

editorial:

from a food history perspective (Ulrich Schwarz-Gräber, Peter Eigner)

‘Historians of food usually find it necessary to explain the significance of their subject.’ⁱ

The contributions of this volume address a wide spectrum of different subjects: they range from early modern citizen hospitals, to nineteenth-century urban population growth, to repercussions of economic crises, to the labour movement, to post-war society, to social labour and ecological sustainability. The connection between the contributions is their food (history) perspective.

Food history is not (yet) a clearly defined field.ⁱⁱ As a research object, food mixes up the traditional spectrum of the social world. In this field the differentiation of society into different sections risks evaporating. Food as a research object produces a history without adjectives, as Massimo Montanari once put it.ⁱⁱⁱ Variables of human life and coexistence that are usually examined separately from one another, from a food history perspective, appear to be linked.^{iv} Ecology, economy, institutions, politics and religion come together and form a coherent set of issues.^v Extensive historical trends are linked with hunger, deprivation or indulgence of single individuals. Social formations and its hierarchies, forms of power, rituals, symbolic orders are expressed by physiological states.^{vi} This list raises the question of whether, or to what extent, the expanded scope of food history – one might get the sense of a *histoire totale* here^{vii} – is merely a sociology of science phenomenon that occurs with newly emerging research field. Or does the nature of the research object food actually bring about a genuinely new way of thinking history?^{viii} Indicative of the latter are the ‘imperative norm of [...] not eating means dying’,^{ix} the necessity of being available on a daily basis and the integral role of food for the ‘metabolism of society’.^x

For quite a while, historical research in food issues has experienced an ongoing boom.^{xi} It is by now well established in the academic arena, particularly in the French and Anglo-American one, which is shown by the publication of several specialist journals^{xii} and some handbooks.^{xiii} In the German-speaking historiography this trend is much less pronounced.^{xiv} German-speaking food history was, and still is, tied to individual researchers rather than research institutions.^{xv} The fact that English-speaking food history is the centre of this trend is also due to the rapid development of food

studies, an academic programme that is marked by crossing disciplinary boundaries.^{xvi} Particularly research studies by anthropologists and sociologists have resonated with other disciplines.^{xvii}

Moreover, inherent characteristics of the research object food feed into researchers' "insatiability".^{xviii} As a 'social total phenomenon',^{xix} food is in opposition to the analytical decomposition of social reality into different sections, the differentiation between society and individual, the clear-cut distinction between man and environment, the physical world and the semiotic system, between constant development and the recurrent day. In this sense, Arjun Appadurai has aptly referred to food as a 'highly condensed social fact.'^{xx}

Therefore, the food history perspective involves facing the challenges of this compression and complex combination: issues of food weave together social inequalities, political power relations, formation of cultural meaning, gender relations and individual bodies.^{xxi} Food history connects mega trends with physiological living conditions and the everyday life of individuals.^{xxii} Food as a research object has a high level of "reactivity" towards all sections of societal and individual life.

Food studies often use the expression of 'food as a lens' or 'food as a prism', through which certain issues and social circumstances can be seen.^{xxiii} However, while this optical metaphor seems to describe the food history perspective very fittingly, it also has serious shortcomings. It easily reveals the paradoxical starting position of every historical research that first must construct its subjects 'as legitimate and coherent objects of knowledge' that it 'claims to discover'.^{xxiv} Referring to 'lenses' or 'prisms' does not contradict this; however, it implies a distance between researcher and research object and thus conceals the constructed nature of research. Therefore, a food history perspective does not only mean looking through a 'lens' that helps focus on certain issues and social circumstances. It also includes placing the research object into the context of food history.^{xxv} And this "placing" impacts the research object. It does not help distinguish the research object from others, rather rendering it frazzled and resulting in discovering connections and interdependencies.^{xxvi} Thus, the food history perspective is also explorative – food history 'always transcends itself to other fields and topics of history.'^{xxvii}

The questions and topics of the contributions to this volume are not necessarily new. New, however, are their perspective and context and thus the attempt to discover connections and entanglements. In his chapter, Martin Bruegel weaves together the history of the organization of kitchen staff in Parisienne restaurants in the 1920s with issues including health, professional hazards, discourses on hygiene, consumer protection and state regulations. Proceeding from the backstage of the world famous Paris restaurant trade, the working conditions of kitchen staff, Bruegel describes a historical scenario where the fight for better working conditions by referring to national culinary reputation, tourism and consumer protection proved an effective means to attract public attention and against the government's idleness. In doing so, Bruegel tells the story of the Paris labour movement beyond classical labour movement topics such as standard of living, working hours and wages: he demonstrates how, in their fight for better working conditions, chefs skilfully tapped into the power of discourses and fears about food to counterbalance asymmetries between their position and that of employers and government.

