

## **Introduction: Mapping Food and Globalisation**

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Food and globalisation are inseparable. Since ancient times long-distant trade has involved staple foods and luxury products such as wine, tea, coffee, rice, spices and dried fish. Securing greater access to food was a driving force behind colonial expansion and imperial power. Food markets were the first to become globally integrated, linking distant areas and cultures of the world. In no other area have the interactions between global exchange and local practices been as discernable as in changing food cultures. Food consumption plays a crucial role in the construction of local and national identities and in the changing self-understanding of social groups, migrants and ethnic communities. But food consumption and distribution have also been major arenas of political contention and social protest, ranging from demands for food entitlements and social citizenship to distributional conflicts between producers and consumers, from movements for ‘free trade’ to those championing ‘fair trade’. Yet, in much of the literature on ‘globalisation’ food has played little more than a Cinderella role, marginalized and subordinate to the leading cast of financial markets, migration, communication and transnational political cooperation.

Food has played a distinctive role in the course of globalisation, arguably as if not more important than those of finance, transport, and industry that tends to dominate writing on the subject. Human societies can manage without money, telegraph cables, or cotton goods. They cannot go without food. Food is an essential of human existence. It concerns culture as well as calories. In the 1960s Lévi-Strauss singled out food as a way of decoding the unconscious attitudes of a society.<sup>1</sup> Since then anthropologists have moved away from a structuralist reading of food, stressing instead processes of internal differentiation as well as the influence of external factors like political economy.<sup>2</sup> Food helps to order and classify social norms and relations – dogmeat on a plate may be a sign of impurity and barbarism in some cultures, a tasty delicatessen

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<sup>1</sup> C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (New York, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> J. Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class* (Cambridge, 1982).

in another. These orders are unstable, with room for change over time as well as subject to internal differentiation. Still, it is possible to highlight certain properties and mechanism that makes food such a central and contested medium in the history of globalisation. Most existentially, food is about survival. Unlike any other commodity traded through global networks, food becomes part of our human body and selves. ‘You cannot eat money’ – nor can you eat the electrodes of global communication networks. Food, by contrast, is ingested and digested, its nutrients being broken up and absorbed by our body, our organs and tissues. Food becomes part of us. It should therefore not be surprising that food is an important source of personal identity and public anxieties. ‘You are what you eat’. In addition to its nutritional qualities, food involves processes of sociability and communication. Food is not just swallowed but prepared, arranged, and displayed. It requires additional receptacles, cooking utensils, and spaces for storage, cooking, and consuming. Eating is a social process which shapes family and communal relations through its changing routines and rituals – the evolution of breakfast, the Thanksgiving dinner, and so forth. A fast food restaurant like McDonald’s can be a social meeting place, a space for teenagers to hang-out after school, as well as a counter for take-away food.<sup>3</sup> Food, too, involves taste and taste formation. It is a marker of social distinction – hence Michelin stars and celebrity restaurants, and the practice of eating out.<sup>4</sup> It is also a marker of national identity and civilisation – the ‘white loaf’ that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came to symbolise civilisation and liberty versus the ‘dark bread’ marking barbarism and dependence. As Felipe Fernández-Armesto has neatly put it, food ‘is what matters most to most people for most of the time.’<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> J. L. Watson (ed) *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia* (Stanford, CA, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> The literature on food, status and taste, and on the practice of eating out is vast. A good starting point is A. Warde, *Consumption, Food and Taste: Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture* (London, 1997). See also the anthropological perspectives in P. Caplan (ed) *Food, Health and Identity* (London, 1997); P. Weissner and W. Schiefenhover (eds), *Food and the Status Quest: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Providence, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> F. Fernández-Armesto, *Food: A History* (London, 2002), p. xiii. Additional overviews can be found in K. F. Kiple, *A Movable Feast: Ten Millenia of Food Globalization* (Cambridge, 2007); M. Montanari, *The Culture of Food* (Oxford, 1994); R. Tannahill, *Food in History* (London, 1973).

It is therefore not surprising that food has been at the forefront in the current battle over globalisation, with French activist farmers smashing their way into a McDonald's and international social movements agitating against genetically-modified crops. Food serves as a lightning rod for all sorts of anxieties and disquiet about the human condition in late modernity, about the speed of life (fast food/slow food), the dominance of science ('Frankenfoods'), a loss of 'authenticity' and diminishing connection with nature (industrial versus organic foods), the invasion of the local by the global (McDonaldisation), and physiological and mental stress and disease (obesity and bulimia). There are arguments to be had about the ways in which public debate about these subjects has become polarized, sometimes at the expense of scientific truth and critical reflection; biotechnology, for example, is not just the result of capitalist monopoly imposed by international corporations but has been promoted by peasants (often illegally) and the governments of India and China – nor are fears of a 'terminator' technology based on fact.<sup>6</sup> But it is equally important to place such current debates in their long-term historical context, to understand the pathways and traditions out of which contemporary concerns and developments, and to recognise the multiple and often contradictory dynamics of the pairing of food and globalisation in the past.

