

Report Eating Healthily

The conference was opened with the evocation of Plato's Symposium, where food plays a central role for the development of philosophical reasoning. The speakers discussed healthy eating in all its diversity and facets, coming from different fields. The interdisciplinary perspective on the topic encouraged an out-of-the-box thinking. The conference also followed the University of St.Gallen's ongoing interest in Brazil manifested through the HSG-Institute in São Paulo (GIM-LA).

Yvette Sánchez continued her introduction with a comparison of food habits in Switzerland and Brazil, showing some parallels as well as contrasts: the overweight statistics are growing in both countries reaching nearly 55% in Brazil (41% in Switzerland). New eating patterns emerge, and people consume food more frequently outside of home. Healthy food practices gain importance. All of these trends (convenience, organic, functional) can be observed in both countries. However, while Switzerland recycles, Brazil does not at all. Brazil features a growing middle class, and the consumption of functional food, such as Danone's *Activia*, is growing rapidly (50%/year).

While Brazilians consume 5kg of yoghurt per year and capita, Argentinians consume 10 kg, and Swiss even 15.5 kg.

As a very culture-sensitive good, eating involves symbolic and cultural capital. Food provides energy, maintains life and stimulates growth. The German word "Lebensmittel" reflects this very well as including two meanings: 'food' and 'means for life' (*Mittel fürs Leben*). Eating includes several paradoxes: on the one hand, the eating habits of healthy people prove to be to a high degree irrational, contradictory and a constant battle between insights, rules and their transgressions. On the other hand, the obese seem to have no pleasure in eating.

Food reflects and even also anticipates cultural contact situations or first post-migratory encounters, and can serve as a catalyst for integration. Long before taking political and economic influence, migrant communities establish their "cuisine". In the US *salsa verde* has outsold ketchup.

We incorporate food in a physical, but also symbolic sense. This has been reflected upon by Claude Lévy-Strauss (*The Raw and the Cooked*) or by Roland Barthes (*Incorporation of the beef's power through the beefsteak*). To such gastro-theoretical thoughts, we can add the gastro-poetical ones from the Old Testament's apple to Proust's Madeleine. Also the art of cooking shows many facets, from Eat Art, to today's chefs, as Ferran Adrià, who was invited to documenta 12. Regional (for example, French or Mexican) cuisine has been appointed as UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The origin, preparation and dramaturgy of food for survival or satisfaction and, once incorporated, digested, wasted or destroyed, are universal metaphors of transformation – but also of transgression (e.g. cannibalization in the aesthetics of Brazilian Modernismo).

The basic substance of food serves as fundamental interface between culture and life with dense, deep symbolic meanings and condensed knowledge of life. The plate is a microcosmic stage of surrounding dramas.

In her long and distinguished career, **Lívia Barbosa** has examined food both as a social anthropologist and as a consultant to various companies. The main objective of her talk was to outline the narratives around the topic of “healthy eating”. Her presentation was based on the results of a broader research project, which started in 2005 and is currently in its 3rd edition.

In a few introductory remarks, Lívia Barbosa presented a panorama of current topics regarding food. When doing research on food and eating, one problem stems from its invisibility as many processes are implicit. However, what once seemed of implicit importance (cooking, or eating) has become now explicit: the food we eat is also the food we talk about and the one we see in cinema and on TV. Foodscapes are built by artists, and food has become a cultural resource more than ever before; cooking can lead to stardom. Obsessively eating healthily can be classified as a new eating disorder (orthorexia).

The more we know about “healthy eating”, the more difficult we reach the right choice. Mary Eppstein states that food has replaced sexuality as a moral topic. Today, our morals are evaluated according to what we put on our plate; eating is perceived as a way to make yourself a better person. Two trends underline this observation: gastronomization of everyday life and the trend of healthy eating. As moral connotations of food are increasing, Lívia Barbosa noted that healthy eating is a social construct and has varied over time. The instructions preserved in the Abbey Library in St.Gallen about healthy food by a doctor of the 15th century prove to be quite the opposite from today’s advice.

