflects on improvisation as creating something anew.

### **Table 5 here**

An interesting aspect of the hybridisation of disciplines is the fact that all three bloggers are not professionally trained, but started as enthusiasts interested in a particular aspect of food cultures, and developing appropriate skills in programming, cooking, photographing, or writing through their interaction and engagement with digital media. This is an example of

learning practices ‘expanding’ food cultures and creating new knowledge about them, while at the same time contributing to the development of the interface itself (Harbich & Hassenzahl, 2011). As food bloggers learn and develop their skills in interaction with digital media, they become bricoleurs blending elements from different disciplines, each crafting a unique approach to computer-mediated food cultures.

Crucially, food blogging evolves by integrating and converging different disciplines into one media form, as cooking, photography, videography and narrative writing become a single indistinguishable interdisciplinary practice. While food blogging is developing as an interdisciplinary practice, it will be interesting to follow the ways in which authenticity will be interpreted in the future: either as a digital image, a traditional recipe, an interactive experience or a live experience.

### The Hybridisation of Roles

As a side effect of the hybridisation of disciplines, the hybridisation of roles places the food blogger at the centre of the creative process. This hybrid role echoes interdisciplinary practices, and promotes the food blogger as an expert in his or her field. For instance, without being accredited by an institution or having any kind of professional qualification, Georgakopoulos has become an expert in food photography, while Gkiouso and Minakis often act as opinion formers, providing guidance and information on recipes and local restaurants. Trust and reputation are key aspects of the hybrid role, which have been developed on-line through blogger-audience interactions, and derive from the quality of posts, which enhances reputation feedback (Yang & Chen, 2008).

In general, the hybridisation of roles is a critical issue that determines the identity of the bricoleur in food cultures. On the one hand, the blurring of boundaries between user-bloggers and the audience imposes a new model of collective bricolage endorsed by digital media. However, neither Minakis and Georgakopoulos nor the other food bloggers in Table 3 place collective practices at the centre of their creative practices and improvisation. This raises a further question about why this happens. As this point could be a subject of future research, we can use data from our research to suggest two possible answers.

Food bloggers do not engage with collective participation, either because their key motivation relies on the broadcasting of self-interests (Anderson, 2012; Hung et al., 2011), or because collective participation does not improve the performance of the blog (by increasing its

traffic), as measured and translated into rewards (traffic and advertisements/reputation). For instance, Minakis reports that in terms of traffic it is more worthwhile spending time in the kitchen developing and improving his recipes rather than replying to comments. Nevertheless, the lack of collective participation may be related to characteristics peculiar to the blogging model, as other Internet-based media, such as Wikipedia, acquire content through crowd sourcing.

In the end, the approach of food bloggers to collective participation is related to the ways in which they interpret authenticity. When food bloggers emphasise transparent remediation and traditional practices, they attempt to increase their reputation based on their expertise and the exclusivity of their information. As a result, this creates a clear role for them, as they become experts superseding previous authorities and gatekeepers of collective authenticity. In contrast, the dynamics of reflective remediation may generate new models of creative activity, redistributing authority and rearranging the roles in food production. Reflective remediation fundamentally blurs the boundary between the role of user bloggers and the audience which taps into collective creativity, as the user blogger is no longer an authority assuring the authenticity of a tradition, but as a compelling experience in its own right (Bolter & Gromala, 2005).

Ultimately, food blogs, together with other food-related media, play a prominent role in the evolution of food cultures, re-establishing the relationship between public and private practices. While the transparent remediation of food blogs makes public information available to consumers, reflective remediation turns private practices into public ones. The hybridisation of roles reflects an additional element of media convergence, renegotiating the relationships between food bloggers, consumers and producers (Jenkins, 2004). For instance, food practices based on collective bricolage can allow ideas to migrate from the digital realm and form the basis of new product development, initiating new models of creation and production.