This volume offers a series of entry points into these dynamics and tensions, with chapters exploring the relationships between empire and markets, migration and identities, global and local actors, and food and ethics. Ironically, the very centrality of food in human history has tended to make our understanding of these global dynamics more, not less, fractured. The study of food is marked by fragmentation, broken up into specialist inquiries into nutrition or status, environment or political economy, food chains or cultural symbolism.<sup>7</sup> This volume tries to move in the opposite direction, creating points of contact between scholars from history, geography, anthropology, and science studies. One genre that has offered a synthetic perspective in recent years has been that of the 'commodity biography'. We now have case studies of sugar, cod, the

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<sup>6</sup> See R. J. Herring, 'Why did „Operation Cremate Monsanto“ Fail? Science and Class in India's Great Terminator-Technology Hoax', *Critical Asian Studies*, 38:4 (2006), pp. 467-93.

<sup>7</sup> As a rare example of interdisciplinary cooperation see R. Grew (ed), *Food in Global History* (Boulder, Colo., 1999).

pineapple and many more which trace the production, diffusion, consumption and representation of a single foodstuff to illuminate the worlds of labour, power, and material culture that helped to circulate it.<sup>8</sup> In this volume, we also include particular foodstuffs, like coffee and rice, but we are equally keen to explore the local and international settings, the political traditions and social and ethnic groups that shaped the way in which food has been produced, traded, consumed, and connected to moralities and identities.

Conversely, a focus on food also helps to provide a more historical perspective on globalisation. Globalisation has been described as ‘a process which embodies a transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions - assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact - generating transcontinental or interregional networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power’.<sup>9</sup> For historians, the critical term in such a definition is ‘process.’ Instead of invoking an abstract concept or formal model, as often the case in the social sciences, we pursue a more historical understanding of globalisation, exploring change over time. Instead of a unique condition or a distinct state of the world, globalisation is better conceived as an evolving process. However, we sustain that globalisation is not irreversible, nor does it follow the logic of a simple linear development. Rather it is historically contingent in several ways. There have been both periods of global integration *and* disintegration in modern history. Even in periods of accelerated global integration, not all parts of society follow the same pattern, nor do all regions and nations of the world. Globalisation is uneven and incomplete. It refers to a complex process of inclusion and exclusion, of changing cultural, social and economic hierarchies, which constantly redefine the boundaries between groups, states, and nations.<sup>10</sup> Nor is globalisation a ‘natural’ or self-sustained process. It depends on the ideas, perceptions and

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<sup>8</sup> S. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*; M. Kurlansky, *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World* (London, 1998); M. Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (New York, 2002); F. Beaman, *The Pineapple: King of Fruits* (London, 2005); M. Redclift, *Chewing Gum: The Fortunes of Taste* (London, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> David Held, David Goldblatt, Anthony McGrew and Jonathan Perraton, *Global transformations. Politics, Economics and Culture*, (Stanford, Ca., 1999). p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> M. H. Geyer and J. Paulmann, ‘Introduction: The Mechanics of Internationalism’, in: M. H. Geyer and J. Paulmann (eds), *The mechanics of Internationalism. Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1849s to the First World War* (Oxford, 2001), p. 6.

interests of individual and collective actors. And, globalisation has always faced strong resistance from those who feared negative consequences.<sup>11</sup> Political and social conflicts have thus been inherent in globalisation. We cannot therefore fully understand this phenomenon by merely analyzing structural changes and developments such as migration, capital flows or trade. We also must include cultural perceptions, political debates and social practices that shape globalisation. As in all historical circumstances, chance, contingency and agency play a major role.

To question a deterministic and teleological reading of globalisation also means to accept that this process has not simply been a diffusion of Western hegemony and values. Recent studies by historians and social scientists tend to see globalisation as a fragmented and multi-centred process, rather than framing it in terms of homogeneity and linearity.<sup>12</sup> To speak of ‘multiple globalisations’ is to recognise the non-western roots of global trade and the intersections between a diverse set of global circuits. Globalisation of food production and consumption has not exclusively been linked to the rise of industrial economies and modern trade institutions in the Atlantic World. There was an Asian path to global food markets too. It is problematic to presume that globalisation produces ‘a single world market’ as classic trade models suggest. Instead, different regional markets emerged that were interconnected but not fully integrated. The development of different trade areas in the contemporary world (European Union, North American Free Trade Area, The Association of South East Asian Nations) is evidence of the ‘regionalist’, multi-centred logic of globalisation.

When to date globalisation is a highly controversial and contentious issue. Some authors view the last two decades as a distinct, radically new era marked by the rise of the global economy, the emergence of institutions of global governance, and the global diffusion and hybridisation of

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<sup>11</sup> See A. Hurrell and N. Woods (eds.), *Inequality, Globalization and World Politics* (Oxford, 1999); E. Rieger and St. Leibfried, ‘Welfare State Limits to Globalization’, *Politics & Society* 26 (1998), pp. 363-390; J. Brewer and F. Trentmann (eds), *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges* (Oxford and New York, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis, 1996); A. Amin and N. Thrift, *Globalization, Institutions and Regional Development in Europe* (Oxford, 1994); *Globalizations and Social Movements: Culture, Power, and the Transnational Public Sphere*. Edited by J. A. Guidry, M. D. Kennedy, and M. N. Zald (Ann Arbor, 2000).

