

Research Note

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..Twenty-five Years
of Studying *un*
Phénomène Social
Total

FOOD HISTORY WRITING ON EUROPE IN THE
NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES



ABSTRACT

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This survey focuses on food history writing on nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe, by using a selection of book introductions, colloquium papers, critical reviews, and papers from specialized journals. It provides a chronological survey that starts in the 1980s, and ends with recent trends. It explores tensions between socioeconomic traditions and ethnological approaches, looks for the cultural, linguistic and other turns, and puts forward as a promising field of study the integrated approach of the food chain.

Food,
Culture
&
Society

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Today, food historians no longer seek to legitimate their scientific interest. This is new. Only some years ago, many food historians felt the need to start their papers and books by apologizing for their subject, after which they continued by listing the very diverse but ever-essential and fascinating functions, roles, meanings, and usages related to food (Belasco 1999: 27). Emma Spary (2005: 763) has even perceived a “disdain for the subject.” But in general, nowadays “Food studies’ has arrived” as Priscilla Ferguson (2005: 679) puts it in the opening sentence of her comprehensive review article. She not only accepts the fact that food studies have multiplied, but also that the discipline has become independent from other fields, such as agricultural history, or themes, such as the standard of living. Four years ago Warren Belasco (2002: 6) still doubted the latter.

This recent self-confident and almost triumphant attitude of most food historians should not be surprising. I can think of no other field in humanities that has recently met with such large academic and general interest and approval. With regard to the latter, it suffices to refer to the worldwide cascade of books, TV programs, internet sites, exhibitions, fairs and museums meant for both large and expert publics. In the academic realm, colloquia, workshops, symposia and master degrees dealing with food history are organized on a regular basis. This interest appears through the publication of numerous books and articles, while extensive review articles surface in general history journals. Today, this field has canonical texts (Dalby 2003, referring to the *Word History of Food*) and guiding authors (Ferguson 2005: 692, alluding to Flandrin and Montanari’s *Food: A Culinary History*).

At least two questions may be asked with regard to this success: how should it be explained, and what is its significance in terms of themes, approaches, sources, methodologies, theories and findings? Here, I will deal with the second question: I wish to investigate whether this shift of interest is confined to scale enlargement, or whether there is something *more* going on. I will therefore survey the food historiography of the past twenty-five

years with an emphasis on Europe since about 1800.¹ I use review articles and book introductions, and consider the output of specialized colloquia and journals. The scope is undeniably limited and haphazard, but there is much to learn about themes, approaches, theories and methodologies that mirror other food history writing, and indeed, broader research in social sciences.

The wide range of disciplines is undoubtedly a trait of food history. Alongside historians, there are sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, philosophers, economists, linguists, archeologists and communication scientists who deal with food history. Many historians consider this an advantage and do not care about disciplines. In practice, however, this multidisciplinary often leads to friction, in that traditions, methods, aims and even language differ greatly. This friction is the guiding thread of my search for new themes, approaches, theories and methodologies. I wish to trace its nature and importance, and, particularly, the relationship between the disciplines.

Economic History and Ethnology: The 1980s

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The volume that emerged from the first colloquium of the International Commission for Research into European Food History (ICREFH), May 1989, provides a review of the literature on European food in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Teuteberg 1992). A tension between socioeconomic historians and ethnologists surfaces in its introduction, and also appears in the country reports, as socioeconomic history is largely prevalent. The country chapters deal with prices, shortages, per capita consumption or family spending far more than with cooking, eating, prestige and meals. For example, the Hungarian ethnologist Eszter Kisbàn needed five and a half pages for social and economic history, but less than half that for ethnology (Kisbàn 1992). This bias toward socioeconomic history also appears in Teuteberg's survey of sources that are most commonly referred to in the volume: statistics, budget enquiries, food surveys, calorie intake estimations and other quantifiable data. Teuteberg concludes, "So far we can say that historic research has primarily confined itself to the food supply, which has been rashly equated with real consumption" (Teuteberg 1992: 13). This seems an adequate conclusion as far as mainstream food history writing in Europe up to 1990 is concerned.

Despite the prevalence of socioeconomic history in this book (and in the European food historiography of those days), Teuteberg's introduction presents a broad classification of food history themes that not only include the interests of socioeconomic historians, but also prestige, status, fetishism, safety feelings and hedonism (Teuteberg 1992: 5). This allows him to move beyond the established socioeconomic history of the day, by pointing at

communication, representation, taste or pleasure. This atypical view was influenced by other disciplines. Although welcoming the work by Margaret Mead and Mary Douglas, Teuteberg (1992: 17) criticizes anthropology as being too static.² Teuteberg's work shows appreciation for the work of ethnologists exploring the daily life of common people, using *unexpected* sources (like dolls houses). Teuteberg suggests that when ethnologists gained knowledge of insights and approaches by social historians, particularly in the 1970s, they produced work of great potential interest to historians. Teuteberg's enthusiasm for communication, representation etc, is due to his interest in ethnology, and is certainly not the practice of most historians.

According to the country reports, food history writing in Europe seems to have followed parallel paths up to 1990. From the 1930s, ethnology (utensils, meals) and particularly economic history (markets, prices) influenced food historiography. Following the social turn of the 1960s, focus shifted to the standard of living of the laboring classes. This was followed, at the end of the 1980s, by a more moderate and nebulous cultural turn. Most authors of the country reports expected that research would continue along the lines of the 1980s, although some authors expressed their concerns about this (e.g. Kisbàn 1992: 209).

