

Reframing Convenience Food

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Preface and Acknowledgements

What do we mean when we refer to convenience food? How do consumers make sense of the category? How do they combine it with other kinds of food and modes of cooking? How do they incorporate it into their everyday lives and what are its consequences in terms of public health and environmental sustainability? These are some of the questions that this book seeks to answer, challenging received wisdom, taken-for-granted ideas and common-sense assumptions about the topic. By rooting our understanding of convenience food in the mundane practices of everyday life, we seek to reframe the subject, questioning how the popularity and commercial success of convenience food can be reconciled with its conventional positioning as unhealthy and unsustainable. How to resolve this paradox lies at the heart of our suggested reframing of convenience food.

The research on which the book is based was funded under the FP7 ERA-Net SUSFOOD programme on sustainable food production and consumption (FP7-291766). The SUSFOOD programme aims to reinforce cooperation in research, development and innovation between EU members and associated States in order to maximize the contribution of research to the development of more sustainable food systems. The book was written during the Brexit process, when the UK was negotiating its departure from the EU. Working together has, however, only strengthened the authors' common commitment to collaborative working within

and beyond the European Research Area. We are also happy to acknowledge our gratitude to Nikola Schulz, the SUSFOOD project manager, to Annika Fuchs at the Federal Agency of Agriculture and Food (BLE) in Germany, and to our European funding partners: the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture in Germany (BMEL), the Danish Research Council (DASTI), the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) in the UK and the Swedish Research Council (FORMAS).

The book reports on four case studies (commercial baby food, supermarket ready meals, workplace canteen food and home-delivered meal boxes) all of which offer ease and convenience to consumers at different points in the cycle of planning, shopping, cooking, eating and clearing up. The research was undertaken in Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the UK, by a multi-disciplinary research team with expertise in anthropology, geography, sociology and communications research. Our aim has been to work across the four countries and to integrate the case studies. Individual chapters may focus on one country and one kind of convenience food (such as supermarket ready meals in the UK or meal-box schemes in Denmark). But each chapter is organized thematically and includes comparative material from across the four cases with the aim of producing a genuinely integrated, international and interdisciplinary study.

Each chapter was initially drafted by one or two authors and they are credited here: the original version of Chap. 1 was drafted by Peter Jackson, Chap. 2 by Peter Jackson and Jonathan Everts, Chap. 3 by Bente Halkier, Chap. 4 by Helene Brembeck and Maria Fuentes, Chap. 5 by Jonathan Everts and Peter Jackson, Chap. 6 by Christine Wenzl and Jonathan Everts, Chap. 7 by Bente Halkier and Angela Meah, Chap. 8 by Angela Meah and Maria Fuentes, and Chaps. 9 and 10 by Peter Jackson. But, in each case, other authors contributed to successive drafts so that every chapter is multi-authored and the book is a truly collective endeavour.

Our collaboration was greatly enhanced by periodic writing workshops in Gothenburg, Mallorca and Sheffield where successive chapters were read and discussed, arguments were refined and new examples added prior to redrafting and recirculation. We also presented our work at several international meetings, sharing preliminary thoughts with each other, with invited discussants and wider audiences. The following

meetings were particularly productive and we would like to thank the organizers for creating the opportunity for open dialogue and lively debate: the Nordic Conference on Consumer Research meetings in Vaasa (2014) and Aarhus (2016) and the European Sociological Association meetings in Prague (2015) and Bologna (2016).

Finally, we would like to thank our home universities and academic departments for providing a stimulating and supportive environment for our research. These include: the Department of Geography at the University of Sheffield where Peter Jackson and Angela Meah are based; the Centre for Consumer Science (CFK) at the University of Gothenburg where Helene Brembeck and Marie Fuentes are based; the Department of Communication at Roskilde University where Bente Halkier began the project and where Frej Daniel Hertz's doctoral research is based; the Department of Sociology at Copenhagen University to which Bente Halkier transferred in 2016; and the Department of Geography at the University of Bonn when Jonathan Everts began the project, before moving to Dresden and then to Halle Universities. Valerie Viehoff was also employed in Bonn while working in the UK and Germany, and Christine Wenzl's PhD research is based there. It is a measure of the openness of our academic communities and the porousness of disciplinary boundaries that several of us spent time at each other's institutions, sharing ideas and deepening our understanding of our four countries and their relationship with (different kinds of) convenience food. We are grateful for such collegiality and for all the opportunities we have been afforded in the process of working together. Our families also deserve our special thanks for enabling us to work on this project, including days spent away from home and hours working late. Thanks for the many ways you have enriched our lives and for making our work on this book more convenient.

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