cultures. From this point of view, contemporary globalisation represents a wholly novel condition, which has been linked to the idea of a ‘second modernity.’<sup>13</sup> Other scholars have been more prepared to stretch the phenomenon back in time but want to reserve it to the era of industrial modernity. In this view, the decades before the First World War witnessed a first era of globalisation that radically set it aside from earlier economic periods.<sup>14</sup> True, it was only when industrial production, steamships, and telegraphs compressed time and space in the nineteenth century, that world markets become integrated, in the sense that a fully shared common market emerged with converging commodity prices and factor incomes. The years between 1870 and 1914 saw the breakthrough of an integrated global food and trade system. Prices tell the story. In 1870 the price of wheat in Liverpool was still 58% higher than that in Chicago. By 1913 the difference had fallen to a mere 13%. If in the late 1860s it still cost 4s 7 1/2d. to ship a quarter of wheat from New York to Liverpool, the price had fallen to 11 1/2d. by 1902.<sup>15</sup> To emphasize the very recent history of globalisation in this sense might be true in a strictly quantitative sense concerned with market integration and converging prices; it is equally well though to recognise that even today the scope and reach of globalisation remains uneven, with over a billion people living in abject poverty, excluded from the technological, financial, and consumption networks that connect the better-off populations on this planet. Still, a focus on converging price data can unduly distract from the quantitative as well as qualitative significance of global cultural and material exchanges in earlier periods. Even in the eighteenth century, global flows of food were not limited to luxury consumption. They involved growing numbers of plebeian European consumers and producers; teapots were a widespread accessory in the lodging houses frequented by the poor in eighteenth century London.<sup>16</sup> Nor was trade in food limited to the Atlantic economy or inter-Asian trade, as sometimes presumed.

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<sup>13</sup> U. Beck, *What is globalization?* (Cambridge, UK, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> M. Geyer and Ch. Bright, ‘World History in a Global Age’, in: *American Historical Review* 100 (1995), p. 1034-60; K. H. O’Rourke and J. G. Williamson, ‘When did globalisation begin?’, in: *European Review of Economic History* 6 (2002), p. 23-50.

<sup>15</sup> W.W. Rostow, *The World Economy* (London, 1978), pp. 161 ff. For the importance of shipping, see K. O’Rourke and J. G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge MA, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> J. Styles, book on plebeian consumption (New Haven CT, forthcoming).

Another group of scholars approaches globalisation from the very opposite end of human history. Here globalisation is a phenomenon as old as humanity itself. Arguably the birth of globalisation lies back some 60,000 years when the first humans migrated from Africa. Standardised food production began about 10,000 years before the first McDonald's opened, when wild rye and wheat was brought under cultivation and Asian jungle fowl became the chicken of European consumers.<sup>17</sup>

The focus of this volume is to recover the material, political, and moral dynamics of food, connecting early modern to contemporary processes of globalisation. This is not to deny the significance of much older transformations, such as the domestication of animals, when hunters became farmers, the invention of cooking, or the ways in which food became ritualised in the world religions. But the period between the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries saw a qualitative change of a different order, marked by the Columbian exchange, the expansion of transatlantic and Asian commercial and imperial networks, the spread of new technologies and knowledge, the push of industrialisation, a time when transport and communication systems bridged spatial distance and when world-wide mass migration changed societies and cultures fostering a world of unprecedented global exchange of goods, services and people.

The trade in spices, sugar, and later wheat expanded by leaps and bounds, tying together distant regions in new networks of production, trade, and consumption. Trade with pepper and other spices between Asia and Europe increased in the sixteenth century, when direct maritime contacts were established between the two continents. In 1500, the amount of spices imported was roughly 2,400 tons. By 1700 it had risen to 8,500 tons.<sup>18</sup> Even more important for European consumers were sugar imports, which in the same period increased from a few tons to about 80,000 tons. By 1700, sugar imports (measured in terms of volume) represented about 75% of all agricultural imports from the tropical and semi-tropical regions. Initially a drug and a luxury product sugar

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<sup>17</sup> See, most recently, K. F. Kiple, *A Movable Feast: Ten Millennia of Food Globalization* (Cambridge, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> C. H. Wake, 'The changing pattern of European pepper and spice imports, 1400-1700', *Journal of European Economic History*, 8 (1979), pp. 361-403.

spread to all social groups in the seventeenth century. In the course of the nineteenth century, exports of crops from the southern hemisphere to Europe increased rapidly. While in 1790, their overall quantity amounted to roughly 400.000 tons, exports from the ‘Third World’ had reached 18.500.000 tons on the eve of the First World War.<sup>19</sup> Most of this expansion took place after 1850, when European demand for staple food rose dramatically and declining transportation costs made intercontinental trade more profitable. Between 1850 and 1913, world trade in agricultural products grew at a faster pace than ever before, at an average annual rate of 3.44 per cent. In 1913, food accounted for 27% of world exports.<sup>20</sup>

Numbers, however, only tell part of the story of what was a new phase in globalisation. The trade in new foods went hand in hand with processes of imperial expansion and migration, new systems of production, distribution and consumption, tensions between cultural imperialism, on the one hand, and hybridisation and resistance on the other, the rise of new organised producer and consumer agencies, battles between free trade and protectionism, emerging new knowledge regimes in nutrition and science, and a reshaping of social and ethnic identities. It was the moral geography of food that was transformed in this period, as much as the price on the world market.

### **Empire, Markets and Power**

Current political battles over food and globalisation are nothing new. From the outset, global food exchanges have been embedded in imperial and economic power structures. The discovery of the New World, the expansion of Europe and the emergence of modern colonial systems in the late fifteenth century created intensive networks of food and trade between the Americas, the Caribbean and the metropolises of Europe. The Atlantic World was the centre-stage of an integrated system of food chains linking the plantation economy of the Caribbean, Brazil and

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<sup>19</sup> P. Bairoch, *Economics and World History* (Chicago, 1995), p. 93.