Here, the latter stage is of particular interest to me: how did "culture" appear in food history writing during the 1980s, and what did it mean? Did social theorists rouse a cultural interest? Had ethnology been discovered and embraced by historians? To deal with the first question, I briefly looked at the names indexed in the book and counted the number of references to social theorists. This is certainly tricky (it supposes an outstanding indexing work), but it may be enlightening. Four authors (out of sixteen) mentioned a total of nine social theorists who propose a cultural perspective (among others Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, Mary Douglas, Norbert Elias and Claude Lévi-Strauss). Eleven chapters did not mention the basis of a possibly emerging cultural approach. May I conclude that up to 1990 historians primarily reached for the data, hardly considered theory, and were happy with a solid set of questions plunged in socioeconomic history? To answer the second question (i.e. the influence of ethnologists on historians), I will make a short trip to France.

A Digression: Annalistes and Flandristes in the 1980s

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Of course, food historians may incorporate theoretical insights from other social scientists without making explicit references. To address this, I will look at the survey of French food history writing by Eva Barlösius (1992). I am interested in the promoters or forerunners of a cultural interest in France

(and not just in the way, and if, socioeconomic historians received ethnology). Barlösius starts by reminding us of the bases of French food historiography in the 1960s. Braudel's concept of *vie matérielle* was the source of food studies, assigning a central role to the *longue durée*, quantification, popular classes and nutritional margins (i.e. malnutrition). The emphasis was no longer on price history, but on food consumption and calorie intake. In this respect Barlösius notes, "It is surprising how uncritically the historians of diet accepted the results of the physiology of nutrition" (Barlösius 1992: 93). Barlösius notes three main approaches to the "biological research" undertaken by French and European historians:

- economic-agricultural (supply, starvation);
- quantitative reconstruction of food intake (calorie, proteins);
- psychosociological (eating and drinking).

The latter stream was quite marginal (in fact, just Jean-Paul Aron, 1973). At the end of her paper, Barlösius briefly mentions innovations by Jean-Louis Flandrin during the early 1980s. Flandrin moved away from the centrality of food supply and physiological necessities, to concentrate on cooking, taste, meals and aesthetics, implying different sources, source reading and methods. How should these modest changes in French food historiography in the 1980s be characterized?

Flandrin himself did look back at the 1970s and 1980s, criticizing "Histoire des rations alimentaires" of the 1960s and 1970s, supporting an ethnological approach instead. Indeed, Flandrin (1999: 19–21) denounces the illusionary scientific appearance, the misleading results and the sterile research during this period. Flandrin has also evaluated the position of historians during the decades preceding 1980 *vis-à-vis* other disciplines dealing with food studies. Historians of the period neglected ethnology, considering it too anecdotal. Moreover, they overlooked anthropology that presented a structuralist approach aimed at studying analogies and general patterns, with Lévi-Strauss as a central figure. Flandrin (1999: 22) criticizes the anthropology of those days for analyzing reality from a metacultural point of view, with arbitrary, subjective and ethnocentric starting points, reaching "only very poor ideas."

So, if French historians around 1980 were generally unaware of ethnology and anthropology of food (according to Flandrin), where did the change come from? Flandrin noticed new interests in cultural issues in 1980s historiography dealing with Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. He listed the themes of those days: taste (and particularly spices), meal patterns, conviviality, innovation and otherness (in time and space). He enumerated the sources: recipes, menus of banquets, travel accounts, iconography, dietary treatises and professional manuals. By integrating these findings about France into Teuteberg's introduction to the

European survey (1992), I would suggest that ethnology and anthropology were indeed present in the minds of historians of the 1980s, but without leading to much actual application in historical practice. This accounts for Flandrin's reticence to acknowledge a mutual influence during the 1960s and 1970s.

Before leaving France in the 1980s, I should mention three names that are missing in surveys on French food historiography up to 1990, but that have turned up with praise around 1990: Theodore Zeldin, Stephen Mennell, and Steven Kaplan. Zeldin's (1977) writing on general French social history resists the bio-historians' domination in France and pays attention to the history of taste, regional cuisine, cooks, restaurants and culinary writers. Among other things, Zeldin's work queries the difference between England and France. This question was the starting point of Mennell's research (1985). Mennell avoids applying structuralist or symbolic concepts as they hardly have any explanatory value. Based on Jack Goody (1982) and especially Norbert Elias (1978, 1982) he proposes a developmental approach, leading him to figurational (or process) sociology of groups in the past, where changing networks of people are central. Kaplan (1984) proposes an analysis of the provisioning chain of bread in Paris. This work deals with grain prices, but placed within power relations, concepts of quality, police involvement, and networks of grain merchants and millers. Kaplan (1984: 9), meanwhile, operates in the "ethnographic periphery." Jean-Pierre Poulain (2002: 202) acknowledges the importance of these and other *foreigners* researching French food history.³

Food Historiography in the Cultural Blizzard: The 1990s

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A number of authors have addressed the question of how culture appeared in food historiography in the 1980s. Teuteberg, Flandrin and Kisbàn shared a parallel concern—that historians should learn about the approaches, methods and sources of ethnologists. In the 1980s only a few historians had done so, although their number had grown by 1990, as they began to look further into the work of cultural historians (primarily of Antiquity and Middle Ages), ethnologists, sociologists and anthropologists. Situated within a wider epistemological angle, this hardly comes as a surprise. By 1990, a cultural turn had timidly appeared in the field of history writing.⁴ What was the role of food historiography in this process?

