

INTRODUCTION

Food and migration are two central domains in West African economic and social life. Both receive not only academic interest, but also media, public and political attention. However, unlike in other regional contexts (cf. Ben-Ze'ev 2004; Brown and Mussell 1984; Hage 1997; Kershen 2002; Law 2001; Petridou 2001; Ray 2004; Wilk 1999),¹ they are rarely examined in combination in studies not only of West Africa specifically, but also of Africa or African migration more generally.

Most often, food in Africa is considered from the perspective of nutrition, famine and food security, with only a few studies addressing food from a cultural and social position in African contexts (Devisch, de Boeck and Jonckers 1995; Flynn 2005; Froment et al. 1996; Holtzman 2006a, 2007, 2009; Osseo-Asa 2005). In anthropology, despite the growing attention that has been given to consumption and food from the 1980s onwards and the resulting advancement of the anthropology of food as a field of studies (Mintz and Du Bois 2002; Watson and Klein 2016), Africa is still largely left outside its scope. In a similar vein, existent social science scholarship on African migration (including West Africa), too vast to outline here, has, surprisingly, mostly overlooked the intimate relationship between migration and food. When both domains intersect, it is usually from the perspective of consumption in destination countries (e.g. Parveen 2017; Tuomainen 2009; Williams-Forsen 2014), or of the impact migration has on food and nutrition security (e.g. Crush 2013). Instead, multi-sited research that pays attention to the role of food in connecting African migrants' and their home-based kin's social and economic lives is still limited (with the exception of Abranches 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b; Oliveira 2018; Renne 2007).

Yet from the start of the ethnographic research that led to this book, this relationship revealed its central importance in the lives of people in Guinea-Bissau – a small country on the West African coast – and of those who, from there, had migrated to Portugal, in Europe. When I arrived in Portugal in May 2010, coming back from Guinea-Bissau to complete the last stage of my one-year, multi-sited fieldwork, I was introduced to Aliu, a Guinean Fula food trader in Portugal, originally from the region of Bafatá (Figure 0.1).²

He had been pointed out to me as one of the first protagonists of the story I had been following for nearly one year, and which is documented in this book – that of the regular travel of Guinean food and plants from Guinea-Bissau to Portugal, and of the people involved in all stages of this movement. In Bissau, his brother Samba had explained their creation of the first family-based organized supply of homeland food to the growing migrant community in Portugal, which had resulted from an absence of that food, experienced by the first arrived Guinean migrants as physically painful:

My brother had this idea in Lisbon because there were other Guineans working in the construction sector, like him. Since they couldn't eat food with the ingredients they were used to, they asked each other, 'my brother, see if you know someone coming from Bissau and ask them to bring some *badjiki* [roselle leaves], even if only 5 kilos...' If one of them managed to have some sent, he would have to share it with the others. That is how my brother decided to have a box of Guinean produce sent every week, distribute it between his colleagues and charge them for it.

I met Aliu in Largo São Domingos – a square in the Lisbon downtown area of Rossio, which Guinean migrants use for socializing and exchanging homeland food, and one of the most important field sites in my ethnography (figure 5.3.).³ There, Aliu confirmed what his brother had told me in Bissau: from both countries, the two siblings had contributed to the early stages of the making of a Guinean transnational lifeworld through food.⁴ Their original initiative of sending and receiving food and plants across borders was intimately related not only to Aliu's personal history of migration and an identified need and demand, but also to the larger colonial and postcolonial history of Portugal and Guinea-Bissau. This story therefore also illustrates the way in which spaces are shaped by history, memory and the materiality of the environment (Connerton 1989; Nora 1984; Stewart and Strathern 2003; Sutton 2001) – all of which are processes that can be elucidated through the study of food. Pointing to a tree nearby, Aliu explained:

In the old times, the Disabled War Veterans Association was right here, behind that tree, and that's where we started selling. I was a colonial soldier between 1973 and 1974 in Guinea-Bissau, and I came here to receive a pension. When I arrived in 1989, however, I was told that only the injured were entitled to it... But we were always hanging around here. We even had lunch at the association, people slept there... that's how we started selling here... We saw that there was demand. People who had come to Portugal, like us, they liked those things. So, we asked our relatives there to send more food over here for us to sell... After us, other people started doing the same, and now there are many sellers, as you can see.

This book is primarily concerned with the effects that the activity the two brothers initiated in the early 1990s has on the economic and social lives of Guineans at home and abroad, and on the connections that it generates between both lifeworlds. As I mentioned above, the importance of food in their lived experience became evident to me after beginning fieldwork. Previously, my interest had been on Guinean transnational trade more broadly, which I wanted to explore from a material culture perspective, looking at what objects were at stake and at what they could tell us about the lives of those involved in their trade from both ends. This interest was built on the recognition that migration from Guinea-Bissau had been significantly overlooked in studies of African migration, and that the effects of group-organized transnational trade on migrants and, even more so, on their families at home, were largely ignored in the literature on migration more generally.⁵ Yet not long after I set off to explore the materiality of trade in the Guinean migration experience, food clearly emerged as one of the most present materials in Guineans' lives, not just in relation to trade but to a much more comprehensive reality. It proved to be the first travelling material from a historical perspective, accompanying the first migration movements to Portugal, and the one that remains the most significant in terms of quantity and the regularity with which it travels. Moreover, as was to become clear throughout the course of my ethnography, the materiality of Guinean food and plants is embedded in a particularly intimate relationship with the land that connects all living things and the spirits of the ancestors, therefore linking the experiences of production, exchange and consumption across borders in unique ways.

In light of these observations, I narrowed the focus of my research and endeavoured to understand what made food such an important material for Guineans. In order to do that, I first looked at spaces of production in Guinea-Bissau and at the relationship between people, food and the land where the crops are grown. I then followed the food's journey from its farming sites to the local food markets of Bissau and from there to the final destination in Lisbon, where it is received and exchanged by Guinean migrants in spaces such as that described by Aliu. This provided evidence of how everyday practices and meanings related to food are as much part of the material and social world of migrants as they are of those who stay back home. As a result, it also helped to understand the role of food in bridging physical distances between people in both locations.