Lívia Barbosa distinguishes four different eating discourses: functional/medical, political/ethical, spiritual, and popular eating. With respect to functional/medical food, Lívia Barbosa explained we tend to perceive food as medicine and as a therapy for everything (including cancer and Alzheimer). The responsibility to stay healthy is shifted to the individual. The second narrative interprets eating as a political or ethical act promoted by social movements. Producing and consuming healthy food becomes an act of humanity. To exercise and to shape and cure one’s body are corner stones in this discourse. The third narrative, the one of spiritual eating conceives of food as an ambassador of the cosmos in which everything is connected. The body is seen as a temple, which is entered by clean food only. The flow of energy and pollution are important

ideas in this context of eating mindfully. A fourth narrative refers to pop eating: we are obsessed with new ingredients that help us to stay healthy. These ingredients are subject to cycles and trends. In Brazil, tapioca has been promoted as the promise of health recently. A thin body is central in this conception.

In the social construction of healthy eating, different discourses are hard to separate. In all narratives we find aspects of spiritual eating dispersed. Mindfulness has become also a gastroenterologist concept. Energy and pollution are equally wide-spread, and clearing yourself appears in all discourses.

How do people deal with all of these different conceptions of healthy eating? Livia Barbosa explained that we tend to make a patchwork out of this, according to personal circumstances and preferences. Eating patterns differ during the week, as people are inclined to compensate their sins committed during the week at weekends. Lunch on Sundays with family and friends is important as a moment to let it go.

As organic food costs 100 to 150% more than the conventional one, healthy eating depends on resources. Even so, narratives of eating healthily can also be found in lower classes. Having turned into a matter of morality, eating correctly also becomes an increasingly public concern.

Thomas Rudolph and Melanie Basset started their presentation by asking the audience about each researcher's objective today. From the diversity of the given responses Thomas Rudolph concluded that it is more and more difficult to establish a clear answer as to what healthy eating entails: Hamburgers from McDonald's® could be healthy, if only the quantity was limited. He stated that the results obtained in research should generate more impact, as obesity has become an increasing and global problem. While 30% were obese in Switzerland in 1992, the number increased to 41% in 2012.

Melanie Basset summarized the changes in eating habits over the past years gained from a study with 100 consumers in Switzerland. The need to eat fastly has become more urgent than the need to eat with pleasure, inexpensively or healthily. These trends mirror substantial modifications of today's hectic lifestyle. 70% of people only take 15 minutes for breakfast, and home consumption has decreased dramatically, also during week-ends. At the same time, a growing dissatisfaction in the Swiss population has emerged probably due the discrepancy between the individuals' eating habits and his or her awareness of alternative, healthier options. It is therefore important to support people make healthier decisions.

While recommendations on eating decisions need to be personalized, such recommendations are difficult to achieve. Data collection is particularly sensitive in this area, as sleeping habits and personality traits all have an impact on our food choices. Activity trackers, google contact lenses

and similar new devices could not only be used in order to collect data, but also to coach consumers. While these devices are not yet accurate, they may soon be. In a video, Melanie Basset and Thomas Rudolph gave an outlook on a small computer to be carried on a wrist that could give advice as to which food is preferable and how much activity we would need based on the measured data.

The remarkable device incited some controversy in the audience as its use may not only be an enriching experience, but also discourage people. In a study conducted with 200 people, food intake and sleep was measured with such a device but the larger part of the participants gave up after only 4 days, as the app was too intrusive. Moreover, due to the multiple interpretations regarding the assessment of the healthiness of a particular decision, it may not be so simple to make a right recommendation. Trying out new things and innovation will not be encouraged by a programmed device.

Klazine van der Horst, a researcher at Nestlé, presented a way to measure food intake, different from the electronic devices. Food decisions tend to be quite difficult to be surveyed, since few people weigh their food, or even recall all of their consumption during a week. Keeping a food diary places a high burden on the participants of a study. Nestlé wanted to develop an electronic, accurate questionnaire to be used globally. In Switzerland and Europe, nutrition analysis software is available, such as Viocare and Food4me. Viocare presents people with pictures of food and asks them to indicate how frequently they eat this type of food and to adjust the portion they usually consume. This allows avoiding the painstaking process of conducting a food diary, but gives more accurate results than an ordinary questionnaire.