A neat overview of the 1990s (as provided by the 1992 ICREFH volume for the pre-1990 historiography) is lacking. Yet, it seems appropriate to consider the five volumes published by ICREFH during the 1990s, as they cover numerous and varying European countries, offer approaches of various disciplines, and include leading scholars of the field. While these colloquia

do not provide a full overview of the research, it is reasonable to assume that they have many ties with wider developments in this field.

ICREFH's second meeting was devoted to food policies (Burnett and Oddy 1994), a traditional theme of socioeconomic history, with little use of cultural history, ethnology or anthropology. A lot of attention was paid to prices, markets, supply, energy intake, rationing, and tensions between opponents and supporters of state intervention. Within this frame of nation-states and great economic and demographic changes, some authors wrote about food quality of particular products, municipal initiatives related to food adulteration, and innovation and diffusion. On the whole, this meeting was pretty close to the 1980s approach, with ethnologists adopting traditional historical questions and methods. For example, the paper by the ethnologist Petrànovà (1994) deals with rationing in Bohemia during the First World War, focusing on statistics of rations and prices.

The third meeting addressed food technology, science and retailing, with innovation being the common denominator. Den Hartog's (1995) introduction mentions theories of product diffusion by Joseph Schumpeter and Everett Rogers, referring to Amartya Sen's notion of food entitlement, but does not mention innovations in the field of cultural history. Concepts like taste, preference and feelings of food insecurity do appear, albeit modestly. However, these are not questioned, due to being seen as being part of a one-way process (from industry to consumers, with the latter primarily reacting to falling prices). In this way, consumers are seen as "victims" of economic processes and not as active agents.

ICREFH's fourth colloquium tackled food and material culture, a then marginal interest (Schärer and Fenton 1998). Jean-François Bergier's introduction pays large attention to culture that he defines as "a network of referential values characteristic of the group to which the individual belongs and therefore differentiated with respect to other groups' culture" (Bergier 1998: 1). To research this network (of food), he considers iconography and objects in addition to texts. Martin Schärer's introduction takes this further by focusing on material culture, considered as the study of the relationship between society, individuals and *things*. This is about significance, identity construction, values, changing utilities, codes, communication and representations. This postmodern thinking represents more than a mere cultural turn in food history writing. The colloquium was held in 1995, a period of a *crise de l'histoire*,⁵ continuing debate, doubt and indecision. The book testifies to this. Illustrations and graphs appear alongside each other (previously, there had been no pictures), the names of Mary Douglas, Norbert Elias, Stephen Mennell, Sidney Mintz, Georg Simmel and Gunther Wiegmann (re)appear, and papers address topics such as kitchenware, *service à la russe*, time-space relations with regard to meals, and gender perceptions of working-class meals. Nonetheless, a great part of the book

may be characterized as solid, traditional work in social history or in ethnology, with little mutual influence.

The fifth colloquium addressed health implications of food and drinking (Fenton 2000). In the proceedings, some papers address calorie intake, shortages, budget enquiries and food policies, but others deal with food scares, dietary advice and its frequent changes, vegetarianism, slimming, medical discourses and food semiotics. Atkins (2000: 83) welcomes the cultural turn as particularly appropriate for reviving this field of study, and others pay large attention to the language of advertisements and speeches. Such papers mention codes, signs, construction of stereotypes and commonsense views, invention of meaning, and social constructs. Inger Johanne Lyngø (2000: 157) offers a nice example of the latter. She focuses on the “interplay between things and meaning” when studying diet, health and science in Norway in the 1930s. Her concern is “how science becomes a cultural matter,” and to find out about the actual process of mediation through language. She tackles the nutritionists’ discourse, by analyzing the text and the iconography of five advertisements in a women’s magazine between 1936 and 1939. In short, the linguistic turn had made its appearance.

By now, historians had shown great interest in the significance of language for studying the past, but this did not necessarily mean that they embraced all elements of the linguistic turn as understood by Jacques Derrida.⁶ Rather, they had become sensitive to discourse, representation and social constructs by words. A good example is Pascal Ory’s contribution to Pierre Nora’s collection, *Lieux de mémoire*. Surveying French food history writing, Ory (1997) cheers the pioneering work by Aron, but deplores his search for the “objective reality.” In contrast, Ory prefers to study the culinary discourse, asking “Did the cook construct the culinary writer, or was it the other way around?”

ICREFH’s sixth colloquium dealt with food relationships between town and countryside (Hietala and Vahtikari 2003). The proceedings provide a mix of traditional and newer approaches, to which the index testifies (e.g. it includes the entry “post-modernism”). Amilien (2003) presents an ethnologic analysis of the food discourse of Norwegian restaurants. To examine regional differences in image construction, her paper studies the menus of allegedly typical Norwegian restaurants in five towns, concluding that recently opened restaurants do contribute to the construction of national identity. Socioeconomic historians at this colloquium incorporated ethnological influences to varying degrees, depending on the choice of theme. For example, Burnett (2003) deals with self-provisioning and commercialization of the diet in England, looking particularly at land allotment, thus permitting little interest in cultural aspects. Hans Teuteberg (2003) writes on the expanding market for vegetables in nineteenth-century

Germany. After dealing with the naming of vegetables, he presents a survey of the growth of per capita consumption of greens, mentioning storing and retailing problems. He does not refer to the significance of vegetables, their hierarchy and wide social and cultural differences, or the very different ways of preparing and serving. Paradoxically, in his conclusion he points at ways of preparation, hierarchies, and the image of vegetables in respect to the knowledge about vitamins. If I may label the latter as a cultural interest, it is clear that it, literally, came only at the end.