The main premise of this book is that the interplay of migration and materials like food and plants, as well as related practices of production, distribution and consumption across borders, affect people's lifeworlds in ways that indicate a particular investment in connections. Spaces of production in Guinea-Bissau, of food preparation and consumption in a new environment and, in and between both countries, experiences related to memories and aspirations triggered by food, acts of sharing, giving and reciprocating it, and

livelihoods based on its exchange, are all connected at a transnational level and analysed, in turn, in the different chapters of this book.

While carrying out this examination, the book will follow the close-knit lives of farmers, food sellers, those who buy, pack and transport the material to the airport and distribute it upon arrival, carriers and airport staff, brokers and a number of other people involved in the process of sending and receiving Guinean food. It will provide an understanding of how these different roles are created or changed through an increased demand of homeland food with migration, how the people who perform them experience those changes, and how they remain connected across borders. As the importance of such materials and their capacity to connect derive equally from their 'symbolic' form (meaning) and their bodily qualities (substance), as well as from the relationships in which they are integrated, I adopt here a phenomenological-oriented approach that is focused on experience and meaning of things as equally constitutive of people's realities.

Phenomenology and the Body: Some Brief Definitions

Just as philosophical traditions of phenomenology are remarkably diverse, so are its anthropological uses. Studies of health and illness, sense of place and religion comprise some of the main areas where phenomenological-oriented approaches have been more widely used in anthropology. As I will come back to later in the conclusion, by investigating migrants' and their home-based kin's food-related connections with a phenomenological orientation, in this book I suggest the development of what we can call a phenomenology of food and migration, as a theoretical framework with which to explore this still emergent area of research.

Ram and Houston (2015: 1) suggest a definition of anthropological phenomenology as 'an investigation of how humans perceive, experience, and comprehend the sociable, materially assembled world that they inherit at infancy and in which they dwell'. While its uses can be of a methodological or theoretical nature, this book adopts it as a theory of perception and experience. An 'anthropology of experience' has been increasingly followed since the mid-1980s, when an undue focus on meaning, discourse, structural relations and political economy started to be seen as oblivious of the everyday experiences, contingencies and dilemmas that weigh on people's lives (Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 92–93). Here I follow Ram and Houston's (2015) approach to experience as a form of sensing and comprehending the world through our perceptions, senses, endeavours and intentions.

One of the most influential contributions to phenomenological approaches in anthropology is probably the idea of body subject and the direct relationship between the human body and its world. In anthropology, the body as a site of analysis owes much to Heidegger's (1962) conceptualization of

being-in-the-world and Merleau-Ponty's (1945) emphasis on the embodied person as the subject of experience. Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) practice theory, although situated outside the phenomenological perspective, has also been a central reference to most analytical and theoretical work on the embodied experience. Focusing on the notion of 'habitus' as a system of routinized dispositions that emerge out of the relation to wider objective structures, Bourdieu presents a structurally mediated mode of subjectively perceiving and appreciating the lived world. In his theory of the body, perception and thought are inculcated through activities performed in symbolically structured space and time. Bourdieu tries to merge phenomenological subjectivism with structuralist objectivism, arguing that neither alone is enough to explain social action. 'Habitus' therefore explains individual experience while retaining the role played by objective structures, and the concept's use in studies of migrant transnationalism is especially helpful, since migrants' everyday experiences are necessarily linked to the structural context in which they occur, both in socioeconomic and politico-institutional terms.⁶

Bourdieu's critique of phenomenology draws on the argument that it 'sets out to make explicit the truth of primary experience of the social world' (1977: 3), hence unquestioning what is familiar and taking the apprehension of the world as self-evident. However, Bourdieu's practice theory also received a number of criticisms.⁷ Piot (1999), for example, called attention to its Eurocentric conception of persons and the social, which betrays a self-evident economism and seems to be unaffected by history. In fact, Piot contends, how can we use conceptual terms like 'strategy', 'interest' or 'accumulation' of symbolic capital outside a certain cultural and political terrain based on the late twentieth century's capitalism and the language of the individual, propriety and finance? (ibid.: 16). Despite this concern with the inapplicability of practice theory in non-western contexts, Bourdieu's discussion of the multidimensional sensuous and corporeal qualities of human practices and things is useful for the discussion presented in this book, as it helps to situate Guinean food and plants in the interplay between objects, personal stories and broader narratives. He describes the world of objects as a book 'read with the body, in and through the movements and displacements which define the space of objects, as much as they are defined by it' (Bourdieu 1990: 76). Echoing Bourdieu's theory, Connerton's (1989) focus on bodily practice and performance influenced the theoretical focus of my examination of food-related practices, as has Weiss's (1996) use of the concept of 'engagement' to capture the reciprocal interchange between people, their world and its objects. When exploring the relationship between gender and the material world, Moore (1994) also drew attention to the insufficiency of representational theories in explaining it, in the sense that meaning is interpreted by acting social beings, rather than merely inhering in symbols. The body is thus seen as the set of activities constructed in space, and embodied practices as what gives meaning to that construction (ibid.: 71). Moore's more recent

concern with ‘hopes, desires and satisfactions’ (2011) has also been a source of inspiration in the conceptual framework that I apply in this book, due to its engagement with temporal processes and the potentialities of human agency and human subjectivity in meaning-making and, consequently, in new ways of being.

In human geography, where important research on migration and transnationalism has taken place, the body has also gained a central role (Longhurst 1997; Nash 2000; Rose 1999; Thrift 1996). In the 1970s, Buttimer (1976) was already trying to stimulate a debate between phenomenological approaches and human geography, in order to enhance the connections between space and the human experience. Since then, many have argued for a turn away from language and texts towards non-representational theories, focusing on expressive embodied practices, performativity, showings and manifestations of everyday life (Thrift 1996).

In studies of migration and diaspora, the notion of home has been reconceptualized in line with what I call a phenomenological orientation. Home is nowadays seen as part of a physical and cognitive cosmos made through practices and memories, rather than a static place. Disciplines like geography, anthropology, sociology, feminist, cultural and postcolonial studies explore home as a process that involves material and symbolic elements not just left behind, but also newly encountered and negotiated in a new country (Ahmed 1999; Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Blunt 2005; Brah 1996; Chapman 2001; Fortier 2000; Gardner 1993; Levitt and Waters 2002; Rapport and Dawson 1998; Robertson et al. 1994; Salih 2003). Some have addressed the concepts of home and homemaking through the study of objects and people’s embodied experiences of them, and studies that tackle the link between migration and material culture have in the meantime proliferated (Basu and Coleman 2008; Burrell 2008; Dalakoglou 2010; D’Alisera 2001; Miller 2001, 2008; Parkin 1999; Tilley 2006; Tolia-Kelly 2004).