After this general introduction, Mrs. Van der Horst turned to a study on childrens' food consumption in Brazil, FITS/Kids (= Feeding Infants and Toddlers Survey). FITS/Kids complements the data available in Brazil, and measures food intake for children between 5 and 10 years old in the São Paulo Region. Existing data only track food intake for children at age ten and older, and Nestlé hopes to trigger an additional national study also for younger children. The company has collected nutritional data, food intake, weight and physical activity, meal timing and behavior patterns, such as eating in front of the TV, as well as the food preparation. This allows identifying risk groups (e.g. of obesity).

Pedro Marques-Vidal's presentation examined the patterns of obesity based on socioeconomic status and neighborhood. The Swiss health surveys from 1997, 2002, and 2007 based on self-reported data clearly indicate that obesity is lower in more educated people and that non-Swiss residents tend to be more obese. The CoLaus study, conducted with 6500 participants in the area

of Lausanne, is the only one that measured weight gain in a standardized way. The data shows that nationality affects weight gain, as marital status does. Surprisingly, and difficult to explain given the national data, weight gain was not associated with the educational level. Another interesting finding refers to obesity inclined to be clustered in neighborhoods: obese people live in the same areas, and so do lean people.

Tanja Schneider provided an anthropological perspective on the topic of food, and presenting three case studies of organizations advocating more ecological or healthier food alternatives through online tools: the *buycott app*, *foodwaste*, and a wiki-based online consumer protection community.

The lines of comparison for the three cases were agenda-setting, the kind of evidence accepted by the organization, and the modes of action employed. *Buycott* converts mobiles to barcode scanners for food, providing certain information to consumers when they decide what to buy. The idea could be summarized by “vote with your wallet”. *Buycott* is a neutral platform, diffusing knowledge provided by its users. Accordingly, it does not follow a clear line, and defends different and even opposing issues. *How-to-buy-Wiki* provides an open source internet platform promoting product transparency. *Foodwaste* requires membership as it is an independent not-for-profit organization, campaigning for a number of issues. Newsletters are its main form of action. Regarding agenda setting and core values, differences between the organizations emerge. *Buycott* is relatively neutral as its agenda is shaped by the masses. *Wiki's* agenda is also set by users advocating transparency and sustainability. *Foodwatch* sets its agenda autonomously, in the headquarters in Berlin, Amsterdam and Paris.

The kind of evidence taken into account by the different initiatives varies as well. With *Buycott*, campaign organizers establish rules for accepted information. *How-to-buy-Wiki* has an advisory board that checks the reliability of the data. *Foodwatch* equally relies on the organization's expertise for the assessment of the data.

Buycott builds small actions by many consumers everyday, but it hopes to expand into a wider realm and to affect a general audiences as well as public discussions. *How-to-buy-Wiki* tries to pressure corporations by naming and shaming, as does *Foodwatch*. One very important insight regards the platforms themselves reproducing certain logics and digital platforms becoming part of the activist landscape.

Peter Braun started his presentation exploring the different notions of eating healthily, which in this context, may refer to human health, economic, global, or environmental health.

With respect to eating habits, differences across the demographic groups can be observed in Brazil and Switzerland. Millennials inform themselves about their options via the internet. Best agers (age 30–60) are more cautious about their choices, but willing to consume and open to change. For high agers (between 70 and 80) it is particularly important to eat healthily.

In Switzerland the following trends can be observed: people look for honest and truthful food and ask for transparency and sustainability. At the same time, they ask for comfortable and convenient products. New technologies offer new solutions to these needs. In Switzerland, producers form local or smaller networks, as small is associated with natural and healthy. Online shops for natural and organic food trace the products back to the producers. If a product can be traced to its true origin, it is also assumed to be healthy. The business model of direct farming is not new, but its online marketing is a novelty. These business models are disruptive, as they bypass conventional retailers.