In general, the ICREFH colloquia did show a growing interest in cultural issues in the course of the 1990s. This interest moved beyond a simple shift of themes, as it also adopted methods and approaches that came with the cultural turn (e.g. the interest in language and material culture). My next step is to compare my conclusions with regard to the ICREFH publications with other research, where changes may have appeared earlier, more radically or differently. I propose to check this by looking at the content of *Food and Foodways* in the 1990s, a review paper published in 2002, and three books that appeared in the second half of the 1990s.

Foodways around the Year 2000

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The journal *Food and Foodways. Explorations in the history and culture of human nourishment* has been published since 1986. In its first years, the historians Maurice Aymard, Jean-Louis Flandrin and Steven Kaplan were the editors, assisted by the sociologists Claude Fischler and Claude Grignon (senior associate editors), and by anthropologist Carole Counihan and sinologist Françoise Sabban (associate editors). In the course of the 1990s, sociologists and anthropologists moved up in the hierarchy, with Grignon joining the three editor-historians in 1992, and Counihan and Sabban in 1999. In the latter year, a new generation appeared as associate editors (Bruno Laurioux, Martin Bruegel, Séverine Gojard, and Derek Shanahan: two historians, one sociologist and one geographer).

In 1986, the composition of the editorial committee and the board of advisors well reflected the scope of the journal. Historians, sociologists, anthropologists, nutritionists, literary critics, economists, psychologists and ethnologists aimed at publishing articles on history and culture of food. Yet, the accent was on history: in 1986, 51 percent of the editorial committee and board of advisors were historians, and in 2000, their part had dropped to 44 percent (while the share of sociologists had grown from 8 to 17 percent). This multidisciplinary interest is mirrored in the content of *Food and Foodways*. In the 1980s and 1990s, history, anthropology and sociology represented 78 percent of all articles, while ethnology and archeology were only poorly represented (10 percent). "Pure" food history articles (i.e.

historical papers by historians) accounted for about one-third of the total. France and, particularly, the USA supplied most papers, leaving Britain and other countries far beyond. Italy was present with only one article, while Spain, East European countries, Africa, Asia and Latin America were absent.

One way to find out about the way history is approached in *Food and Foodways* is by looking at the special issue published in 1996, "Food allocation of time and social rhythms." The issue contained a selection of papers that had been previously published in French (Aymard *et al.* 1993).⁷ This book was the outcome of the colloquium at the initiative of the historian Maurice Aymard, the sociologist Claude Grignon and the sinologist Françoise Sabban, all three editors of *Food and Foodways*. In this respect, the 1996 special issue of *Food and Foodways* may thus have reflected the editors' approaches, themes and questions. They asked whether food practices "make the greatest contribution to the structuring of social time" (Aymard *et al.* 1996: 161), and confronted historians, sociologists, anthropologists, one statistician and one biologist with two sets of questions. The first set (the place of food in the daily schedule) was labeled as sociological, the second set (the relationships between food and social rhythms) as ethnological. Some historians, like Jean-Louis Flandrin (1996), took an ethnological starting point in that he studied the naming and schedule of meals; others, like Steven Kaplan (1996), took an economic perspective, in that he studied the production and distribution of bread. Food history was thus studied through a multitude of themes and methods, with attention to social rhythms, use of time for cooking and eating, festive meals, meal schedules, food variety, formation and development of meal patterns, meal hierarchies etc.

As with the multidisciplinary ICREFH colloquia, the presence of several disciplines also led to tension in *Food and Foodways*. However, the editors of this special issue did not consider this a disadvantage. They emphasized that anthropology may temper the "latent evolutionism" of history, and that history and anthropology may bring a relativist view to sociology, which, in turn, can break free from ethnocentricity (Aymard *et al.* 1996: 181). The notion of relativism appeared on several occasions in the introduction. This was the result of three dangers that the authors observed: ethnocentrism, leading to the focus on familiar ("own") information; indigenous theories, which is a consequence of the first danger, e.g. the theory of "food modernity" with concepts of social progress and declining inequality; and the idealization of nature, e.g. with universal notions of time. However, most authors of the papers hardly shared such poststructural thinking.

I find a similar mix of solid, traditional approaches and newer ones in *Food and Foodways* as I encountered in the ICREFH volumes. Claude and Christine Grignon, for example, begin an article in the following way, "It is only through quantitative data that we can reconstitute, and try to interpret, what we consider as social change" (Grignon and Grignon 1999: 151).

Surely, statistics may tell a lot, but the authors' constrained preference was puzzling. There is a thorough cultural turn in the article on the symbolic meaning of Coca-Cola during the Second World War (Weiner 1996), and a linguistic turn in an article on the way students think and talk about drinking and drunkenness in Finland and Spain (Pyörälä 1994).