<sup>20</sup> W.A. Lewis, ‘The Rate of Growth of World Trade 1870-1913’, in *The World Economic Order: Past and Prospects*, ed. by S. Grassman and Erik Lundberg (London, 1981); see also: G. Federico, *Feeding the world: An economic history of agriculture, 1800-2000* (Princeton, 2005); O’Rourke and Williamson, *Globalization*.

Peru with European consumers – the ‘first planetary empires’ in Sidney Mintz’ apt phrase.<sup>21</sup> In South-East Asia, the Islamic World and parts of Oceania, European commercial organisations like the Dutch and the English East India companies organized many aspects of colonial trade and governance a long time before formal colonial governments were established. As William Clarence Smith shows in his contribution, trade with spices, tea, coffee beans or cacao were at the core of a rapidly growing commercial space that stretched from China across Vietnam and Arabia to Europe and the New World. Europe played an important role in these trade networks with rapidly expanding consumer markets, but it was not the only player. Other regions mattered too.

The recent debate about the cause of the ‘great divergence’ between the West and the East -- that is why the European and North American economies began to pull ahead in the course of the nineteenth century -- has focused fresh attention to the relationship between the wealth of nations and colonial exploitation.<sup>22</sup> This debate, of course, has a long history, stretching back three centuries to the controversy between mercantilists and the advocates of a new science of political economy, most famously Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776) which emphasized the gains from trade and the costs of territorial empire. More recent revisionist writers like Ken Pomeranz have emphasized the role of a slaved-based system of extraction in the colonies to the economic growth of the imperial core.<sup>23</sup> How much slavery and imperial exploitation precisely explain the growth of European societies as opposed to the development of Asian economies is a subject of on-going debate.<sup>24</sup> Still, there can be little doubt that consumer societies in Britain, France or the Netherlands would have developed quite differently without colonies. In his contribution, Mintz links the rise and transformation of colonial regimes to the emergence of a ‘global food system’,

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<sup>21</sup> Sidney Mintz in this volume.

<sup>22</sup> See P. Bairoch, *Economics and World History. Myths and Paradoxes* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 57-98, P. O’Brien, *Colonies in a Globalizing Economy, 1815-1948*, Working Papers of the Global Economic History Network (GEHN), 08/04, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> K. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> P. C. C. Huang, 'Development or Involution in Eighteen-Century Britain and China? A Review of Keith Pomeranz's "The Greater Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy"', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 61(2) (2002), pp. 501-38; P. Parthasarathi, 'The Great Divergence', *Past and present* 176 (1) (2002), pp. 275-93.

a process that evolved in several stages over the past five hundred years. Colonialism cast a long and profound legacy on international food regimes. In the nineteenth century, mass migration led to the reorganisation of agriculture in the old and the new world. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the spread of free trade in Europe, starting with the repeal of the corn laws in Britain (1846) and then spreading to Continental Europe and beyond, opened the expanding consumer markets of the industrial nations to the rest of the world.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, the more open liberal commercial order eliminated the preferential access of British West Indian sugar planters, who faced growing competition from the expanding beet sugar industry in Europe.

This was only one facet of a dramatic change in the relationships between European metropolises and their colonies. The ‘colonial settler regime’ began to supplant the older colonial system of exotic goods and spices. In the second half of the nineteenth century overseas production of wheat and meat rapidly expanded within a global trade network. This expansion was not located in the tropics or subtropical zones but took place in temperate climates in the former colonies of the European settlement in the United States, Argentina and Chile, and in the remaining white-settler colonies of the British Empire, like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. At no stage in the late nineteenth century was this global economy of food ever fully liberal or open; Canada and Australia as well as the United States retained important tariffs and trade barriers. Still, technological advances in shipping and refrigeration facilitated a thickening of commercial ties between the new and the old worlds. And, after the pressure of the ‘great depression’ in the late nineteenth century, the decade before the First World War witnessed intensified global flows of finance and services.

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<sup>25</sup> P. Bairoch, ‘European trade policy, 1815-1914,’ in *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, eds. P. Mathias and S. Pollard, VIII (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 1-160. For the European free trade moment and the collapse of the Cobden-Chevalier treaty network, see P. Marsh, *Bargaining on Europe: Britain and the first Common Market, 1860-92* (New Haven CT). Just how much material difference the most-favoured-nation-treatment in these treaties made for international trade is a subject of debate. For a revisionist view, assigning it at best a marginal role, see O. Accominotti and M. Flandreau, ‘Does Bilateralism Promote Trade? Nineteenth Century Liberalization Revisited’, Centre for Economic Policy Research discussion paper no. 5423 (January 2006).

This era of ‘liberal’ expansion came to an abrupt end with the implosion of global markets during the First World War, the world depression (1929-31) and the Second World War. A new food system now emerged, marked by three distinctive characteristics. First, state regulation assumed a more decisive role, aimed at protecting domestic producers, but also trying to regulate international flows of food. Second, there was a new awareness of global imbalances between food production and human needs, together with growing attention to the problem of distribution between uneven regional demand and supply. And finally, the food sector was evolving into a highly commercialised industrial system, a significant stepping stone towards what in recent years has become a ‘life sciences integrated’ system.