However, a focus on the body also raises other questions, such as ‘[w]hat happens to the project of “giving voice” to the marginalized, if the concern is with what cannot be expressed rather than what can?’ (Nash 2000: 662). In the study of food and migration, the corporeal and sensorial dimensions that are at the centre of both experiences, and expressed as such by migrants themselves, help to minimize this risk. As Gardner (2002: 3) has argued, transnational movement is first and foremost a series of physical events, whose effects are experienced in the body. Likewise, food that is grown, ingested, shared and exchanged connects bodies that are displaced by ‘making’ them with the same substance (Abbotts 2016). Moreover, a focus on the interrelation between cognition and bodily experience helps to overcome the ‘visualist bias’ in western anthropology (Sutton 2001) and acknowledges the power of other senses, like taste and smell, demonstrating their capacity to maintain connections between places, events and people. Although some anthropological studies of food and displacement have focused on the body

and the senses as unit of analysis (Ben-Ze'ev 2004; Dudley 2010; Law 2001; Petridou 2001; Sutton 2001), none of these has used an approach that links people's entwined perceptions and experiences of food to contexts of production, exchange and consumption.

The phenomenological orientation I adopt here also takes into consideration the wider context in which people move. Authors like Goody (1982) and Mintz (1985) have placed history at the heart of the anthropological study of food and foodways.⁸ Mintz's influential sociohistorical study of sugar, for example, demonstrates the importance of looking into historical processes when socially analysing foodways and meanings of authenticity, which are constantly subject to change, inasmuch as they are entangled in social relations rather than abstractly fixed. As this book will elucidate, the economic and social lives of Guineans who participate in the transnational circulation of food are historically shaped by the colonial past, agricultural and migration policies, unemployment and labour market deregulation and encounters with new foods and lifeworlds. As Mintz has put it, 'the anthropology of just such homely, everyday substances may help us to clarify both how the world changes from what it was to what it may become, and how it manages at the same time to stay in certain regards very much the same' (1985: xxvii).

Food Connections: On Transnationalism and Multi-Sited Ethnography

Most research on migration, even that which focuses on the transnational experience, is ethnographically positioned at the 'arrivals' end of the movement only, exploring the points of departure largely from the migrant's narrated experiences.⁹ Within existing multi-sited research on migration, only a few relate to food (Alvarez and Collier 1994; Cook and Harrison 2007) or West African migration (Johnson 2009; Stoller 2009), but, apart from a few exceptions (Abranches 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b; Oliveira 2018), none examines both in combination.¹⁰ Yet the fact that migrants' and their home-based kin's lives are connected in many ways in what Brah (1996) has named 'diasporic space', and that homeland food plays a key role in that connection, means that one side of the migration should not be ignored in the investigation of meanings and experiences of transnational life (Smith 2006) and food. To be at both points of departure and of arrival is, as Hannerz (2003) notices, an ideal methodological strategy in studies of migration. It is also a privileged position from which to analyse the shifting status of the 'things' (such as food) that make up people's lifeworlds, as they circulate through different contexts (Appadurai 1986).

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the way in which Guineans' transnational lifeworlds are connected across borders by people and their foods, this book is based on multi-sited ethnographic work conducted in

the country of origin – Guinea-Bissau – and that of destination – Portugal. Anthropologists like Appadurai (1996), Coleman and von Hellermann (2011), Gupta and Ferguson (1997), Hannerz (2003) and Marcus (1995), who have deeply reflected on meanings of field locations when doing ethnography with progressively less spatially bounded groups – as is the case of migration – have influenced this methodological option. Marcus, who first coined ‘multi-sited ethnography’ as a method in 1995, defined it as ‘designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some sort of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defined the argument of the ethnography’ (1995: 105). Within this ethnographic method, he distinguished six techniques of ‘following’: 1) the people, 2) the thing, 3) the metaphor, 4) the plot, story or allegory, 5) the life or biography and 6) the conflict. This book was methodologically inspired by the technique of tracing things (food), through which people’s movements, memories, aspirations, histories and lived experiences were also followed.

More than focusing on mobility in its own right, I use it to reach the food-related materials, spaces, practices and relationships that, from both countries, are part of Guineans’ making of a transnational lifeworld, and that work to bridge physical distances and narrow ensuing ambiguities. Indeed, grounded research is needed to address the materiality of migrants’ pathways, insofar as ‘transnationals’ are not only mobile and ‘travelling through’, but also emplaced and ‘dwelling in’ places (Dunn 2010). Although it may at first appear to be a contradiction, multi-sited ethnographic research on food connections, as is presented in this book, can be done with an approach to transnationalism that focuses on the tangible everyday experiences of migrants and their kin.

Recognizing the importance of grounded empirical work in studies of transnational processes is not new in disciplines like anthropology, human geography or sociology (Burawoy et al. 2000; Coleman and Collins 2006; Mitchell 1997). While Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992) initially coined transnationalism as a multiplicity of ties (familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political) that are maintained by migrants in both home and host societies, a grounded approach to transnationalism has actual individual experiences, rather than abstract ties, at its core. In this book, the experiences under analysis are shaped by meaningful practices centred around the sending and receiving of food and embedded in people’s memories, stories and emotions (Levitt, DeWind and Vertovec 2003). They are also shaped by specific social relations between individuals situated in what Smith and Guarnizo have named unequivocal localities at historically determined times (1998: 11).

The combination of grounded transnationalism, phenomenology and multi-sited ethnography will hopefully contribute towards attenuating some of the criticisms that the multi-sited method has unsurprisingly received,

particularly those related to a supposed focus on transnational processes and practices rather than an actual concern with the participants in the research (Wilding 2007).¹¹ Likewise, while avoiding a discourse of victimization, it will consider important inequalities and the influence of historical and political contexts (colonialism and neo-liberal reforms, for example) on migrants and their home-based kin's transnational food-related practices. The obstacles Guineans encounter in their migration or return projects, livelihoods and practices of exchange, for example, all of which are shaped by the circulation of Guinean food, provide evidence to respond to a critique of transnationalism that associates it with the false idea that people can just escape state control (Friedman 2002; Kearney 1995; Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004).