In her contribution, Sarah Pichlkastner compares the food situation of early modern public hospitals, experimenting with the controlled use of an anachronism.^{xxviii} By creating the categories availability, access, usage and stability from present indicators of food security according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, she analyses the handling of food and the food situation in these welfare publications, which were also economic enterprises. The complex concept of food security, which focuses on connections between production, procurement, distribution and consumption allows us to better describe the complex nature of public hospitals.

Both Jonas Albrecht and Maximilian Martsch, in their contributions, work from a food history perspective in order to paint a more differentiated picture of societal and economic transformations over the course of the nineteenth century. Jonas Albrecht's study on changes in bread supply in Vienna during the pre-March period joins the ranks of recent research that concerns itself with supply structures of rapidly growing nineteenth-century metropolises.^{xxix} The contribution centres on repercussions of urbanization and political regulations on the bakery trade. It describes the differentiation of two different supply structures until the mid-century: that of guild bakers and that of country bakers. The former were subject to strict regulations, the

latter operated in a more liberal production environment. By situating these two supply structures in urbanistic terms, Albrecht can demonstrate how they not only coexisted but also complemented one another. Although they belonged to opposite sides of the existing economic political spectrum, they had different functions within the context of bread supply for the growing population of the city.

With a similar focus on the growing metropolis Vienna, Maximilian Martsch examines the founders' crisis of the mid-1870s from a food history perspective. He follows Roman Sandgruber's assumption of the susceptibility of food to economic cycles, which became particularly apparent when 'in times of crisis meat rapidly vanished from the menu'.^{xxx} Thus Martsch is looking for indications that the founders' crisis influenced meat consumption. According to the analysis of contemporary statistics and reports it appears that the crisis had no bearings on the development of meat consumption in the Vienna metropolitan area. Alongside consumption, the chapter is concerned with the market and supply system of the city as well as transregional trade and production chains in order to examine these elements of the food chains for indications of the crisis. Martsch can demonstrate that neither long-term transformations in retail and the organization of the market, nor changes in transregional trade and production chains showed any signs of a direct impact of the economic crisis. Except for the specific question of how to place the crisis into context, this study on meat shows that the food history perspective can render the interaction of different sectors of the economy accessible to analysis and connect local and transregional trends.

Bernhard Bachinger presents a research report on social conditions in the Soviet occupation zone in Austria during the immediate post-war period, which are still comparatively scarcely investigated. He develops research approaches that focus on food supply, the key social topic of the time, in order to relate political zones of conflict to the actions of provisional authorities and people's strategies for survival. His in-depth overview, with an emphasis on people and referred to as "displaced persons", not only points towards research desiderata but also suggests that a precise empirical reconstruction of the tumultuous and violent conditions, particularly in respect to informal and partly illegal means of procuring food, can provide an important contribution to the problematic politics of history of post-war Austria.

In her contribution, the sociologist Veronika Reidinger leads us into the present, addressing meeting points between food studies informed by social and cultural science and social sciences. A systematic connection of these two areas has yet to be developed. Reidinger identifies research desiderata and emphasizes that the connection of both approaches can provide a mutually reflective potential. Her theoretically informed ‘survey’ through different eating situations of the daily relationship routine (of social work) is concerned with practices of inclusion and exclusion and with the impacts of powerful health and body discourses. She also touches upon institutional shifts in the recent past, which establish compassion-economic supply structures in the field of welfare state arrangements and often consolidate inequality. The contribution reveals power relations that permeate the arena of meals under the care of social work and advocates making food the subject of professional reflection within social work. In doing so, Reidinger aims to counter the risk of carelessly perpetuating power effects mediated through food.

The artists Honey & Bunny, Martin Hablesreiter and Sonja Stummerer, describe their reflections on our current food culture.^{xxxii} Their essay refers to the exhibition *Market of Externalities*, an Arts & Science Project, which they organized in the Museo Nazionale della Scienza Leonardo da Vinci in Milan in 2017. They explore to what extent sensually tangible Eat Art, which addresses our food culture and its scientifically proven global political and ecological consequences, can create irritations and thus initiate reflection and change.