### The Hybridization of Practices

The hybridization of practices can be seen as a 'structured improvisation' (Hebdige, 1979) that involves an interplay between transparency as an original structure, and reflectivity as an improvisation diverging from the original. While transparency maintains the identity of a cultural practice, in this case the traditions of Greek food, reflectivity drives the hybridisation

of practices integrating disciplines and roles, and ultimately fusing the digital and cultural aspects of food cultures. The three food bloggers examined in this study started with the intention of presenting original Greek food, but reflectivity allowed them to ‘expand’ (Harbich & Hassenzahl, 2011) their food cultures through their individual creativity and improvisation.

Nevertheless, a basic discussion of the hybridisation of practices demonstrates the creative practices of food blogs to be simultaneously cultural and technological. This further shows the difference between mediation, the broadcasting of an existing experience, and remediation, which is the reshaping of the experience. As a result, when food blogs mainly engage with transparency, they maintain their role as mediators of information (Bolter & Gromala, 2005), keeping food cultures, roles and practices separate from each other. This being so, bricolage can therefore be seen as a process of combining different elements instead of integrating and ultimately hybridising them (Burke, 2009). At one extreme, the food blogger becomes a bricoleur by necessity in order to demonstrate his or her collective authenticity, while hybridisation might be considered as having a negative influence on food cultures.

On the other hand, the logic of remediation considers hybridisation and bricolage to be interrelated. In particular, reflective remediation shows hybridisation to be a trigger for bricolage, which is the intentional creative process that takes place during interaction with digital media. The bricoleur both influences and is influenced by a hybrid environment, while bricolage is an experiment in the interaction between design and food cultures. Ultimately, food cultures and food-related technologies combine to form an integrated and converged media form, while media convergence becomes the process that integrates hybrid disciplines, roles and practices, and broadens the spectrum allowing bricoleurs to improvise.

As food cultures and technologies are interrelated, the hybridization of practices demonstrates that the remediation of food cultures has a simultaneous impact on both culture and technology. Individual creativity and improvisation can be sources of the evolution of food cultures, and can also fuel technological development as a result of bricolage. As bricolage increasingly gains ground in contemporary culture, the hybridisation of practices introduces a new mode of technological development fuelled by hybrid disciplines, in turn forming interdisciplines, and hybrid roles that are increasingly performed by enthusiasts, experts and the audience.

## **Implications for Future Research**

Food practices essentially contain knowledge (know-what) and experience (know-how), which they transmit to individuals and groups within cultures (Crossley, 2006). This appears more clearly when population flows introduce new knowledge into different contexts, as people transfer knowledge and eventually hybridise food cultures. In this case, the ‘object’ (information and knowledge about food practices) and ‘subject’ (individual) are a single entity (Crossley, 2006).

However, digital media and food blogging have challenged this principle, separating the ‘subject’ from the ‘object’. In particular, the interface itself emerges as a new ‘object’, which accommodates food practices, while expressing the identity of blogger or group (the ‘subject’). Although food blogging is essentially a reflective medium, food bloggers share knowledge as both information and experience (Hung et al., 2011), while maintaining an open structure for new knowledge creation and knowledge exchange based on the participation of users, experimentation, ‘mass innovation’ (Leatbeater, 2010) and ‘collective intelligence’ (Segaran, 2007).

Many of these issues are discussed in the current paper, but a number of questions require further investigation. While a food blog is fundamentally a diary of food practices (Deuze, 2006), in which ways and under what conditions does HFI contribute to the archiving of cultural food information for future use? Do any projects or initiatives exist that attempt to group information and knowledge? To what extent are collective intelligence, mass innovation and crowd-sourcing being used to cultivate food cultures?

Current research on food blogs, including this paper, is often limited because it considers their use within the setting of a typical PC environment, although research is increasingly examining the possibilities of user-generated weblogs and blogs in mobile environments (Chiu et al., 2011). In particular, non-stationary situations and locative media are generating new opportunities of creating, distributing and consuming information about food practices in different and multiple contexts (Bilandzic & Foth, 2012; Chiu et al., 2010).