Those introducing the 1996 special issue on social time paid great attention to the danger of ethnocentrism. To counter this, they aimed at a close(r) collaboration between sociologists, historians and anthropologists around one common point: attention to "the other." This implies comparing and studying contacts (conflicts, exchanges) between food cultures. The review by Super (2002: 169) considers the "other" as one of its central themes next to "diffusion," "cuisine" and "nutrition." Super (2002: 165) concentrates on publications "that can serve as examples of the range of scholarship", taking Davidson (1999), Kiple and Ornelas (2000) and, particularly, Flandrin and Montanari (1999) as three landmarks of food history writing. His concern is not about the relationship between socioeconomic history and ethnology/sociology/anthropology, but about the main themes of recent literature.

By "diffusion" Super understands a wide range of themes, ranging from food innovations, timing of changes and international food trade, to diffusion of techniques and habits. "Cuisine" is equally broad, with attention to the underlying structure of food, table manners, prohibitions and cooks. By "nutrition" Super notes the wide interest in food shortages, malnutrition, social inequality and hunger, noting a lack of quantifiable data (especially prior to 1800). Under the last theme, the "other," the author classifies the interest in identity construction, cultural markers and taboos. Super's conclusions are of particular interest with regard to my survey, in that he has presented common traits of food history writing around the year 2000 (Super 2002: 175). First, he has noted the cultural turn in socioeconomic history. Second, he concludes that, by incorporating wide domains of the past, food history presents a chronology of its own, losing track of more general history. According to Super, this is regrettable because of the danger of oversimplification. Third, because of the shift to incorporate several domains of the past, food historians define their field in an ever-more ambitious way. Fourth, this ambition leads to an enormous research program that lacks a clear methodology. The author expects that ecological and biological issues, combined with traditional social and economic approaches, offer great potential. And fifth, the momentum of food history will continue.

In general, John Super's survey confirms the points I have made with regard to changes in ICREFH's colloquia and *Food and Foodways*. I would suggest that, by 1995, food historians were perhaps not taking the lead in terms of new approaches, methods and themes, but were very close to innovations in historiography.

Before moving into the very recent food history writing on Europe since 1800, I wish to pay attention to three books that not only mirrored the new interests of the 1990s, but also formed them. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari's *Histoire de l'alimentation* (1996) with 47 chapters and 915 pages, was translated into English in 1999.⁸ In general, it was well received (as well as being the main subject of Super's review).⁹ The introduction to this book opens with the demolition of some familiar ideas about food, and goes on to stress the importance of the study of the daily life of the common people. The editors briefly survey the major phases of food history writing in the twentieth century (prices, hunger, mortality, business cycle up to the 1960s; calorie intake and consumption in the 1960s and 1970s). They deplore the fact that *Annales*-historians have all too rarely considered research by ethnologists. They note that such interests first appeared among historians of Antiquity (Flandrin and Montanari 1996: 13). The notion of identity with confrontations of the "own" and the "other", then, become central to the research in the volume. Flandrin and Montanari end their introduction by stressing their wide ambitions: food history has a strategic position within social structures and values.

Essen und Kulturelle Identität takes precisely the interest in identity as the starting point of a collection of thirty-one papers (Teuteberg *et al.* 1997). The introduction notes that while much previous historical research has reflected the natural sciences' interest in sufficient and healthy food, between production of foodstuffs and intake of calories, there is the field (or negotiation) of culinary culture, with meanings, symbols, communication etc. Crucial is the notion that eating and drinking demarcate boundaries, and that both are central to identity (Barlösius *et al.* 1997: 13).¹⁰ Many ICREFH *habitués* appear in the book, alongside linguists, philosophers, nutritionists, ethnologists, literary critics, sociologists, economists and geographers. A nice example of the mid-1990s debate between structuralist and poststructuralist trends is to be found in the introduction, which lists six conclusions of the book, including the contradiction between historical "fact" and "fictional construct" (Teuteberg *et al.* 1997: 21). Historical methods (with their *wirklichkeitsrelevante Quellen*) differ from art and literature, which deal with representations of reality. The book's editors thus believe that history *reconstructs* the past, whereas other sciences *represent* that past.

Another conclusion was the richness of culinary diversity within Europe. Regional or national identities lead to problems of territoriality (nation-state, *terroir*, *appellation contrôlée*, towns and countryside): interregional and international exchanges and influences lead to changing identities. This is the theme of the third book that I wish to consider, *Food in Global History* (Grew 1999). Raymond Grew introduces the fourteen chapters by stressing the "explosive combination" of food history with world history. He considers

globalization, questioning this concept as well as stressing the many opportunities it may offer. Particularly, he suggests four frameworks for global research: universal experiences (e.g. the study of staple food), diffusion (of techniques, plants, ideas), webs of connections (formal ties of a political, economic or cultural nature), and cultural encounters (nationalism, ethnic identities). To be fully rewarding, these frameworks should be situated within theories or approaches that connect global food history to relevant historical questions. Grew mentions several early good examples of global food history (e.g. Mintz 1982; Salaman 1985). Food history, then, might contribute greatly to a new periodization of the past. Moreover, new insights might emerge from comparisons, leading to the questioning of generally accepted knowledge (which is very often based on local study). Finally, global food history should overcome Eurocentric habits and “invite a tolerant relativism” (Grew 1999: 25).¹¹

What's New?