These global processes however had very different outcomes in different regional systems and cultural settings. This is the main theme of Rick Wilk’s chapter on the cultural and economic significance of European food exports to Belize.<sup>26</sup> Unlike other colonies of the Caribbean, Belize was not part of the regional plantation economy. Traditionally it was an exporter of timber. Since the first European settlements, Belize therefore was highly dependent on food imports from Europe and later from the United States. Even though food trade, as well as the banking system, was almost entirely in the hands of foreigners and multinational food processing companies, Wilk rejects the traditional narrative of globalisation such as ‘McDonaldisation’. These often presume an ‘authentic’ local cuisine was submerged and displaced by foreign or ‘global’ cultural and culinary trends. According to Wilk, the increasing influence of European products (and often, re-imported ‘colonial’ goods) was not necessarily an expression of colonisation and foreign dominance. Rather it reflected a complex setting of ethnicity, social status and rank which classified both people and their cuisines. Consuming foreign products was thus a common practice of those social and ethnic groups who were keen to acquire higher status. At the same time, European tastes and technologies were regarded as markers of progress and civilisation which determined the position of each colony in the political geography of empire. The role of ‘distinction’ and conspicuous consumption in cementing status orders has been well known by

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<sup>26</sup> Rick Wilk in this volume.

social scientists since Thorstein Veblen and Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>27</sup> There is no reason to limit this analysis to classes within a national society. We may extend it to an imperial economy of distinction. Here was one reason why efforts of the imperial metropolis to render agriculture in the colony more self-sufficient and prosperous failed. These imperial dynamics continue to cast a shadow on colonial food cultures long after political independence. Wilk identifies a destructive cycle that continues to the present as Belizean supermarkets sell large quantities of foreign food, while local producers are unable to compete with highly subsidized farmers from the North.

The formation of global food markets was rooted in regional dynamics and market integration. Trade stretched well beyond imperial or colonial settings. The emergence of rice production and trade in Southeast Asia was an exercise in economic regionalisation, as Paul Kratoska shows in his contribution to this volume.<sup>28</sup> Already in the early twentieth century, the economic zone extending from southern China to India with territories under British, Dutch, French, American, Thai and Chinese rule, accounted for more than 80 % of global rice exports. This expansion was fuelled by a rising demand for rice in Asia, Europe and North America. Massive investments in irrigation and infrastructure, fostered by French and British colonial offices, as well as the immigration of Chinese labour made rice plantations highly productive. Even though tariffs and other market barriers existed, free trade advanced thanks to the support of most regional powers and colonial administrations. As in the West, the Great Depression of the 1930's brought to an end a relatively peaceful era of commercial exchange and economic development in South East Asia. Together, aggressive Japanese imperialism and new nation building hampered a swift reconstruction of the Southeast Asian trade zone. The relation between colonialism and globalisation was ambivalent and contradictory. In some cases, imperial rule was a driving force of expanding markets and integration, while in others it destabilized long-grown economic relations and trade institutions.

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<sup>27</sup> T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York, 1953); P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA, 1984).

<sup>28</sup> Paul Kratoska in this volume.

A good example of how decolonisation could lead to the internationalisation of commodity markets is provided by Steven Topik's and Michelle Craig McDonald's chapter on 'Americanizing Coffee: The Refashioning of a Consumer Culture'.<sup>29</sup> With the War of Independence, coffee rapidly supplanted tea in the newly independent United States of America and became a symbol of national autonomy and anti-colonialism against the British Empire. Coffee-drinking was regarded as an act of patriotism and freedom. Colonial embargoes and commercial policies redirected American coffee imports from the Caribbean to Brazil. Economic relations between the United States and Brazil deepened once American merchants and shippers supplanted the British in the Atlantic slave trade, integrating Brazil and Africa into a United States-based triangular trade after Brazilian independence in 1822. Ironically, a plant which for generations had stood for slavery and exploitation now became the national symbol of economic independence and political freedom. At the end of the nineteenth century, the United States imported more than one third of the global coffee production, compared to a mere 1 % in 1800. The assimilation of coffee in the daily life of Americans, was further reinforced by the arrival of immigrants from continental Europe where coffee played an important part in consumption.

### **Migration and Diffusion**

Even though colonial empires were a driving force behind globalised markets, transnational food chains often evolved along different pathways. Spatial diffusion was not always driven by imperial power, trade or market regulation. Migrants have always been important agents in the transnational circulation of food. Travellers, merchants and migrant labour brought with them new products and cuisines, changed local food habits and consumption patterns. In addition to the growing variety of supplies and consumer choices, 'food migration' played a fundamental role in redefining ethnic relations, cultural identities and national representations. Maren Möhring's case study is West Germany, where ethnic food was almost unknown until the 1960s.<sup>30</sup> The rising demand for labour during the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s brought millions of

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<sup>29</sup> Steven Topik and Michelle Craig McDonald in this volume.