For instance, social navigation applications may in future use real information in a mixed-reality environment (Fleischmann & Strauss, 2006), while mobile devices, such as smartphones, or wearable and augmented-reality devices, such as the wearable device Google Glass, may be able to stream information from food blogs to help the user to navigate

(Google, 2012). Following the logic of hybridisation of practices and media convergence (Jenkins, 2004), further exploration in this area is expected to enrich food cultures by bringing new media characteristics into the creative process, while widening the hybridisation spectrum even further to include mobile technologies.

Nevertheless, an additional stream of research in architecture and design seeks intelligent solutions in a domestic environment (Kirsch, 2001). Smart technologies are increasingly gaining ground, while smart homes, smart devices and smart kitchens are becoming feasible (Fox & Kemp, 2009). A recent project mentions the use of such technologies to form an archive and haptic gesture interface in the kitchen of the chef Ferran Adrià (Williams, 2012). A future project could therefore focus on the extent to which computer-mediated food cultures might overlap with smart home/space devices, sharing information and knowledge in a radically designed environment that enables creative practices.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, this paper proposes a ‘cultural framework of HCI’, which it applies to the context of food blogging. By examining three Greek food blogs based in countries other than Greece, this paper demonstrates the particular ways in which bloggers engage with the remediation of food culture. All three bloggers engage with transparency in order to represent the originality of the Greek cuisine; however, reflectivity emphasises deeper aspects of their individual creativity and improvisation, which varies from the visual exploration of food cultures (Souvlaki For The Soul), to narrative writing about relatively unknown Greek food practices (Kalofagas), and interactivity with the audience (Digital Scullery).

However, this study has at least two important limitations. First, the choice of three case studies from the same cultural background makes this study culturally-specific and raises the issue of replicability. Although Greek food culture, as a less institutionalised context, is more interesting for a study of cultural hybridisation, studying different cultures in a comparative research might produce different results. For instance, if we repeated the same type of study with French food blogs or with a comparison of French and Spanish blogs, we would be likely to have different results. Second, the national cuisine framework adopted in this study could be considered to be a research design that limits the conventional concerns of HCI research. Instead of grouping food blogs according to national cuisines, future research could analyse the modes and functions of food blogs – such as the potential conflict between the



display of information and the enabling of collective creativity – and could consider a larger sample of blogs from different cultures.

A key conclusion of this research is that transparent remediation accelerates the sharing of knowledge about food cultures on various social media, while reflective remediation creates a hybrid context in which novel food practices can arise. In particular, reflectivity makes possible the hybridization of disciplines, integrating programming and photography and/or videography with food culture. It also enable the hybridisation of roles, as food blogging emerges as a hybrid role or as users engage in the creative process, blurring the boundaries between experts and non-experts. Finally, the hybridisation of disciplines also becomes possible, as food cultures become entangled with the use of digital technologies, and bloggers increasingly contribute to food cultures and the development of technological media.

Nevertheless, an approach that focuses mainly on transparent remediation tends to mediate the collective authenticity of food practices, distinguishing between disciplines, roles and practices. In this case, bricolage is defined as a re-combination, in which separate elements are opposed to hybridisation. In contrast, reflective remediation underpins the prominent role of food blogs and other food-related media in promoting authenticity as a form of individual and collective creativity which takes place through media convergence. In this case, hybridisation sets the conditions for bricolage, which exists within a broader spectrum of hybrid disciplines, roles and practices.

It is important to acknowledge the significant role of food blogs in food cultures. Nevertheless, the creative potential of food blogs has not been fully explored, mainly due to the tendency of food bloggers to maintain their collective traditions instead of experimenting with the medium. While celebrating collective creativity for the sake of otherness may be misleading, preserving and renegotiating the past often forms the basis of future creativity and innovation based on structured improvisation.

Finally, the ‘cultural framework of HCI’ stresses individual creativity and improvisation in terms of cultural and technological development. However, further research is required in order to apply the framework to different contexts, while extracting useful insights in other challenging areas of HFI, such as mobile-mediated food cultures or space-embedded smart technologies.