Thomas Brunner started his talk with the question of how we can nudge people into a healthy behavior. Originally, his research was based on an online survey of 16 pages gathering data on 400 participants. The survey entailed a food frequency questionnaire and checked for the food pyramid compliance.

Since this questionnaire was rather labourous for the participants and did not provide very evident results, Thomas Brunner conducted additional experimental studies. During chocolate-tasting, participants were exposed to either a screen displaying an artwork by Giacometti or one by Rothko. People that were exposed to Giacommetti ate significantly less chocolate, than those looking at Rothko. Following these results, vending machines were adapted and decorated either with Giacometti, pictures of a fun fair, and pictures displaying people in a sport field. The Giacommetti vending machines sold significantly fewer chocolates, and the healthy snacks tripled.

In a second experiment, individuals completed a number of tasks. While they were busy with these exercises, they could help themselves to chocolate bars that were presented in different conditions. People ate less, when they had to unwrap the chocolate, and even fewer, when they had to serve themselves with sugar tongs. The same pattern could be observed when a healthier option, dried apricots, was presented.

Vanessa Boanada presented her research on the impact of a dam construction on riverine people of the Amazon in Brazil. Food is part of her research, as the building of a dam and the consequent relocation also affects food choices of the local population. The research project monitors the social and environmental changes in the area where the dam is constructed over a period of five years.

The dam construction forces people into more urban settings, as their original homes are flooded. Riverine people can be characterized as resourceful and mobile with a rich inherited tradition. However, even though they adapt very well to different Amazonian environments, urbanization, road construction, infrastructure and voluntary migration leads to a marked change in their daily lives. They stop following traditional activities, such as rubber tapping; other habits emerge, such as buying food in town. Double housing, the practice to have one house near the Amazon and a second one in town, becomes obsolete as the Brazilian government does not reconstitute second homes when the area is flooded.

Vanessa Boanada conducted life-story interviews with 40 families. The narratives evolve around their prior life and earlier migration. In these interviews, eating habits were also analyzed. One obvious change with respect to food affected the main source of protein for riverine people, fish from the Amazon, replaced by food bought from the supermarket. The main concerns are diminished autonomy and dependence on the supermarket. Whether or not this also may cause food insecurity is a topic for further studies. The adaptation to urban life also involves replicating some of the patterns practiced before: riverine people establish edible gardens, and traditional fishing partially persists; the fish is sold in front of the families' houses.

Overall, these changes indicate that adaptability is a matter of individual responsibility, and public policy outsources this burden to individuals.

Emerson Ferreira Queiroz presented insights on Brazilian biodiversity, which bears a potential for pharmaceutical applications. Brazil hosts 1/5 of the world's biodiversity, that is, 50.000 species of plants in very diverse ecosystems.

Different medications have already been developed stemming from Brazilian plants: *Atractium* molecules can be isolated from the *Condrodendron tomentosum*, in order to paralyze the muscles before a surgery; the *Stevia* plant provides sweet glycosides used by Coca Cola ®. Normally, the medical uses of the plants are known to indigenous communities, but are not included in formal drugs.

It is difficult to identify a new component. Emerson Ferreira explained the different phases in the chemical synthesis process: extraction, fractionation (isolation of molecules), purification, constituents and identification of the molecule responsible for the activity of the substance. The University of Geneva has developed a new method of identifying components with only a few micrograms of the organic material, which is a huge advantage, given that the material has to be transported from Brazil. Usually, only some grams are needed in order to test components.

In a joint research program between Switzerland and Brazil, different fruits are analyzed. Two Brazilian students joined the research team in Geneva. Different publications as well as one pa-

tent originated from the collaboration. That pharmaceutical industries move towards functional food can also be considered an interesting trend. In contrast to drugs, food does not need to pass various tests to have the impact proven. It takes about 10-15 years from discovering a component to getting a drug approved, and therefore functional food is an attractive option.

Jéremie Forney's talk examined Swiss trends in local food and framed it theoretically by questioning scales of locality in particular for the example of cheese.