<sup>30</sup> Maren Moehring in this volume.

migrants from Southern and Southeast Europe to the Federal Republic. Many former ‘guest workers’ opened restaurants and snack bars. Within a few years, the culinary landscape in West Germany was transformed, as ‘exotic’ foodstuffs and foreign ‘national’ cuisines sprang up. Möhring points to the ambivalences in the ‘ethnicisation’ of food. On the one hand, after years of being relatively sheltered from more global food cultures, West German society was opening up to foreign cuisines and lifestyles. For many migrants, establishing an ethnic restaurant brought new opportunities of income and upward social mobility. However, Möhring cautions us against seeing here simply a happy story of peaceful multiculturalism and cultural hybridisation. Commodifying and consuming ‘the other’ has often been a source of exploitation and racial stereotyping. Dining out in an ethnic restaurant produced specific forms of class, ethnic and gender differences. Like Topik and Craig McDonald for the early United States, Möhring argues that the emergence of distinct national or regional cuisines is an intrinsic effect of globalisation.

In her analysis of the seed trade in nineteenth century America, Marina Moskowitz rearranges several other pieces of the conventional picture of globalisation.<sup>31</sup> They concern scale. Globalisation is often equated with the rise of large, corporate, highly integrated sectors of mass production and retailing. True, agriculture in the United States was highly integrated in the global trade networks of the late nineteenth century. American farmers exported an increasing share of staple foods like meat, maize and wheat to European markets. Standardized large-scale agriculture and high vertical integration of food and transportation industries developed in this period, giving American farmers a lead over European producers. On the other hand, this period also witnessed a rapid expansion of market gardening and of the local production of fresh produce in the United States. The trade in seeds and local horticulture increased rapidly thanks to the growing demand of private households and small-scale farmers who appealed at a greater variety of food supply. While the seed trade extended the food chain, it also fostered a new awareness of the local quality and freshness. Instead of resulting in global concentration and convergence, therefore, the provision of fresh produce showed the ways in which global dynamics were balanced by local forces. The advantages of transcontinental and transnational

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<sup>31</sup> Marina Moskowitz in this volume.

exchange were mainly significant for the lengthening of the season for which certain commodities were available, or the provision of exotic options that might not be grown in particular local environments. The case of fresh produce provision in post-bellum America demonstrates the parallel evolution of local and global scales of provisioning. It also reveals the limits of the global to reorder the local, and of the specifically local natural and cultural factors that contain and condition global influences.

### **Global Actors**

What sets the decades after 1880 apart from earlier periods was a much greater level of global institutionalisation.<sup>32</sup> National governments began to regulate the production, trade and consumption of food more systematically. This was in part to protect national producers against foreign competition. After the mid-Victorian era of greater free trade and open markets, many countries – including the United States and most of continental Europe – raised their import duties and introduced other non-tariff barriers. Food regulation now included veterinary and food controls in order to contain the spread of epizootics and plant diseases. However, as Alexander Nützenadel shows in this volume, national protectionism and international cooperation were sometimes two sides of the same coin.<sup>33</sup> As in other fields of political activism, rural producers and their political spokesmen set up their own international organisations in order to create and shape international rules and market regulations. This did not automatically mean that domestic producers were just looking at new ways of protectionism. Alongside domestic protectionist politics, agrarian producers also pursued an international strategy of stabilising food markets. Here the enemy was not the consumer, but industrial and financial cartels. The International Institute in Rome, founded in 1905, for example, looked towards a fair system of global trade by eliminating the market power of international banks and industrial trusts.

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<sup>32</sup> See A. Iriye, *Global Community. The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Alexander Nützenadel in this volume.

This vision of a global trade system was harshly disrupted by World War I. The Great War is often considered to mark the end of the ‘first globalisation’, since it destroyed the international networks of trade, finance and governance that had expanded during the nineteenth century. But this is only one part of the story. The war also made Europeans painfully aware of how much they were dependent on food imports from overseas. Food supply was a decisive factor in the war. After more than half a century of relative abundance, mass starvation returned to Europe. For the first time in generations, industrialized countries faced food shortages and famines. Enormous bureaucratic organisations and rationing systems were established to handle the growing problems of supply and distribution of staple foods. Decreased production in the European theatre of war and the loss of Russia as an exporter of grains created a large demand for agricultural exports from overseas. Against the backdrop of war, a ‘new internationalism’ began to emerge which, instead of free trade and the free flow of goods, looked towards international mechanisms of coordinating food, of eliminating cycles, and stabilizing markets. Here was a shift towards a ‘visible hand’ which was hoped to align the interests of European consumers and overseas producers in a new era of global governance that would continue to influence social movements, thinkers, and politicians in the new global era of the United Nations after the Second World War.<sup>34</sup>

Nutrition was a crucial component in this ‘new international’ view of the global. As Dana Simmons shows in her chapter, war and genocide created the conditions for nutrition to become a science of social hygiene.<sup>35</sup> While during the nineteenth century a chemical understanding of nutrition had dominated scientific debates, malnutrition was now studied as a medical pathology. Nutrition scientists turned away from chemical equations in favour of etiologies. Medical doctors, not chemists, shaped this new field. Doctors in European cities, ghettos, internment and

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<sup>34</sup> For this shift, see Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation* (Oxford, in press). For the pressure of war and different food regimes, see Avner Offer, *The Agricultural Origins of the First World War* (Oxford); F. Trentmann and F. Just (eds), *Food and Conflict in Europe in the Age of the Two World Wars* (Basingstoke 2006); Christoph Nonn in H. Berghoff (ed) *Konsumpolitik: Die Regulierung des Privaten Verbrauchs im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Dana Simmons in this chapter. See also now N. Cullather, 'The Foreign Policy of the Calorie', *The American Historical Review*, 112(2) (2007).

concentration camps sought to identify and track the physiological and moral symptoms of a newly classified disease: malnutrition. Nutritional science, however, was not a self-contained European invention. Its formation was closely linked to colonial practices and experiences in countries which Europeans would come to label the ‘Third World’. Colonial methods entered Europe precisely at the moment when mass starvation struck the heart of the European empires..