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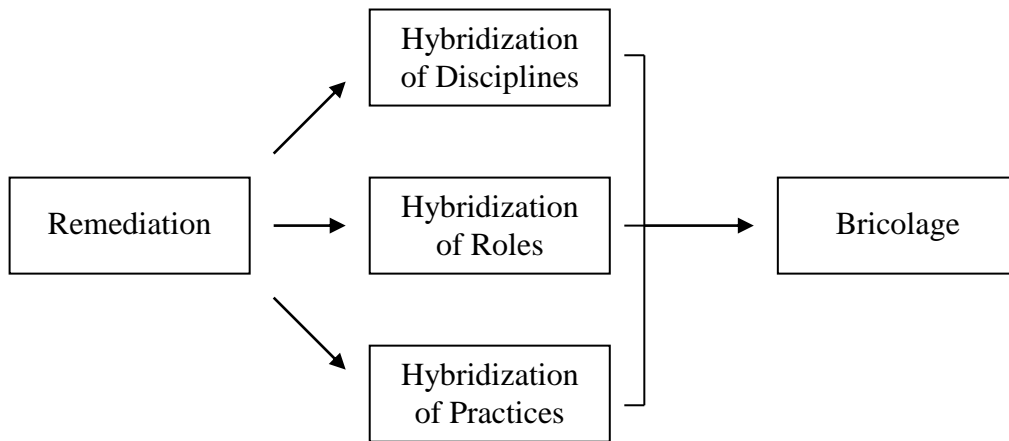
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





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**Figure 1: A conceptual framework in studying HFI**



*Source: the authors*

**Figure 2: Research Design and Focus**

	Eat	Cook	Grow
Micro - Individuals			
Meso – Restaurants and Retailers			
Macro –National Context			

 Main research interest  
 Background information

*Source: the authors' extension of Foth et al. (2011)*

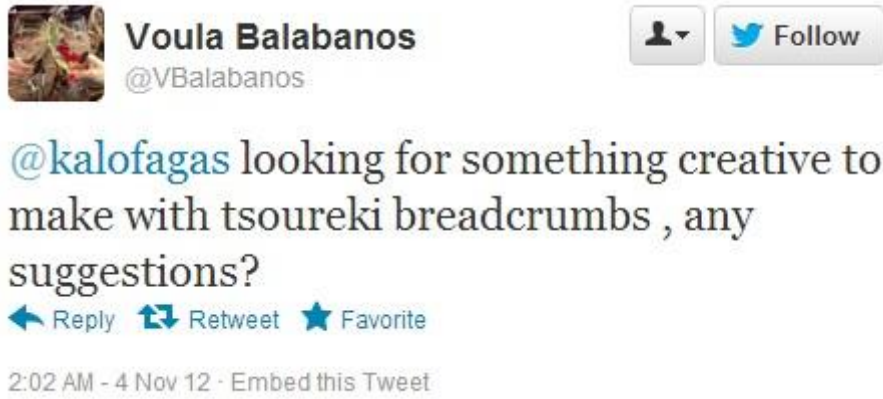


**Image 1: Twitter conversation of Peter Minakis with user @dltorran**



*Source: Peter Minakis Twitter account*

Image 2: Twitter conversation of Peter Minakis with user @VBalabanos



Source: Peter Minakis Twitter account

**Image 3: Food presentation on Peter Georgakopoulos's food blog**



*Source: <http://souvlakiforthe soul.com/>*

Image 4: Souvlaki For The Soul photo stream on Flickr

flickr® from YAHOO!