‘Food causes a stir, in every respect’, write Martin Hablesreiter and Sonja Stummerer. In a similar vein, Warren Belasco, in his description of the field of food history, asks: what could be more personal and, at the same time, more political than the question of where our food comes from.^{xxxiii} In the editorial of the first issue of the journal *Food & History*, Massimo Montanari argues that the renewed interest of historians in food is fuelled not only by their curiosity but also by pressing questions of our present in respect to food.^{xxxiii} Indeed, our society seems to increasingly look beyond its own nose as far as food and eating are concerned. The extreme economic inequality in our society, the use of limited resources and insecurities regarding one’s own lifestyle within an individualized consumer society are often discussed in the context of our current food system and eating diet practices.^{xxxiv}

This is the first issue of the *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, which explicitly focuses on food history. However, by transcending disciplinary boundaries, emphasizing a strong reference of historiography to the present time as well as examining power relations that reach far into everyday working and living conditions, the recent food history is an excellent fit for the journal and its programme, as expressed in 1990.^{xxxv}

ⁱ John C. Super, 'Food and History', *Journal of Social History* 36/1 (2002), 165–78, here 165; the authors are grateful for Oliver Kühschelm and Maximilian Martsch's critical comments on the first draft of this article.

ⁱⁱ Cf. Jeffrey M. Pilcher, 'Introduction', in id. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Food History* (Oxford/New York, 2012), xvii–xxiv, here xx; Priscilla Ferguson, 'Eating Orders: Markets, Menus, and Meals', *The Journal of Modern History* 77/3 (2005), 679–700, here 699.

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Studying the subject food has contributed to forging a new methodological tool for a history without adjectives', Massimo Montanari, 'Editorial. A New History Journal. A Journal about New History?', *Food and History* 1/1 (2003), 14–17, here 16.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, 16.

^v *Ibid.*, 15; see also Warren Belasco, 'Food History as a Field', in Paul Freedman/Joyce E. Chaplin/Ken Albala (eds.), *Food in Time and Place* (Berkeley, 2014), 1–17, here 6; Katarzyna J. Cwiertka/Megan J. Elias/ Jeffrey M. Pilcher, 'Editorial Introduction: Writing Global Food History', *Global Food History* 1/1 (2015), 5–12, here 7; Jeffrey M. Pilcher, 'The Embodied Imagination in Recent Writings on Food History', *American Historical Review* 121/3 (2016), 861–887, here 861.

^{vi} Montanari, 'Editorial', 15; see also Belasco, 'Food History', 6; Pilcher, 'Imagination', 861.

^{vii} Cf. Reinhard Koselleck, 'Social History and Conceptual History', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 2/3 (1989), 308–325, here 310.

^{viii} Montanari, 'Editorial', 16.

^{ix} Sidney W. Mintz, 'Zur Beziehung zwischen Ernährung und Macht', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 35/1 (1994), 61–72, here 71.

^x Cf. Marina Fischer-Kowalski/Andreas Mayer/Anke Schaffartzik, 'Zur sozialmetabolischen Transformation von Gesellschaft und Soziologie', in Matthias Groß (ed.), *Handbuch Umweltsoziologie* (Wiesbaden, 2011), 97–120.

^{xi} Kyri W. Clafin, 'A Decade of Rapid Growth in Food History and Food Studies Research in the US', *Food and History* 10/2 (2012), 215–22; Andrew Smith/Jeffrey M. Pilcher/Darra Goldstein, 'Food Scholarship and Food Writing', *Food, Culture & Society* 13/3 (2015), 319–329, here 321; Cwiertka/Elias/Pilcher, 'Editorial', 5–12; Jan-Friedrich Missfelder/Katharina Bohmer/Peter Burschel, 'Editorial. Esskulturen', *Historische Anthropologie* 25/1 (2019), 5–10.

^{xii} *Food & Foodways. Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment* (founded in 1985); *Food, Culture & Society. An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* (founded in 1996); *Gastronomica. The Journal of Critical Food Studies* (founded in 2001); *Food & History* (founded in 2003); *Global Food History* (founded in 2015).

^{xiii} Carol Helstosky (ed.), *The Routledge History of Food* (London/New York, 2015); Paul Freedman/Joyce E. Chaplin/Ken Albala (eds.), *Food in Time and Place. The American Historical Association Companion to Food History* (Berkeley, 2014); Anne Murcott/Warren Belasco/Peter Jackson (eds.), *The Handbook of Food Research* (London/New York, 2013); Pilcher (ed.), *Handbook*; Kyri W. Clafin/Peter Scholliers (eds.), *Writing Food History. A Global Perspective* (London/New York, 2012); Warren Belasco, *Food: The Key Concepts* (Oxford/New York, 2008).

^{xiv} Cf. Missfelder/Bohmer/Burschel, 'Esskulturen', 7.