Indeed, following the debate on globalization and global space as an exaggerated celebration of movement (Gupta and Ferguson 1992) and a product of practices of power and exclusions (Massey 2005), it is important not to let the often elite ideology of transnationalism blind us not just to emotional attachments to place (Jackson, Crang and Dwyer 2004: 6–7), but also to existing inequalities. However, in the context of Africa, an emphasis on local processes, or on how global processes – including those related to international migration – are interpreted and adapted locally, is key to avoid a perspective that sees the continent merely as a victim of limited opportunities and constraints (Chabal, Engel and de Haan 2007; de Bruijn, van Dijk and Gewald 2007). Detailed ethnographic accounts are, as Sanders and West (2003: 11) have put it, 'required to enhance our appreciation of the myriad ways in which people around the world engage with globalizing processes, ranging from resistance to embrace, but including, most importantly, the vast and complex swath of strategies lying in between'. In this book, the strategies under analysis are those relating to food production, exchange and consumption in two countries of a migratory landscape. Examined with a phenomenological-oriented perspective that looks at both meanings and experiences of food, this multi-sited ethnography will reveal new ways in which lifeworlds separated by migration are reconnected.

A Historical Note on Guinea-Bissau

Guinea-Bissau is a small country situated on the West African coast, whose territory officially covers 36,125 km² (including over 8,000 km² of swampy marshland and 3,200 km² of terrain periodically covered by rain). It is bordered by Senegal to the north and east and Guinea-Conakry to the east and south and has a population of about 1,900 million inhabitants (World Bank 2021).

Society in today's Guinea-Bissau is the result of the long history of migrations across West Africa, as well as wider movements through the continent, which originate from, amongst other routes, the Atlantic slave trade and the

trans-Saharan trade paths (Davidson 1966). It is this long history of movements that, alongside hostile campaigns of religious conversion and territorial conquest, makes Guinea-Bissau an extremely complex ethnic mosaic from early times up to the present day, despite its small dimensions in territory and population (Pélissier 2001a). Although numbers are not precise, around thirty main ethnic groups (excluding subdivisions) are estimated to live in the country, of which the Balanta, Fula, Mandinga, Manjaco and Pepel are the most significant numerically (Machado 2002).

Far from being clear-cut distinctions, however, most ethnic categorizations are made of complex boundaries, stemming from the fluidity of past movements, transpositions and reciprocal influences of various cultural traditions, ethnic merging and subdivisions, close relations to other people of similar language groups that transcend national borders, Islamization, and colonial campaigns (Lepri 1986; Lopes 1987). The conceptual and historical subjectivities and shortcomings regarding the notion of ethnicity in Guinea-Bissau will be discussed in the next chapter, and the ways in which Guineans use their ethnic belonging in the context of food production, exchange, preparation and consumption will be shown throughout the book. For simplicity, while acknowledging the limitations of these categorizations, I will henceforth use the term 'ethnic groups' to refer to this diversity.¹²

The Fula and the Manjaco are the most represented ethnic groups amongst Guinean migrants in Portugal. They are also, alongside the Mancanha and the Mandinga, those who performed the largest migratory movements to neighbouring countries during colonial times (Carreira 1960; Carreira and Meireles 1959). The Manjaco and the Mancanha are coastal people, organized in political units known as *reguladu* (kingdoms), who share, with each other and with the Pepel, an affinity in terms of language, agricultural production, religious system and hierarchical sociopolitical organization. In the early twentieth century, many moved towards Senegal and the Gambia in search of better work opportunities and as an attempt to escape colonial taxation policies implemented by the Portuguese (Gable 2003; Galli and Jones 1987). The Mancanha are nowadays, alongside the Pepel – who, however, have had limited participation in international migration – the ones who farm the soils of Bissau, from where fresh vegetables and fruits are sent to the migrant community in Lisbon. The Fula and the Mandinga are Muslim people from the interior regions of the country. During the colonial period, they performed seasonal migration movements from the eastern regions of Gabu and Bafatá to Senegal and the Gambia to work in groundnut plantations, wooden craftwork, weaving and shoemaking, as well as trade. Nowadays, Fula migrants in Portugal prevail in the food trade business, selling the products that the Mancanha and Pepel women harvest in Bissau.¹³

Given the Fula's predominance amongst migrant food traders, it is worth noting their history here. Dates and events that describe the first Fula's



Figure 0.1. Map of Guinea-Bissau. Map No. 4063 Rev. 5, February 2018, United Nations.

arrival in what is now Guinea-Bissau are imprecise and differ in historical sources and in people's oral narratives. In colonial accounts, the Fula, like the Mandinga, were described as foreigners and invaders (Carreira and Meireles 1959), who marginalized other Senegambian groups, pushing them towards the coast (Vigh 2006). This view of the Fula as foreigners persists, to a certain extent, in contemporary Guinea-Bissau, also because many Futa-Fula – people of a Fula subdivision who migrated from the Futa-Djallon region (which nowadays includes Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone) in the eighteenth century – still move from present Guinea-Conakry to Guinea-Bissau and identity as Fula. Finally, as Aliu's testimony has shown, the Fula cooperated in higher numbers with the colonial power. This was due to a common interest in fighting against coastal people and to the fact that, given their clothing and writing practices, as well as their politically centralized structures and the abundance by a 'religion of the book', the Portuguese saw them as less 'backward' than the coastal people and strategically negotiated with their chiefs (Lopes 1982; Teixeira da Mota 1951). Many Fula chiefs were thus intermediaries in the relationship between the local population and colonial authorities, who aimed at extending Portuguese ruling power to the interior.

Trade played a key role in the history of the region and is intimately linked to the movements and encounters described above. For centuries, before the Portuguese presence on the coast, a network of inter-societal long-distance trade had developed with strategic crossroads in Guinean territory and beyond, mainly by Mandinga rulers of the inland kingdoms who secured the trans-Saharan trade in ivory, gold and slaves (Mendy 2003). The Fula's involvement in trade is, unlike the Mandinga's, described in colonial accounts as a later tradition that replaced older occupations of goldsmith, blacksmith and tanner, as well as previous roles as herdsmen and cattle traders who travelled long distances in order to find pasture and water for their cattle (Carreira 1966).