Home The Tour Sign Up Explore - Upload


You aren't signed in Sign In Help

Search


Souvlaki For The Soul's photostream

Slideshow


Sets Galleries Tags People Archives Favorites Profile






**Little bowl of blueberries**  
Summer time goodness  
All rights reserved  
Uploaded on Dec 8, 2011  
11 comments



**Cabbage Rolls**  
The Greek version. Recipe on my blog.  
All rights reserved  
Uploaded on Nov 24, 2011  
7 comments



**Quinoa Porridge**  
With bananas, honey and cinnamon. Part of a complete breakfast.  
All rights reserved  
Uploaded on Nov 23, 2011  
14 comments



Source: Georgakopoulos Flickr account

**Image 5: Dialogue between Peter Minakis and user Mary Dailey on Kalofagas**



The image shows a screenshot of a forum thread. At the top, there is a purple geometric logo. Below it, a user named Mary Dailey has posted a message. The message text is: "I really want to make this, as I do not remember ever eating it. I am wondering if I can't find this particular pepper, what do you suggest I use?". Below the message is a "Reply" link. In the next section, a user named Peter Minakis has replied. His message text is: "Mary, red bell peppers should be fine.". Below his message is another "Reply" link.

 *Mary Dailey* says:  
September 25, 2012 at 4:42 pm

I really want to make this, as I do not remember ever eating it. I am wondering if I can't find this particular pepper, what do you suggest I use?

[Reply](#)

---

 *Peter Minakis* says:  
September 25, 2012 at 4:49 pm

Mary, red bell peppers should be fine.

[Reply](#)

*Source: Kalofagas*

**Image 6: Dialogue between Sofia Gkiousou and user zev zevel on YouTube**

Hi Sofia, do you use the powdered Nescafe or the freeze dry chunky Nescafe?

Nice trick with the jar!

Oh, and to be blat... Your English is f\*ing fantastic! LOL. You shouldn't be self conscisous about it at all.

zev zevel 1 week ago

Hey there zev. I actually use the dry chunky stuff. Some people think it makes a difference in taste but I don't.

Thanks for the note on the English :-D

sofiagk in reply to zev zevel 1 week ago

That's very interesting, Sofia. And confusing too, I might add. The issue with the freeze dry chunky is that it makes making the cream or foam almost impossible to make - at least here in the USA. Maybe you have better Nescafe in Greece, that is suitable for the Frappe. ????

This is from Wiki: "This is the reason it is not possible to make a good frappé in many countries, unless one can find spray-dried coffee (which is actually generally less expensive than freeze-dried instant coffee)".

zev zevel in reply to sofiagk 1 week ago

Arrgghhh, no wait. Didn't realise you were from the States so perhaps we mean a completely different thing? I use Nescafe Original, as found in the UK (where I live btw). This comes in tiny little granules. In Greece people mostly use the powder-like version but even when I was living in Greece I still used the normal granule type Nescafe. Does that help?

sofiagk in reply to zev zevel 1 week ago

Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBvToL1y3us>

**Image 7: User post on Souvlaki For The Soul**



sarah

July 9, 2012 at 08:07

hilopites is very similar to the pasta that we have in algeria called trida, the only difference is that the dough contains fine semolina as well as flour and egg. they look exactly the same. In algeria we steam the pasta instead of boiling it. I think also we add some broth to it after it has been steamed. just look up trida and you'll see the similarities. while you're at it look up tlitli which is basically orzo, again we steam this and let the broth absorb afterwards

*Source: Souvlaki For The Soul*


Image 8: User/blogger Stella sends picture and her experience to Digital Scullery

Nov 08 2011

## Stella made roxakia. And a bit of troubleshooting.

Posted by The friends at 11:54 | Advice, Food Stuff, Friends' food stuff | Add comments

Tweet 0 | Like 1 | P me 0 | +1 2




Hello "auntie" Sofia!

I am sending you this photo as historical proof that yes, I, the kitchen lazy gal, made at some point in my life roxakia!

The photo is not very good, but I will not say the same for the roxakia. They are yummy!

What I like about the recipe is that it went step by step to the end (almost). It's the first time that I wasn't terrified by the concept of as much flour as required (I could see in the video how to do the dough). Nothing stuck, it was easy. (actually, I did the little dough sausages with my 4 year old daughter, she really appreciated the process). On cue the roxakia came out of the oven hard, everything went great.



Source: Digital Scullery