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The combination of many disciplines had become well established by the year 2000, although this did not mean that disciplines actually applied one another's methodologies. In general, *culture* came much more to the fore than in the 1980s, but it had widely varying connotations and applications. Still, many historians continued conducting traditional socioeconomic history. Ethnocentricity and Eurocentricism were seen as dangers, which led to appeals for comparisons through space and time. And finally, more attention was paid to language, while relativism was welcomed (two poststructural features). *Après coup*, this seems pretty familiar nowadays: little by little food historians got used to changes in methods, use of sources, and all kinds of turns. Yet, the distance between approaches of 1975 and 2000 is really impressive. To investigate recent changes, I will consider *Food and Foodways* and the ICREFH colloquia, and combine these observations by looking at a review paper and a new journal.

[TX]The 2001 ICREFH colloquium dealt with all forms of eating out (Jacobs and Scholliers 2003). It was inspired by the fact that since the 1980s an increasing number of very diverse people are eating out, as well as by sociological research that viewed this as a problem (Finkelstein 1989) or as a new social phenomenon (Warde and Martens 2000). The theme proved to be popular (e.g. Burnett 2004). The usual participants (mostly historians, then ethnologists and sociologists, and some geographers and literary critics) wrote chapters on varied themes, ranging from fancy restaurants to canteen food. The introduction to the proceedings stresses the tension between customs and innovations on the one hand, and eating out for work and pleasure on the other. It mentions key concepts of the book, which include

differentiation, semantic codes, appropriation, economy of symbolic goods, and symbolic forms. The “languages of taste” or the culinary discourses are studied with great care, continuing the trend of the late 1990s. Jacobs and Scholliers (2003) explore new themes, such as the history of the picnic, fast food catering, the history of cooks, and eating and the public sphere. However, some of the general newer trends remain absent: no comparisons are made, there is no global perspective, gender issues are missing, and the chapters are ethnocentric. In general, there is also a lack of theory.

The 2003 ICREFH colloquium addressed the diffusion of food culture in Europe, looking at four levels: the household, the community, the industry, and the literary (Oddy and Petranova 2005). As usual, participants included historians and others (twelve historians, six ethnologists, two anthropologists and geographers, and one sociologist and nutritionist). The theme touched upon traditional fields, such as dietary advice, cookery books or public health boards, but it also opened new study fields, such as cooks’ training or food quality. Going through the bibliographies of the chapters, it is striking how few theorists are listed. Most papers take off by posing a clear set of problems, and only rarely a method and an approach are elucidated. This does not mean that these were absent, however. For example, Janet Mitchell (2005: 213) surveys the invalid cookery section of a long series of English cookery books since 1800, to reveal the contemporaries’ views on health, thus assuming that cookery books are “cultural constructions ... that reflect ideas about food and health” and not just a collection of practical recipes.

In 2000, the *Food and Foodways*’ editorial board contained 31 percent historians, which increased to 36 percent in 2006. Anthropologists form the second important group (27 percent in 2006), with sociologists coming third (18 percent in 2006). With regard to the geographical spread of author affiliation during this period, the USA augmented its share from 41 to 51 percent, while France diminished its share from 22 to 20 percent. Nonetheless, many more countries have been studied than in the 1990s—barely 40 percent of the articles focus on Europe. *Food and Foodways* has truly become global. The spread with regard to disciplines also reveals some changes since the 1990s. The volume of contributions by historians, anthropologists and sociologists declined by about 5 percent, while communications scientists, literary critics and linguists increased their share from 9 to 24 percent. This shift is reflected by the themes and methods of the articles. Cynthia Baron (2003), for example, studies food and gender in the film *Bagdad Café*, with attention to representation, identity, gender constructions and relations, and the use and significance of a coffee thermos. Her conclusions deal with alternative aesthetics and new visions on food and gender. Her article focuses on the film aesthetic, but it also informs about food culture and the catering business in US diners in the 1980s.

Historians publishing in *Food and Foodways* have been highly affected by the cultural turns. Jane Dusselier (2002), for example, studies the food of Japanese people in US concentration camps during the Second World War. She surveys the food rations and the consequences of food shortage (without going into calorie or protein intake). Following her interest in food protests, she examines the sentiments of the internees with regard to the quantity and quality of the food. For this, she uses letters, diaries, testimonies and photos. She stresses the overwhelming importance of “sensually pleasing” food (moving far beyond the mere stomach filling) in the life of oppressed, marginalized and displaced persons.

Perhaps because of *Food and Foodways*' shifting interest away from the familiar disciplines (history, sociology, ethnology) toward “unexpected” ones (communication sciences, linguistics, tourism), a new history food journal was launched in 2003: *Food and History*, sponsored by the Institut Européen de l'Histoire de l'Alimentation. The editor is the historian Massimo Montanari, heading an editorial board that consists of three historians, one sociologist and one sinologist. The short editorial to the first issue elucidates some aims of the new journal (Montanari 2003). After stressing the importance of food history writing within the previous decade, the author surveys the older research. He emphasizes the structures of everyday life, where food is pivotal, allowing the study of *all* aspects of history. Historians have thus widened their scope increasingly, including good old economic history as well as study of meanings and codes of representations. “Food culture” grabs it all: body and soul, material and immaterial, biology and culture, so much so that the old distinctions (between natural and human sciences) have been upset. In this way, food history writing is indeed a new way of history writing.