Despite the country's small dimension and the cooperation of some Fula with the colonial regime, Guinea-Bissau was one of the Portuguese colonial territories to present the strongest resistance, and Portugal had not only tenuous military control but also little success in colonialist cultural impositions in the territory (Mendy 2003; Pélissier 2001b). Only from 1914, with the project of 'integrating', 'civilizing' and 'Christianizing' the population, did Portugal introduce a special legal system that lasted until 1961 and divided the population into the 'indigenous', the 'assimilated' and the 'civilized'. This division was made according to criteria of linguistic competence and 'manners and customs', where only the 'civilized' were to be granted full rights (Mendy 2003; Teixeira da Mota 1948).

Notwithstanding examples such as this imposed social structure, however, people in Guinea-Bissau have shown their own strategies of resistance and negotiation throughout history. Gable's (1998) research on African

and Portuguese representations of each other during colonial times, and Carvalho's (2002) analysis of Manjaco chiefs' iconographic representations, provide several examples of the continuous negotiations that took place between colonizers and colonized in Guinea-Bissau. As Carvalho put it, 'this relationship should be understood in its double meaning of the establishment of relations of power and dominance on the one hand, and of the creation of new symbols and significants on the other' (2002: 94). In fact, in the long process that combined peaceful migratory waves with movements of military conquest, there was neither a clear-cut imposition of structures of domination, nor an exclusion of ancient structures of the defeated people. Instead, different elements were borrowed and permeable boundaries created. An interesting example is the creation of a distinct sociocultural group whose descendants do not consider themselves part of an 'ethnic group' like the others. These are known as 'Geba Christians' and result from the conversion of autochthonous people who congregated near the Portuguese trading outpost of the Geba river in order to benefit from available economic opportunities.

Despite the risk that these historical – and contested – distinctions may reinforce difference and boundaries, they are important to acknowledge here, due to the role they play in Guineans' connections with their food and land, as this book will reveal.

Migration from Guinea-Bissau to Portugal

Guinea-Bissau declared independence from Portugal unilaterally in 1973, after a decade of liberation struggle led by the influential Amílcar Cabral, who was assassinated eight months before the country's declaration of independence.¹⁴ Although the first flow of Guinean migration to Portugal followed the onset of the country's independence and Portugal's return to democracy in 1974, larger inflows occurred during the 1980s and 1990s. These movements resulted both from a search for better work opportunities and from an unstable political situation in Guinea-Bissau, which included a civil war in 1998–1999.¹⁵ Notwithstanding the rapid growth of migration to Portugal, Senegal is still thought to host the largest community of Guineans abroad, despite a lack of recent sources to confirm this. The Manjaco, in particular, continued to move to Senegal (and, for some, from there to France) in the post-independence period (Galli and Jones 1987; Machado 2002).

As Aliu's narrative revealed at the start of this introduction, Guineans' different patterns of participation in the liberation war also influenced the earliest migration records to Portugal. People of Fula ethnic origin who, like him, had sided with the Portuguese, were denied major political roles and influential positions within the newly installed PAIGC,¹⁶ and saw some of their local chiefs assassinated. Many, then, left the country towards Portugal.

Guinean migration to Portugal had its most significant growth between 1986 and 1996, shifting from the tenth to the fourth most represented foreign nationality (Machado 2002). In 2010, at the time of my fieldwork, the Portuguese Office for National Statistics placed Guineans as the fifth largest group of the total non-EU population in Portugal, with 19,304 individuals (INE 2011), although these statistics overlook a potentially large number of undocumented migrants. From 2011, due to the consequences of the financial crisis in Portugal, net migration was negative for the first time since 1992, yet in 2018 Guineans remained the fifth largest group of non-EU nationals with 16,186 individuals (Oliveira and Gomes 2019).

An initial overrepresentation of men amongst Guinean migrants pushed men like Aliu into areas of trade normally run by women, such as fresh fruit and vegetable selling. The subsequent migration of women produced a more balanced gender distribution and altered the gendered composition of spaces and practices of food exchange in Lisbon. Aliu, for example, moved from the trade of fresh produce to that of kola nuts and raw tobacco, and other, longer established men set up ‘transnational agency’ businesses or ownership of small shops. Transnational agencies, known in Creole as *ajensia*, are small-scale, usually family-run partnerships that include at least one relative in each country and specialize in facilitating the sending and receiving of different products – including food and plants in one direction, and remittances in the other – between migrants in Portugal and their kin in Guinea-Bissau. They will stage some of the stories narrated in this book.

The representation of different ethnic groups with regard to migration is, as it is in Guinea-Bissau, difficult to estimate. The only survey conducted with Guinean migrants in Portugal, coordinated by Machado in 1995 with 400 individuals, revealed that half of those who arrived in the first half of the 1990s identified as Fula, Mandinga, Manjaco and Mancanha. It is thus probably not a coincidence that the same ethnic groups represented the majority of my research participants in Lisbon and, partly as a result of kinship ties, also in Guinea-Bissau. Amongst these longer-term migrants of different ethnic origins, the majority speak Portuguese – alongside a variety of ethnic languages – although Guinean Creole is, as in Guinea-Bissau, the most widely spoken language in everyday social and economic relations, and the one I used to communicate in the field.¹⁷

In 2010, at the time of my fieldwork, 83 per cent of the Guinean population in Portugal lived in Lisbon and its periphery (INE 2011).¹⁸ In 2018 this proportion was estimated at 75.6 per cent (GEE 2020). Rossio, introduced above by Aliu, is an important geographical space for Guinean migrants in Lisbon: it is not only a place of residence for some, but also a space of socialization and exchange of materials – mainly food – and news from home, for many. As Aliu’s narrative revealed, the establishment of the Disabled War Veterans Association in 1974 and the use of that space by the first Guineans who arrived as war veterans played a significant role in its social construction.¹⁹

Yet an earlier African presence in Rossio has been documented in Loude's (2003) vivid historical ethnography, where the area is described as a vibrant place of long-established trade fairs and markets that linked city and countryside. Loude highlights how, in more recent years, Guineans took over the district that had for centuries been occupied by black slaves walking the streets with ladders, lime wash buckets and brushes, offering their lime wash painting services – a sixteenth-century slaves' task – to the houses of the area. Today, Rossio still connects centre and suburbs, as its major train and ferry stations (where many Africans disembark daily, coming from the periphery where they live) provide evidence for.