^{xv} Cf. among others Hans Jürgen Teuteberg/Günter Wiegelmann, *Der Wandel der Nahrungsgewohnheiten unter dem Einfluß der Industrialisierung* (Göttingen, 1972); Roman Sandgruber, *Die Anfänge der Konsumgesellschaft. Konsumgüterverbrauch, Lebensstandard und Alltagskultur in Österreich im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1982); Alf Lütke,

‘Hungererfahrungen, Essens-“Genuß” und Politik bei Fabrikarbeiterinnen und Arbeiterfrauen. Beispiele aus dem rheinisch-westfälischen Industriegebiet, 1910–1940’, *Beiträge zur historischen Sozialkunde* 15/2 (1985), 60–6; Jakob Tanner, *Fabrikmahlzeit: Ernährungswissenschaft, Industriearbeit und Volksernährung in der Schweiz, 1890–1950* (Zurich, 1999); Eva Barlösius, *Soziologie des Essens. Eine sozial- und kulturwissenschaftliche Einführung in die Ernährungsforschung* (Weinheim/Munich, 1999); Gunther Hirschfelder, *Europäische Esskultur: Eine Geschichte der Ernährung von der Steinzeit bis Heute* (Frankfurt/Main, 2001); Ulrike Thoms, *Anstaltskost im Rationalisierungsprozeß: Die Ernährung in Krankenhäusern und Gefängnissen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 2005); Maren Möhring, *Fremdes Essen: Die Geschichte der ausländischen Gastronomie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Munich, 2012); Uwe Spiekermann, *Künstliche Kost: Ernährung in Deutschland, 1840 bis heute* (Göttingen, 2018).

^{xvi} Cf. Simone Cinotto/Darra Goldstein/Melissa L. Caldwell, ‘The Past, Present, and Future of Food Studies: An Oral History with *Gastronomica*’s Editors’, *Gastronomica* 19/2 (2019), 82–6; Gilles Fumey/Peter A. Jackson/Pierre Raffard, ‘Interview with Peter Scholliers, Amy Trubek and Richard Wilk: Surveying the Food Studies Field’, *Anthropology of Food* 11 (2016), 22–4, <https://journals.openedition.org/aof/8110> (16 October 2019); Ferguson, ‘Eating’. The interdisciplinary approach has by now reached the German-speaking research landscape, see for example Ulrich Ermann/Ernst Langthaler/Marianne Penker/Markus Schermer, *Agro-Food Studies: Eine Einführung* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna, 2018). The 1989 International Commission for Research into European Food History (ICREFH) demonstrated the productive cooperation between history and ethnology regarding food and diet, cf. Hans Teuteberg (ed.), *European Food History: A Research Review* (Leicester, 1992).

^{xvii} Cf. Smith/Pilcher/Goldstein, ‘Food’, 323; Belasco, ‘Food History’, 5; Kyri W. Claflin/Peter Scholliers, Introduction. Surveying Global Food Historiography, in: dies. (Hg.), *Writing Food History. A Global Perspective*, London/New York 2012, 1–8, 4f.

^{xviii} Montanari, ‘Editorial’, 16; see on the characteristics of the research object food: Ferguson, ‘Eating’, 680.

^{xix} Cf. Marcel Mauss, *Die Gabe: Form und Funktion des Austauschs in archaischen Gesellschaften* (Frankfurt/Main, 1990), 176; Hans-Jürgen Teuteberg, ‘Homo edens. Reflexionen zu einer neuen Kulturgeschichte des Essens’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 265/1 (1997), 1–28, here 7.

^{xx} Arjun Appadurai, ‘Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia’, *American Ethnologist* 8/3 (1981), 494–511, here 494.

^{xxi} Cf. Pilcher, ‘Imagination’, 861; Tanner, *Fabrikmahlzeit*, 15; Fabio Parasecoli, ‘Eating Power: Food, Culture, and Politics’, in Tomas Marttila (ed.), *Discourse, Culture and Organization: Inquiries into Relational Structures of Power* (Cham, 2018), 129–53, here 130.

^{xxii} Bertram M. Gordon/Erica J. Peters, ‘Introduction’, *French Historical Studies* 38/2 (2015), 185–92, here 189.