The issues of *Food and History* bear witness to this program. All time periods are included, economic history and the history of ideas are present, while very diverse methodologies have been applied. Interest in literature and language appears both in articles by literary critics (e.g. Becker 2003) and historians (e.g. Van den Eeckhout and Scholliers 2003). The mix between nature and culture appears in an article on the use of medicine to deal with bovine tuberculosis in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Orland 2003). Of the 43 articles published in the first four volumes, a large majority have been written by historians (70 percent), while sociologists and literary critics have each written three articles, economists, geographers and anthropologists have written two apiece, and an art historian has written one. So far, “pure” history comes to the fore. Ninety percent of the articles deal with Europe; two articles have addressed Africa and two have addressed Asia. The Eurocentric bias is obvious.

In a recent review, sociologist Priscilla Ferguson (2005) critically presents twelve books published in the preceding six years. She orders the books into

three groups—markets, menus and meals—thus arriving at a simple food provisioning system. She mingles her evaluation with more general observations. She emphasizes the complex nature of food history, the ongoing debate about a common methodology and/or theory, the discussion about the precise position of food history within history *tout court*, and the exact object of the study. She herself has written a book on the triumph of French cuisine, paying attention to texts from poems, cookbooks, menu cards, novels and (later) movies, proposing her book as a “geography and genealogy of culinary culture” (Ferguson 2004: 3).¹²

I will only highlight some observations that seem relevant to me. Ferguson is enthusiastic about Abad’s (2002) work on food supply in Paris, stressing the fact that the book is situated within wider history, touching upon more general questions such as corporations, the state and trade. She is equally enthusiastic about Silvano Serventi and Françoise Sabban’s *Pasta* (2002), for the nice comparative way of looking at one particular foodstuff. She also welcomes moves away from Eurocentric trends. Madeleine Ferrières’ *Histoire des peurs alimentaires* (2002) is appreciated for its straightforward analysis of perceptions of food risks rather than of real dangers. She then turns to Flandrin and Montanari’s *Food: A Culinary History* (1999), which she considers as a guiding book, shifting the interest from food to cuisine, from agriculture to culture, and from markets to networks, paying large attention to “us” and “the others,” and to contacts and confrontations. Particularly, this book, according to Ferguson, abundantly shows how much culinary matters tell about social, political and economic history. The contacts and contrasts in Hasia Diner’s *Hungering for America* (2002) are manifold and complex. This book is about immigrants arriving in America, searching to develop culinary connections with their country.

Before addressing Flandrin and Montanari’s *magnum opus*, Ferguson explores the intellectual roots of present-day food historiography. She acknowledges the importance of socioeconomic history and of the *Annales*, but stresses the influence of three social concepts: Veblen’s conspicuous consumption, Elias’s civilizing process, and Bourdieu’s distinction. However, she points at the fact that Anglo-Saxon historians have been primarily influenced by other researchers, such as Goody (1982), Wheaton (1983), Kaplan (1984), Mennell (1985) and Mintz (1985). According to her, these books appeared in a “culinary wilderness” in the Anglo-American world of the 1980s, but nevertheless have forced an entry into a broader intellectual context (but what about Burnett 1979, Levenstein 1988, Oddy 1985 or Tannahill 1973?). In her conclusion, Ferguson argues that food studies is not a discipline or a field, but at best an enterprise, because it lacks common theoretical perspectives and methodologies. Her concern is to move from specific investigations to general understandings. So far, food history has dealt with high-quality, detailed and innovative research, but it lacks

coherence. According to her, food is all about movement (between times, places, people, classes, countries and cultures), which entails transformation. Hence, historic movements and transformations need to be studied.

I agree with her conclusion. I would add that “movement” and “transformation” fit perfectly well into the frame of the *food system of provision*. Putting food studies within this frame, might provide the coherence so keenly desired by some food researchers. *Food system* is a concept that emerged in political economy. This notion has been used for a “simple” sequence of relationships (production–distribution–consumption). Studying these in historical perspective would lead to specific questions and insights, stressing changes, discontinuities and conflicts between traditional and modern food systems. The consideration of the “simple” food system would imply attention to urbanization, transport, retailing, work, technology, food preservation, international trade and state intervention (Beardsworth and Keil 1997: 33–40). The socioeconomic food historiography has dealt with most of these themes (although not within the scope of a *system*).

Recent research into the agro-business and food retailing has led to more sophisticated concepts about the food system. In the past ten years, three particular issues have been addressed: the *structures* of the food system (including the link between agriculture and industry, the link between retailing and wholesale, and the role of the households); the *tendencies* of the food system (the radical technological treadmill, fertilizers, biotechnology); and the historical *contingency* (interacting of structures and tendencies across various food systems; intervention by groups, the state or households) (Fine *et al.* 1996). Such insights have led Anneke Van Otterloo to consider *all* chains of past and present food systems. She arrives at the following stages of the food system, which tie in with particular locations (Van Otterloo 2000: 239): primary production (farm), secondary production (factory), distribution (market, retailing), preparing (kitchen), consumption (table), and waste (dunghill). Crucially, power relations exist between each link. Intermediating levels (such as the state, lobbyists, pressure groups, advertisement, education) are also taken into account.