Field Locations: People, Their Food and Its Places

Rossio, which occupies a central position in this ethnography, alongside other spaces of food exchange, production and consumption in Portugal and Guinea-Bissau, was the field location that initiated my research. This choice meant that the ethnographic material on which this book is based did not strictly follow the direction of the movement of food that guided the research. The intention was to first become acquainted with the materiality of Guineans' lifeworld in a setting that I was familiar with. This facilitated my access to the following (yet historically preceding) side of the food's journey: Guinea-Bissau. By the end of the first three months in Portugal I had been able to move from Rossio to Damaia, a parish in the outskirts of Lisbon where a large number of African migrants live. In Damaia, one street in a socially deprived area of unplanned settlements is occupied by Guinean vendors of mainly food and *mesinhu* ('traditional' medicines) and became known to Guineans as 'Bandim market', the name of Bissau's largest market.²⁰ From there, I extended the fieldwork locations to other significant yet less frequently used spaces where practices of exchange and gatherings were performed, linking people and food in such performances, not only in Lisbon and its outskirts, but also between those spaces and similar ones in Guinea-Bissau.

Three months later, I travelled to Bissau. Shortly after I arrived, my first host Miriam and her friend Binta asked me to read out to them the contacts they knew I carried in my notebook, which corresponded to the relatives of my research participants in Lisbon. To my surprise, Binta gave an amused laugh, followed by immediate information (including neighbourhood of residence) on most of the names I cited from my notebook. Her husband and mother, she then told me, were also migrants in Lisbon, the latter being one of the women selling food in Rossio. I was invited by the two enthusiastic women to get in Miriam's car and look for the people on my list. During our tour, I made the first acquaintances with many of those who would later become my interlocutors and friends in Bissau. These encounters were accompanied by animated phone calls to Lisbon to acknowledge my arrival,

our encounter, and the receipt of the gifts I had brought to them as intermediary. Food continued, as it had in Lisbon, to mark such occasions, and was often offered to me in return for my help as gift carrier or for the news I brought from an imagined Europe.

While travelling around the peripheral neighbourhoods of Bissau with the two women, the consequences of the rapid growth of the capital's population (by 80 per cent between 1995 and 2005) were immediately obvious. Accounting for 25.5 per cent of the country's population (INE 2013), nearly 90 per cent of Bissau residents live nowadays in those neighbourhoods, which stretch from the city centre where I lived to the unplanned settlements I visited regularly from that day, lacking the most basic services (MOPCU-DGHU 2005). Many of those neighbourhoods were set across both sides of the Airport Road (*Estrada do Aeroporto*) – the main road that, leading out of the city, passes the airport of Bissau. The airport, where key food-related performances were staged three times a week, on flight days, became another important field site from the early stages of fieldwork in Bissau, as did local food markets and smallholdings in the capital and its outskirts, where most travelling produce originates. I began to follow the food on those three weekly days, starting in the smallholdings in the early morning, moving to the markets in the afternoon and to the airport of Bissau in the evening.

Despite a multiplicity of other important field sites, it was Caracol food market that, like Rossio and Damaia in Lisbon, became my central field location in Bissau. Here I was honoured with the friendly title *Maria di Caracol* – a name that most of my research participants still address me with. Caracol, which started as a spontaneous agglomeration of sellers and has rapidly expanded since 1988 (Lourenço-Lindell 1995), is where most Guineans go to sell and buy the vegetables and fruits that will be sent in large quantities to their kin in Portugal. The majority of the smallholdings I visited were located around Bissau's periphery and in the region of Biombo, adjacent to Bissau, since fresh vegetables and fruits require geographic proximity to the capital and its airport for a safe arrival in Portugal. Medicines and amulets made of tree or animal parts (known in Guinean Creole as *mesinhu*) secure particular importance for Guineans at home and abroad due to their material and spiritual properties also embedded in the land, therefore their role in connecting lifeworlds is also analysed in this book. The journey of these materials, like non-fresh food such as dried and smoked fish and seafood, kola nuts or palm oil, often start away from the urban centre. Occasionally, then, I travelled to the southern and the eastern regions of the country to meet those responsible for finding these products and transporting them to Bissau and, from there, to Lisbon. The surroundings of Bandim market in Bissau were also important field locations, as they play a central role in the relationship between food and migration, mainly due to their conglomeration of transnational agencies: the small businesses that facilitate the sending and receiving of food, and other products, between families in the two countries.

On the night of my return to Portugal, I had the privilege of finding several of my research participants at the airport of Bissau, as usual. Together with personal gifts wrapped with the same adhesive tape used to parcel up their regular travelling packages, I carried several food parcels to be collected and distributed at the airport of Lisbon by their relatives. As soon as I reached the arrivals terminal in Lisbon, I delivered the parcels and continued to spend time with old acquaintances and new contacts brought from Guinea-Bissau, benefiting from the status I had gained from having ‘experienced the land’ in Guinean soil. During the final three months, I explored further spaces of food exchange and consumption in Lisbon. The airport, in particular, unveiled important ways in which food experiences are materialized in spaces of intimate performative practice, as it had in Bissau, while being simultaneously linked to wider relationships.

The material in this book results from observations, interviews, conversations and participation in the lives of Guinean women and men of different ethnic origins and age groups for the course of a year, in Guinea-Bissau and in Portugal. In line with the technique of ‘following the thing’ (Marcus 1995) that I adopted in this multi-sited ethnography, it was tracing Guinean food that led me to the people involved in making it circulate, from producers to buyers, sellers, intermediaries and consumers in the two countries.

Overview of the Book

The chapters in this book follow Guinean food from its production sites in Guinea-Bissau (chapter 1), to adapted practices of food preparation and consumption on the destination side of the migration (chapter 2), food-related memories, imaginaries and aspirations across borders (chapter 3), transnational food gifts, reciprocities and trade (chapter 4), and food livelihoods and economic spaces in the two countries (chapter 5). Together, they merge the two ends of a migratory landscape with the various stages of the circulation of food, using multi-sited ethnography and a phenomenological-oriented approach to transnationalism based on the experience of food, as well as its meanings and ensuing relationships.