^{xxiii} Cf. <https://gradfoodstudies.org/future-of-food-studies-2017-cfp/> (16 October 2019); Cinotto/Goldstein/ Caldwell, ‘Past’; Peter A. Coclanis, ‘Field Notes: Agricultural History’s New Plot’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 50/2 (2019), 187–212, here 190; Missfelder/Bohmer/Burschel, ‘Esskulturen’, 6; Gunther Hirschfelder/Sarah Thanner (eds.), *Prekäre Lebenswelten im Prisma der Ernährung*, (Münster, 2019); Catarina Passidomo, ‘Going “Beyond Food”: Confronting Structures of Injustice in Food Systems Research and Praxis’, *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 3/4 (2013), 89–93, here 92; Peter Jackson, ‘Introduction: Food as a Lens on Family Life’, in id. (ed.), *Changing Families, Changing Food* (London, 2009), 1–16; see for a critical view on this Maria Kuczera, ‘More Than a Lens: Reflections on Eating, Materiality, and Practice’, *Graduate Journal of Food Studies* 5/2 (2018), <https://gradfoodstudies.org/2018/12/11/is-food-more-than-a-lens/> (16 October 2019).

^{xxiv} Joan W. Scott, ‘Nach der Geschichte?’, *Werkstatt Geschichte* 17 (1997), 5–23, here 5.

^{xxv} Cf. Edward P. Thompson, ‘Anthropology and the Discipline of Historical Context’, *Midland History* 1/3 (2013), 41–55, here 45; Walter Benjamin, ‘Über den Begriff der Geschichte [1940]’, in id., *Illuminationen: Ausgewählte Schriften 1*, (Frankfurt/Main, 1977), 258; Jörn Rüsen, *Historik: Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna, 2013), 72.

^{xxvi} Cf. Nancy Jenkins, ‘The History of Food Gains a Scholarly Pedigree’, *The New York Times*, 30 May 1984, Section C, 1; Dagmar Vinz, ‘Nachhaltiger Konsum und Ernährung. Private KonsumentInnen zwischen Abhängigkeit und Empowerment’, *PROKLA. Zeitschrift für kritische Sozialwissenschaft* 35/1 (2005), 15–33, here 16.

^{xxvii} Missfelder/Bohmer/Burschel, 'Esskulturen', 6; cf. Ferguson, 'Eating', 680, 700.

^{xxviii} Cf. Caroline Arni, 'Zeitlichkeit, Anachronismus und Anachronien. Gegenwart und Transformationen der Geschlechtergeschichte aus geschichtstheoretischer Perspektive', *L'Homme* 18/2 (2012), 53–76, here 59; Nicole Loraux, 'Eloge de l'anachronisme en histoire', *Le genre humain* 27 (1993), 23–38, here 28.

^{xxix} Cf. for example Gergely Baics, *Feeding Gotham: The Political Economy and Geography of Food in New York, 1790–1860* (Princeton, 2016); Gergely Baics/Mikkel Thelle, 'Introduction: meat and the nineteenth-century city', *Urban History* 45/2 (2017), 184–92.

^{xxx} Sandgruber, *Anfänge*, 165.

^{xxxi} <https://www.honeyandbunny.com> (16 October 2019).

^{xxxii} Belasco, 'Food History', 4.

^{xxxiii} Montanari, 'Editorial', 14; cf. Claflin, 'Decade', 217f.; Daniel Bender/Jeffrey M. Pilcher, 'Editors' Introduction: Radicalizing the History of Food', *Radical History Review* 2011/110 (2011), 1–7, here 1.

^{xxxiv} Linking food with social questions is no specific phenomenon of our present time. It seems that at least from the late nineteenth century there was a connection between crises of the regulation of capitalistic accumulation regimes and debates on the (global) food system, cf. Harriet Friedmann, 'From Colonialism to Green Capitalism: Social Movements and Emergence of Food Regimes', in Frederick H. Buttel/Philip McMichael (eds.), *Research in Rural Sociology and Development* (Amsterdam, 2006), 227–64, here 229; Hugh Campbell/ Jane Dixon, 'Introduction to the Special Symposium: Reflecting on Twenty Years of the Food Regimes Approach in Agri-Food Studies', *Agriculture and Human Values* 26/4 (2009), 261–5, here 264; Nikolas Rose, 'The Politics of Life Itself', *Theory, Culture & Society* 18/6 (2001), 1–30, here 3.

^{xxxv} The editors, 'Editorial: Geschichte neu schreiben', *Österreichischen Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 1/1 (1990), 5–8. With this special issue on food history the OeZG follows a trend. Recently, several journals that usually do not explicitly concern themselves with this topic have published special issues to food historical questions, for example the special issues of the *French Historical Studies*, 38/2 (2015), *Historische Anthropologie* 25/1 (2019) and a supplement issue of the *Historischen Zeitschrift* N.F. 73 (2018).