Simmons’ discussion offers further evidence that the era of the World Wars was not – as often suggested – a period of mere de-globalisation and isolation. True, aggressive nationalisms and autarchy characterized agrarian policy, food regimes and trade organisation during the inter-war years. However, self-sufficiency was never fully achieved, trade and exchange remained vital and knowledge about nutrition and starvation circulated among social experts and medical scientists. Moreover, the experience of hunger and deprivation created new forms of international solidarity which shaped discussions on international food aid during and after World War II.

With the foundation of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) at the end of the Second World War, international food aid was institutionalized. During the 1950s and 1960s, however, the fight against hunger in the ‘Third World’ was supplanted by a broader approach of development policy, based on industrial technology, capital transfer and production-oriented concepts of a ‘green revolution’. As the limits of large-scale production became evident (especially in Africa), the FAO and other Non-Governmental Organisations launched a new program that aimed to help the rural poor become independent producers. Up to 100 million small subsistence producers – one fifth’s of the planet’s population – were to be integrated in a market economy, not only by selling their products but also by modernizing their production with high-yielding seeds, fertilizers, machinery, pesticides, irrigation and alike. This moment of attempted economic ‘globalisation’ seemed an ideal opportunity for the providers of such input packages – industrial and often transnational companies – to expand their markets. According to Gerlach, however, the FAO’s Industry-Cooperative Programme (1966-78) was ultimately an exercise in the limits of global governance.<sup>36</sup> Experiences from the past decades show that

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<sup>36</sup> Gerlach in this volume.

ambitious goals of increasing staple food production in Africa and reducing world hunger are difficult to achieve.

### **Food Chains and Moral Geographies**

The topics of world hunger and the science of starvation are a reminder that in modern and contemporary history, food and globalisation is about ethics as much as about taste and identity. This ethical dimension has played itself out as a tension between two developments. One, that ties in well with the role of FAO and a global action plan to overcome world hunger, is that of a new-found sense of global responsibility. Globalisation has brought a new sense of caring responsibility to distant others. Just as globalisation has bridged previous spatial and temporal distances and the food chain has become longer and longer, so the ethical chain of caring has become more extensive. This ethical stretching concerns both metrics – a concern for the welfare of distant producers by FairTrade supporters – and a stretching of the distance between humans and the animal kingdom and environment as a whole – as in the widening of the circle of responsibilities towards animals amongst vegetarians or a concern with sustainability amongst environmentally conscious consumers. Enlightenment thinkers like Adam Smith were already pondering the effect of a commercialising world on moral awareness and obligations towards distant others.<sup>37</sup> But this side was always only one part of the ethical dynamics of food in globalisation. For global integration also sparked anxieties about vulnerability and dependence. To open one's doors to cheap food from distant sources, in this view, might bring short-term benefits to a society but be a road of disaster and famine in the long run. Global opening could thus appear as a denial of the responsibility to care most for one's compatriots. It was no coincidence that the period of intense global integration before the First World War was followed by one of blockade and hunger in which the control of food became a weapon of total war. In modern history, the relationship between food and globalisation is an ebb and flow between these

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<sup>37</sup> P. Singer, *Animal Liberation: a New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York, 1975); P. Singer, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1 (1974), pp. 229-43. J. C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York, 1994).

two ethical impulses, between opening out and caring for distant others, on the one hand, and focusing on the nearest and dearest closest to home, on the other.

In the last twenty years, the ‘food chain’ has developed into one of the most successful concepts and ways of thinking and talking about food, both in the social sciences and in public discussion and policy more broadly. The ‘food chain’ took off from the idea of the ‘commodity chain’.<sup>38</sup> Its main attraction was to provide a way of following food from farm to fork. Instead of dividing up the study of food into sectors – one concerned with farmers, the other with retailers, yet another with customers – the ‘food chain’ captured spatial continuity, and with it the hope of capturing what happened to food at which point of the chain, when and where value was added, and when and where profit was extracted.

The question is to what degree food can be usefully understood in terms of a more generic commodity chain. As we have already stressed, food is a highly peculiar commodity, or to be precise it is a bundle of quite different foodstuffs with highly specific values, associations, and identities attached to them. Food carries moral geographies that sets it apart from most other goods that circulated through networks of trade. Of course, there are industrial goods like cars to which many people attach a strong sense of national pride; in many European countries, customers tend to buy a national make. Still, few customers would be especially interested in, say, where the rubber in the tyres came from. Foodstuffs, by contrast, raise sensitive questions of authenticity: is it ‘genuine’ German beer, or not; are these ‘real’ English strawberries or not; is it ‘authentic’ Italian coffee or not. Of course, many of these claims to authenticities are products of what Hobsbawm and Ranger in a different context called ‘invented traditions’.<sup>39</sup> Significantly, the story of these authentication regimes in which local origin becomes a marketing falls into the same period when nations invented their own traditions, in the second half of the nineteenth century. Still, it would be too simple to brush all this off as purely bad history and inauthentic in itself. Instead, the concern with authenticity registers profound concerns about risk and trust.

