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**Worshipping Nature and the Body: The Personal, Political, and Spiritual Dimension of the Alternative Food Movement in the 1970s**

The case study explores the countercultural food movement in 1970s America and how it created resonance through social practices of shopping, cooking, and eating, which were endowed with a religious dimension. Books such as Francis More Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet* preached their readers to savor food and its preparation as an act of community building and of worship at the same time (Lappé 1985). Lappé had begun her project of creating guidelines for a better life in 1970 with a one-page handout at the University of Berkeley, which she turned into a cook book immediately thereafter and sold more than two million copies in the years that followed. Both cook book and political manifesto, it helped build the spiritual zeal of the counterculture, how it was acted out and reiterated in the quotidian practices of buying, cooking, sharing, and eating food. Vegetarian, organic, or macrobiotic diets were seen as worshipping the 'body-temple', bringing the individual in harmony with the community and a divine 'mother nature' (Belasco 1989).

The aim of the project is to trace the spiritual zeal of the countercultural, organic, and health food movements, how it sought to establish certain food routines and how it was nurtured by these food routines and their resonance. The project will draw on cook books, food manuals and food magazines as its major sources. Cooking manuals such as Lappé's and others' are by definition meant to safeguard the repeatability and habitualization of food rituals and to guide the proper course of steps and of the whole procedure (Büttner and Keck 2018).

A set of diverse materials, cook book collections and qualitative oral history interviews, will allow us to research the religious zeal of the countercultural food movement with respect to the four different, yet interrelated dimensions of resonance: *First*, with regard to the *dimension of the self*, the case study will explore how people's bodies were conceptualised as primary sites of experience of their relation to themselves and to the world. *Second*, with regard to the *social dimension* the project will analyze the practices of food worshipping and how they forged a vibrant, quasi-religious cooperation and community of peers, devoted to the creation of a 'better world.' *Third*, in a *material dimension* the project will interrogate the agency of foodstuffs and how they partook in the shaping of a more holistic and spiritual relation to nature, the community, the self and its 'body-temple'. *Fourth*, in a *vertical dimension of transcendental relationships* the project will delineate how eating right developed into a crucial concept and practice for seeking to build a better community and a better world that was to be shaped through the worshipping of nature and the body in daily dieting practices.

Methodologically, besides ritual and resonance theory and the ongoing discussions triggered by it, the project benefits from recent intense debates on actor-network-theory (Latour 2005) and on the power of things and assemblages. In particular, it will explore how different types

of actors (human beings, food stuffs, and others) interact and thus shape complex networks, and how power unfolds in these assemblages (Bennett 2010).

In food history, the counterculture has received surprisingly little attention. Warren Belasco's *Appetite for Change* from 1989 is still the authoritative work in this field. Michelle Mart's (2015) work on Rachel Carson and the overlaps of the food and environmental movement takes first steps into the direction of the religious zeal of the movement with regard to 'eating right'. Major studies on the ambivalence and normative power of the urge to live a healthy lifestyle are Charlotte Biltekoff's *Eating Right* (2013) or Julie Guthman's *Weighing In* (2011), or, with regard to complementary fitness practices, the Principal Investigator's *Das Zeitalter der Fitness*. Similarly, the power of foodstuffs and the agency of food items is central to *Fat Agency* (2015) and on *Food, Power and Agency* (2016).

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