Chapter 1 presents a critical analysis of uses, meanings and politics of land in Guinea-Bissau, contextualizing it within the debate and conceptualization of land in Africa more generally, and in West Africa in particular. It discusses the relationship between land’s physical and social uses, including entwined dynamics of food production and forms of social organization. It also looks at how these dynamics are influenced by fluid notions of territory and ethnicity, historical processes of agricultural policies, and gendered practices of resource access and use, where the role of urban women farmers and food sellers within the transnational food chain is given particular attention. From the urban smallholdings where fresh vegetables are harvested to send across

borders to Portugal, the chapter moves on to discuss Guinean fruit orchards and woodland as spaces of production, where fruits and tree parts, as well as animal-based medicinal products that also circulate transnationally, originate. Here I analyse the particular land connections that these products embody, their ensuing uses and meanings, and the different roles played those who, from Guinea-Bissau, enable their circulation to spaces of migration.

Chapter 2 moves on to the migration end and looks at the embodied experience of food preparation and consumption with a focus on the materiality and spirituality of food. While analysing the necessary adaptations resulting from migration, this chapter explores meanings and experiences of food in relation to health, risk and ritual. It also brings back ideas of land, ethnicity and territory and their association with specific foods, plants and related practices, and explores these based on Abarca's (2004) concept of 'originality' rather than from a western concern with 'authenticity'. It shows how Guinean migrants adapt their food-related experiences and transform that adaptation into a new lived reality, hence not necessarily questioning or lamenting a loss of the food's authentic essence drawn from the origin land but, instead, responding creatively to the need to make sense of their transnational social world. Their new created reality hence continues to offer them protection in an unfamiliar environment, even when it includes the absence of certain foodstuffs. This chapter also reveals the roles played by those who, from both sides, help to maintain that protection. The celebration of Ramadan amongst Guinean Muslims in the two countries is used here as a transnational stage for exploring how the preparation and consumption of a special dish – *moni* – with which the fast is broken, helps to connect migrants and their kin across spaces. Following on from this example, the spiritual realm of food, resulting from the substance it shares with the spirits of the ancestors, is also investigated, drawing on the example of kola nuts and their ritual and healing properties, as well as on the local concept of *djanfa* – a harmful practice that the land and related objects and practices can protect against. I explore *djanfa* with a phenomenological approach to the wider critical debate on African witchcraft, building on Nakamura and Pels's (2014) emphasis on the material qualities of what is often described, from a western perspective, as the invisible realm. Here I also introduce amulets as objects whose materiality, similar to food, draws on the land's substance to provide wellbeing to migrants. The chapter therefore shows how food and other objects in Guineans' cosmology, centred around the notion of land, mediate between spiritual power – and, often in an entwined manner, religious power – and human agency in order to help migrants and their home-based kin make sense of their world. It ultimately reveals how, in this mediation process, migrants' lifeworlds are created through the lived experience of those materials and their changes.

Chapter 3 uncovers the ways in which the past, present and future of Guineans' transnational lifeworlds are brought together through past

memories and future projects made in everyday practices of exchange, consumption and preparation of food in street markets and other spaces of socialization in the two countries. Drawing on the temporal dimension of people's lifeworlds, it addresses memories, imaginaries and aspirations of migration and return as spatial and material practices triggered by historical consciousness, and their embeddedness in complex juxtapositions of possibilities and risks. By analysing the influence of food in forming people's understandings of their past and their projects for the future, this chapter also reveals new ways through which Guinean migrants experience and reinterpret the idioms of development, cosmopolitanism, gossip, jealousy and *djanfa* through food-related practices, and contextualizes this case study within a wider debate on African historical subjectivities, colonialism, modernity and mobility.

Chapter 4 focuses on practices of food exchange and engages with the critical anthropological debates on gifts and commodities, the social value of food and the morality of trade. Within these debates, it adds a perspective that has so far been missing in studies of African economic anthropology and migration: one that combines both home and host societies when exploring the integration of local economies in a different socioeconomic space. The chapter looks at the obligations, reciprocity, debt, credit and trust that are part of West African structures of kinship and exchange relationships, centring the analysis on food and extending it across borders. Transnational agencies (*ajensia*) stage some of the stories narrated in this chapter, given the important role they play in facilitating such processes between the two countries and in reducing the distance that, in other contexts, would lead to change in the social value of the material (cf. Appadurai 1986). Those stories demonstrate that, for Guinean migrants and their home-based relations, transnational exchange practices do not always distinguish the role of food as gift or commodity, and that, whilst requiring adaptations, the social value of food does not automatically change with the process of exchange across borders. Here I draw on the debate that reconciles the economic, profit-oriented value of objects and their circulation with the reciprocity, sociability and spontaneity that are embedded in food and its exchange. The chapter also introduces new and more impersonal intermediary roles that are created in the transnational exchange. These new roles, which go beyond networks of co-ethnics and kin and are taken mostly by Chinese migrants in Portugal, do not necessarily change the social value of the food exchanged, nor do they lead to increased alienation between production and consumption. Likewise, the introduction of new spaces and new actors does not result in the loss of community-level forms of organization, even if 'impersonal' rather than 'community' forms of exchange are sometimes preferred in people's negotiations as food traders or customers, in order to avoid the conflict and tension that might result from community obligations. The chapter therefore shows that the juxtaposition of the community and

impersonal domains of the exchange, which other economic anthropology models have proposed (Gudeman 2001), can be applied in a transnational context. It also shows that Guinean food consumers abroad maintain their connection with production, not just by adapting practices of food preparation and consumption, as explored in the previous chapters, but also through the intimate relationships that are kept between them and all other actors involved in the process of exchange in two countries, enabling lifeworlds to remain connected despite geographical distance.