“Local” food in the Swiss context has gained currency also through the retailers’ labels, such as *Miini Region* by Migros. A new consideration is added to buying food as a very conscious decision. However, “local” is not always better. Food could still be produced by low-paid, migrant workers. Moreover, the retailers’ strategy is to put the same product in a different package: carrots were always locally sourced, but are now marketed with *Miini region*. Local food does not question the diet either, it is not a healthier option *per se*. This adds a further dimension to the complexity of the discussion.

What is perceived as local depends on the context. In Switzerland, it may mean the same community, the same canton, or some entirely different space. The discussion about the scale and fixed borders is also psychologically charged.

The example of Gruyère cheese shows this very well. It is staple in a Swiss context, but exported becomes a top luxury cheese abroad. “Local” changes its meaning in these different contexts. Marketing referring to a specific region replaces former state protectionism and asks consumers to be even more cautious.

Eberhard Wolff challenged the general notion of healthy food in his talk, as healthy is always a socially constructed term. Discourses around eating are culturally determined and morally loaded.

Looking at a film excerpt of Woody Allen’s *The Sleeper* (1973) shows this through inter-language comparisons in the different translations of the subtitled English version exhibiting culturally determined ideas about food.

If the English version features one type of food (i.e. *Tiger’s Milk*, a vitamin bar in the 1970’s) as a particularly healthy example, this might be a different type of food in the German translation and yet another example in the Spanish version. While a healthy restaurant in the English version is “vegetarian”, it is “ecológico” in the Spanish version, and called “Reformmarkt” in the German translation.

Jonna Cohen analyzed the question of how US Latinas are empowering themselves through food in an indoor farm (growhouse) in Colorado. She traced the different aspects of empowerment: power *over*, power *to*, power *from within*, and power *with*. The term originated from the feminist discourse and found its way to other fields thereafter.

Applying the concept to the specific case of the growhouse, Jonna Cohen explored how women are led to nourish themselves and learn how to grow their own vegetables or how to create a worm composting place. The aim is to reach self-sufficient urban gardening.

Empowerment happens also through community building and mutual support. Redefining wealth is an important aspect in the growhouse: its aim is not to increase economic wealth, but community or cultural wealth. Moreover, it can be considered as a form of political empowerment making decisions visible or symbolic empowerment, since Latinas set the seed of success, or plant seeds of questioning. These processes of resistance activate and build on prior knowledge.

Dominik Mösching explored how global networks and local practices co-evolve in the case of Colombian coffee. Relying on ethnographic methods, in order to advance a multi-local project, he applied three concepts to analyze coffee production: chain, network, and globalization. The concept of a chain has to be redefined in the context of coffee. Dots and lines can be made and unmade, and practices have different locations; the linearity of a chain does not reflect this flexibility. Direct trade allows translocal connections; and big companies, such as Starbucks and Nespresso source their coffee locally. Traceability becomes an important issue, as coffee is not just packed and unpacked, but de- and re-acknowledged.

Micaela Díaz Rosaenz' research focuses on the links between consumption and citizenship. In her presentation, she compared how a Brazilian barbecue (*churrasquinho*) differs in the Morro, a slum, and Asfalto, a middle-class neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro. A *churrasquinho* in the Morro allows people to transact, but doesn't provide a space to stay for a long time. Food shops are not controlled and do not require a license, and there is no control over salubrity or the origin of the food. The *churrasquinho* in the Asfalto means that people prepare the meat privately and stay together for longer periods of time. There is more control over hygienic issues if one is invited to the *churrasquinho* in the Asfalto, as the food is prepared at home.

Frank Burose presented the Competence Centre for Food Industry whose aim is to diffuse information within the food industry and to build a competence network. Connections with universities and with public and private actors are encouraged in order to facilitate a transfer from research to practice. The Centre pursues three goals: fit for the market, fit for partners, and fit for

news. The network expands over Schaffhausen, Zürich, Thurgau and Appenzell Ausserrhoden providing newsletters and organizing events.