The food system is thus about movement and transformation, connecting our food to the worldwide food web. The historical study of each link of the chain and, especially, of relations between links, seems fundamental to me. However, I would propose two additions. First, I would supplement a link at the very beginning of the chain, i.e. prior to production: before food is produced, it has been imagined, conceived, invented, improved and tested. This is the research and development department—“conception.” And second, I would emphasize the insights and questions that deal with the poststructural issues that have come to the fore since the late 1990s. I would use the sophisticated food system as a starting point, with great stress on

mutual influences between the links, adding particular research methods connected to language, images and objects, to study the food chain from the actors' point of view, and so pay attention to significance, representation, sensitivities, codes and identity construction. Keywords would include everyday life, tensions (between habit and innovation), material culture, and encounters and conflicts (involving space, time, people, groups, products, ideas, interests). This refers to attention to a wide diversity of theories that have been touched upon in recent food history writing, among which are the public sphere (Jürgen Habermas), the cultural field (Pierre Bourdieu), daily routines (Michel de Certeau), or artifacts in their context (Daniel Miller).

This is a broad program.¹³ It may be approached via two ways: the study of a single food throughout the whole system (applied in teaching by Belasco 1999, and Wilkins 2005), or the study of one (or two) links. With regard to the former approach, more or less successful work has been done in the past.¹⁴ With regard to the latter approach, things are more complicated.¹⁵ Recent important work addressing two or more links, which offers many opportunities for connections with the whole food chain, include for example, Stanziani (2005) on the quality of food, Freeman (2004) on the kitchen's equipment, and Diner (2002) on identity construction of migrants.

The Next Twenty-Five Years: Body and Soul, Biology and Culture, Material and Immaterial

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I have considered one organization (ICREFH), two journals (*Food and Foodways*; *Food and History*), and two review papers in order to learn about shifts in methods, theories and approaches in food historiography about Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since the 1960s, methods, theories and approaches are diverse because of the field's multidisciplinary. This did and does not lead to a homogeneous field. Moreover, paradigm shifts within the disciplines that compose historical food studies have occurred in the 1990s, which, again, has hampered the emergence of a consistent field. I am not deploring this. On the contrary, food history writing is open to many disciplines and (full-time or occasional) researchers, each bringing *their* views. And this makes the richness of historical food studies that welcomed historians and ethnologists, rapidly joined by sociologists, economists and geographers, followed by communication and literature scientists, linguists and film experts. Food research is not in need of homogeneous methods, theories or questions, but it is in need of interdisciplinarity, i.e. the integration of traditions and innovations of various disciplines to tackle a particular question.

It was this relationship between disciplines that was the guiding line of my paper. Although historians, ethnologists, sociologists and others met in

colloquia, boards of journals or workshops, an actual dialogue was quite difficult. Research traditions were often too different. Only the persistence of some historians who aimed at the integration of ethnology or some sociologists who applied historical approaches, has led to openness, dialogue and innovation. Nowadays, this openness seems to be prevalent, although it is certainly not accepted or definite.

As a consequence of various turns, *culture* (with whatever meaning) came fully to the fore in the 1990s. I applaud this because food is about communication, social relations, identity formation, constructs of meaning etc. But together, there is a danger. The loss of influence of socioeconomic history has led to a regrettable decline in the study of prices, market functioning, state interference or hunger. I would definitely not want to return to the methods and approaches of the 1970s, but I would plead for a *culturalization* of socioeconomic history. As a possible shift into that direction, I propose the concept of the food system, which forces the researcher to conceive of various, interlinked chains that necessarily combine the economic, the political, the social and the cultural. This would also encourage cultural researchers not to lose sight of social and economic factors.

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Notes

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- 1 For a recent survey of pre-1800 centuries, with an emphasis on France and Italy, see Redon and Laurieux (2005).
- 2 Teuteberg separates anthropology from ethnology, with the former referring to non-European traditional communities, and the latter referring to European folklore. I will use this division throughout my survey.
- 3 Why so many Anglo-Saxons are fascinated by French food history, is an intriguing question. Perhaps they are the victims of the representation of French culinary art, making it stronger by their writings, and sharing it with present-day English intelligentsia (Weber 1991: 251).
- 4 See e.g. the debate on the cultural turn in the *American Historical Review* 107:5 (2002), and the special issue "The future of social history" of the *Journal for Social History* 37:1 (2003).
- 5 I am referring to Noiriel (1996).
- 6 A solid introduction is Clark (2004).
- 7 I use the English version that includes a selection from the original French papers.
- 8 Here, I use the French version. The success of the book may be measured by its translation into Italian, Portuguese and Korean.
- 9 Tannahill (2000) praises the many innovative articles and especially the introductions to

each part, but criticized the European focus, the “series of snapshots that don’t make a film”, and the uneven quality of the chapters.

- 10 The reader may compare with *Food, Drink and Identity* (Scholliers 2001), the main difference being that identity is not conceived as a “given”, but always constructed, and thus adaptable.
- 11 Crosby (2002) reviews this book rather negatively.
- 12 For a review of her book, see Peters (2006).
- 13 As Peter Coclanis (2005: 10) concludes after listing the many fields that agricultural history would need to consider, “Is this an impossible task? Perhaps, but it is one worth striving toward, nonetheless.”
- 14 For example, see Mintz and Du Bois (2002).
- 15 For an attempt to deal with the entire food chain in the twentieth century, with technology in a central position, see Sarasua, Scholliers and Van Molle (2005). For a plea for studying food systems emerging from agricultural history, see Coclanis (2005).

Food,
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vol. 10 :: no. 3
fall 07

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vol. 10 :: no. 3
fall 07

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