Finally, chapter 5 examines the transnational trade of food as a livelihood strategy for migrants and their kin at home. It draws on a critical analysis of the informal economy in both ends of the exchange, and looks at how wider structural processes at home and abroad, such as a lack of opportunities in the regular labour market and the financial crisis in Europe, have affected migrant food traders' economic responses and strategies. The chapter introduces new spaces and actors in these activities, such as airports and the courier system with its carriers, airport staff and custom authorities, and reveals people's own wish to remain engaged with the state on some occasions, and disengaged in others (Lourenço-Lindell 2004), in what Meagher (2013) defined as formal-informal linkages. The food markets of Rossio and Damaia in Lisbon, and Caracol in Bissau, which also illustrate these linkages, are brought back to the analysis in this chapter. With the phenomenological-oriented approach on which this book is centred, the physical market place and the market principle (Applbaum 2005) are examined here in combination, by exploring the ways in which the materiality of those spaces of exchange, including the relationships that are created in the spatial environment, influence the process of exchange. While the chapter shows that the increased demand for homeland food, resulting from the transnational element introduced in food trade activities, creates an economic opportunity for some, it also warns against celebrating any form of income growth through these self-organized channels, as neo-liberal assumptions tend to do. Rather, these channels are mainly part of people's strategy for survival in a context of uncertainty. The chapter ends with the story of Wilson and his mother, Teresa: a narrative illustrative of the creativity and agency in livelihood strategies, which is simultaneously associated with income needs and the need for remaining connected to the land. This connection is experienced through the exchange and the relationships it generates by sharing smells, tastes and memories during Wilson's itinerant food selling business in the periphery of Lisbon.

In the concluding chapter, I position the findings of this ethnography in relation to the relatively scarce literature on food and migration in general and, in particular, within anthropology and social science research on Africa. I then suggest a 'phenomenology of food and migration' as a theoretical approach to the study of such an intricate and rich relationship. While food production, distribution and consumption have been investigated with a grounded historical approach to the relationship between material practices, power and meaning

since the work of pioneers like Mintz (1985) and Goody (1982), the combination of perceptions and experiences of food, when analysed at a transnational level, tends to focus only on the consumption end. In this book, instead, I explore meaning with a focus on the material – the food’s substance – and the spaces that, in the two countries, embody the experience of that meaning at the various stages of the food chain. I therefore conclude that although geographical distance affects people’s economic and social lives when these are set around the circulation of food, this circulation and the varied roles it creates for its participants also enables an intimate connection to be kept between both ends of the chain. While cautioning against the risks of applying a theoretical approach with western philosophical orientation to the study of Africa, the conclusion ends with a note on the possibility that other disciplines and study areas beyond anthropology (such as health and nutrition studies or development economics, which share a concern with food and migration in Africa) also make use of this guiding approach.

Notes

1. Interest in the field has resulted in a special issue of *Food, Culture & Society* edited by Harry West in 2011 (West 2011).
2. As the people of Guinea-Bissau do, I will refer to them and to their objects (including food) as Guineans or Guinean throughout the book. It should not be confused with the people and things of neighbouring Guinea-Conakry (République de Guinée).
3. Although the precise name of the square is Largo São Domingos, Guineans commonly refer to it as Rossio – the larger downtown area where Largo São Domingos is situated. I will use their own designation of the place and refer to it as Rossio throughout this book. Public awareness of Rossio as a space of socialization and exchange for Guineans is widespread and documented, hence the use of its real nomenclature in this book. However, all participants’ names (except those of my hosts in Bissau), as well as any information that might identify them, have been changed for anonymization purposes.
4. Lifeworld is a phenomenological notion that has had multiple philosophical definitions. Here I refer to Heidegger’s conceptualization of human beings’ inseparability from the world in which they live and exist, and from the things that surround them in everyday life (Heidegger 1962).
5. Drawing on his fieldwork from the 1990s, Machado (2002) referred to transnational food trade between Portugal and Guinea-Bissau as an incipient activity with a possible tendency to grow.
6. Vertovec (2009) offers a review of studies of ‘transnational habitus’.
7. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) provide a list of such critiques – mostly associated with the limited room it leaves for agency and social change – and their responses.
8. The term foodways has been used in the literature usually in relation to social and cultural culinary practices. In this book, when I use the term I am referring not only to practices of food preparation and consumption, but also of production and exchange.

9. In studies of food and migration, an exception is Abbots' (2008) work on the relationship between Ecuadorian families separated by migration to New York, through fieldwork conducted in Ecuador. Another exception is Gaibazzi's (2015) study of young Soninke men who remain in a Gambian village with a long history of migration.
10. In 2008, a special issue of *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* was dedicated to transnational linkages and multi-sited lives between Africa and Europe (Grillo and Mazzucato 2008).
11. Part of the criticism of Marcus's programme focused on its seductive character, which did not allow the first generation of multi-sited ethnographers much room for self-critical reflection. This recognition motivated a collection of essays edited by Falzon (2009), where the challenges and thrusts of multi-sited fieldwork are discussed by several scholars, including Marcus himself.
12. The controversy surrounding these designations also originates from different colonial traditions. The Fula, for example, are also known as Fulbe, Fulani or Peul, according to English or French nomenclature, just like the Mandinga are named Malinke, Mandinka or Mandigo. In this book, I will follow the most common designations used by Guineans themselves, which mainly follow Portuguese terminology.
13. In addition to these ethnic groups, who play the major roles in contemporary Guinean migration to Portugal, the Balanta are also worth mentioning. They outnumber all other groups, representing about 30 per cent of the population in Guinea-Bissau, and occupy a corridor between the Muslims of the hinterland and the people of the coast.
14. Independence was recognized by Portugal only one year later.
15. The civil war was followed by a series of political conflicts, with the assassination of the president and head of the armed forces in 2009, four coup d'états, and a constitutional crisis after the last elections of early 2020.
16. African Party for the Liberation of Guinea and Cape Verde.
17. Portuguese, despite being the official language of Guinea-Bissau, is used mainly in governmental domains and amongst the elite of Bissau but is not spoken by the majority of the population. The discrepancy between language use and education (which is still conducted in Portuguese, despite the poor command of the Portuguese language by many educators and its lack of use in everyday life) is what many see as the reason for Guinea-Bissau's low ranking in universalized primary education, when compared with other West African countries. Data from 2010 indicated a primary schooling rate of 67.4 per cent at national level, and 23.5 per cent in secondary education. Amongst adults, illiteracy rates were estimated at 63.4 per cent in 2000 (MEPIR 2011; PNUD 2006). Most of the older participants at both ends of my ethnography were illiterate or had only received incomplete primary education, although the youngest had often completed secondary education.
18. Fieldwork in Portugal was therefore conducted in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, which includes the city of Lisbon and its outskirts.
19. The building where the association operated until 1993 is now the Palace of Independence (Figure 5.3).
20. This street is located in a specific neighbourhood of the parish of Damaia, whose name is omitted in this book as per the participants' request. It will therefore be referred to as Damaia.