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<sup>38</sup> D. Leslie and S. Reimer, ‘Spatializing commodity chains’, *Progress in Human Geography* 23 (1999), pp. 401-20.

<sup>39</sup> E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

Where our food comes and whether our position in the global food economy is safe or leaves us vulnerable is an anxiety that has long historical precursors. They take us back to the ambivalent relationship between empire and globalisation. Peter Jackson and Neil Ward use the case of sugar to flesh out the moral geographies of a food with a mixed identity.<sup>40</sup> Sugar comes in two forms: cane sugar mainly grown in the Caribbean and parts of Latin America and beet sugar mainly grown in Europe. Instead of following a mechanistic food chain approach, Jackson and Ward are interested in the meanings that are created in and through sugar by consumers and producers – and the historical meanings that are suppressed or redefined. More than most foodstuffs, sugar raises profound questions about responsibility and care – both about the current plight of farmers and about historical responsibilities towards a food regime with the blood of slavery on its hands. In recording how beet sugar farmers talk about their place in the subsidised sugar regime of the European Union, they reveal the moral geography of the food chain, with its assumptions about entitlements, what are fair or unfair practices, and the very restricted sense of personal responsibility towards the fate of distant, disadvantaged cane sugar producers. These moral geographies show the danger of thinking about ‘space’ as a separate category from ‘place’. What emerges instead is a more relational view of space, where local and global scales and responsibilities mutually condition each other. Far from being the victim of the ‘global’, the ‘local’ helps to give the global its particular meaning.

Suzanne Friedberg unravels further the multiple and connected histories of transnational food trade.<sup>41</sup> Applying a cultural economy approach to the export of vegetables from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, she moves our understanding away from a crude model of a North-South divide. Friedberg reveals the importance of particular local factors and settings, including the particularities of the vegetables themselves; in Burkina Faso, exporters stayed in the trade in part because it raised them to the high status of patrons of the peasantry. But she also highlights the particular local demands and management regimes that British supermarkets (buying vegetables from Zambia) bring to bear on farmers compared to their French counterparts in Burkina Faso. British retailers have applied standards of transparency and social responsibility

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<sup>40</sup> Jackson and Ward in this volume

<sup>41</sup> Friedberg in this volume.

on local farmers, which required them to pay for raising their standards to ‘best practice’. There is an irony here that shows the dialectics at work between ethics and globalisation. Global integration has raised awareness amongst consumers in the North about social, ethical, and environmental standards of production. At the same time, these standards have become management tools of supermarkets and retailers to enhance their profit margin vis-à-vis local producers in the South.

This moral story has many twists and turns that run through the history of food and globalisation. A good deal of the contemporary excitement and engagement about ‘reconnecting’ consumers in the North with producers in the South rests on a dubious view of history. One popular view is that movements like Fair Trade are an opportunity of ‘remoralising’ the world economy, of tapping into the caring concerns of good consumers to attain a better deal for distant producers exploited by ruthless, unaccountable corporations. In the concluding chapter to this volume, Frank Trentmann follows the different kinds of ‘moral economies’ through which consumers and producers have been connected in the modern period.<sup>42</sup> ‘Moral economy’, in the singular, became a popular category in the 1960s, as much an ideological weapon as a scholarly term of analysis. It conjured up a lost world of mutual obligations and communal solidarity that were supposedly ripped apart by modern capitalism and replaced by a de-moralised science of liberal economics that would underpin the global world economy. However, to view modern history as a watershed between a moral era and a demoralised era where only capital and profit mattered is deeply problematic. ‘Traditional’ societies are not necessarily free of commercial and profit relations, nor are ‘modern’ societies just material vessels drained of ethics and reciprocity. Trentmann follows the different moral visions guiding consumers in the modern world. One hundred years ago, at the crest of an earlier wave of globalisation, millions of organised consumers in Britain rallied to Free Trade (not Fair Trade) as the highroad of citizenship, human solidarity, and universal peace. Cheap food in a globally integrated market would create strong and peaceful relations between consumers in the metropole and distant producers. Ironically, it was the popular imperialism of Conservative women in the inter-war years that replaced this liberal culture with a new moral universe that, in parts, anticipated the outlook of Fair Trade

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<sup>42</sup> Trentmann in this volume.

familiar today. Consumers, Conservative housewives preached, had the purchasing power, indeed the duty, to buy from their cousins and distant producers in the colonies. This brand of ethical consumerism was coloured by race and imperialism, but it equally looked towards ‘reconnecting’ consumers and producers, seeking to channel ethics and moral obligations into a direct relationship between distinct consumers and producers, instead of a more diffused network of market relations.

Food provides useful insights in the complex genealogy of globalisation. This book is an effort to bring together perspectives from a variety of disciplines that have been engaged in this debate over the past years: history and anthropology, geography and culture studies, economics and sociology. By drawing on case studies from different historical epochs and geographic areas, this volume sheds light on how the process of historical change is spelt out in economic, cultural and political perspectives. It reconsiders traditional division between eras of globalization and de-globalization by exploring the persistence of food markets and the rescaling of consumer cultures in past and present. Global transformations of food exchanges often followed different trajectories as other commodity markets since they were embedded in complex settings of colonial expansion, national sovereignties and competing moral geographies. It is therefore essential to explore the different levels of global enmeshment in each domain. This volume is far away from giving a final answer to this ambitious research agenda. It aims, however, to deliver a more systematic understanding of the nature and legacies of global food transformations in the modern world.