NEGOTIATING THE RISKSCAPES OF CONVENIENCE FOOD

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Summary: Addressing the spatial dimensions of risk, this paper examines the multiple ways that consumers negotiate the 'riskscapes' associated with the consumption of convenience food. It explores how convenience food poses a range of risks and potential ways of mitigating those risks. Drawing on empirical research from Germany and the UK, the paper demonstrates how food risks should be contextualized within the practices of everyday life and how consumer understandings of risk differ from expert risk assessments. The paper locates a number of different sites within the riskscape associated with convenience food, going beyond the focus on food safety and security that are the main concerns of health authorities and government advisors. Deficit models of food risk are criticised and alternatives are proposed that emphasise the socially embedded nature of risk within the practices of everyday life.

Zusammenfassung: Mit Bezug auf die räumlichen Dimensionen von Risko werden in diesem Aritkel die unterschiedlichen Aushandlungen von „Riskscapes" im Zusammenhang mit dem Konsum von Convenience Food untersucht. Dabei wird Convenience Food nicht nur als Quelle von Risiken gesehen, sondern auch als eine Möglichkeit der Risikominderung. Mit Bezug auf empirische Forschung in Deutschland und Großbritannien zeigt der Artikel, dass Lebensmittelkonsum im Kontext der Praktiken alltäglichen Lebens betrachtet werden sollten und dass sich das Verständnis von Lebensmitteln und Risiken im Alltag von den Risikobewertungen der Experten unterscheidet. Der Artikel identifiziert mehrere Risikoorte in denen Convenience Food eine Rolle spielt und geht dabei über den Fokus auf Food Safety und Food Security hinaus, der oftmals vorrangig für Gesundheitsbehörden und Regierungsberater ist. Allgemein kritisch gesehen werden Defizitmodelle von Lebensmittelkonsum und Konsumentscheidungen. Als Alternative dazu betonen wir, dass Risiken in die Praktken des Alltagslebens eingebettet sind und kontextualisiert untersucht werden sollten.

Keywords: convenience food, riskscapes, social practices, everyday life, qualitative research

1 Riskscapes

The idea of 'riskscapes' was introduced to address the spatial dimensions of risk (Müller-Mahn 2013), building on earlier scholarship surrounding the lexicon of risk and associated terms. Originally conceived as a mathematical concept that describes the probability of events causing harm, risk is often defined as the anticipation of future damage (Beck 1986). While hazards refer to the potential of something to cause harm, risk refers to the probability of harm from a specific hazard. Risk should also be distinguished from other terms such as anxieties and scares. The former refer to the apprehension of potential danger (Raude and Fischler 2014; Jackson and Everts 2010) while the latter refer to a sudden and widespread increase in risk awareness, often disproportionate to formal assessments of risk probabilities (Miller 1999).

In the specific context of food-related risks with which this paper is concerned, food scares are generally associated with spiralling public anxiety over food-related incidents and the escalating media attention that accompanies such events (Knowles et al. 2007; Whitworth et al. 2017). Adding to the risk lexicon, food insecurity refers to situations in which there is inadequate or uncertain access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food to meet people's dietary needs and food preferences (Battersby 2012, 142). Although common understandings of food poverty converge around notions of insufficient food, typically associated with famine-affected populations in the Global South, an abundance of the 'wrong' type of food – and its impact on diet-related ill-health – is cause for increasing concern in the most affluent countries of the Global North as well as in some countries of the Global South (Foresight 2007). Convenience food is often caught up in these discussions as well as in considerations of culturally appropriate food.

How can we move from a definition of risks as singular events, judged by strict scientific criteria, to a more diffuse sense of risk as subjectively experienced across whole sections of society? It is

here that the concept of 'riskscape' has most to offer. In *Modernity at Large* (1996), Arjun Appadurai examined the cultural dimensions of globalization, identifying the global flows associated with ethnoscapes, financescapes, technoscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes. In much the same way, we might add the concept of 'riskscape' to distinguish between the single site of specific risks (as identified in conventional risk analysis, informed by rational scientific assessments), and the wider risk landscape, where ordinary consumers experience risk according to subjective criteria, informed by very different kinds of logic (both 'lay' and 'expert').

Drawing on Müller-Mahn and Everts (2013), the concept of riskscapes seeks to understand the intricate relationship between concerns, places and practices. Riskscapes are a way of identifying 'risky territories' (November et al. 2010), occupied differently by different people, and which overlap with other riskscapes.[1)] Different riskscapes are interwoven and need to be analysed relationally rather than in isolation. Finally, each riskscape is tied to unique acts of navigation (cf. November et al. 2010). Negotiating riskscapes includes assembling various clues or 'signposts', making interpretations and estimates, and advocating changes in spatial practice (Müller-Mahn and Everts 2013, 27-8).

The concept of riskscapes ties the notion of risk firmly to practice and space. It was developed alongside Schatzki's (1996, 2002) social ontology of practices and material arrangements and stresses positionality and context. Theories of social practices contend that the basic stuff of social life include the multifarious 'doings and sayings' (Schatzki 2002) which organise, stabilise or change social and material orders (Everts et al. 2011). From this perspective, social practices are the basic unit of analysis (not social structures or individuals) and risks are constituted as social phenomena which exist in and through social practices. In studies of consumption, the concept of riskscapes helps to avoid over-generalizations about 'the consumer' or particular social groups and their consumption practices, focusing instead on the conditions and contexts in which consumers are exposed to harm and the spatialities through which risks are experienced.

[1)] Compare our approach to 'vulnerability', defined not as an objective state associated with specific groups of people (such as 'the elderly' or pregnant women) but as a condition to which we may all be exposed to varying degrees, depending on the pathways and practices we pursue (Jackson and Meah 2018).

In the rest of this paper, we seek to apply the concept of riskscape to the socio-spatial practices associated with the consumption of convenience food. The paper re-contextualises individual acts of consumption and situates them firmly in the social and material context within which consumption practices take place and make sense. Our analysis takes into account the riskscapes of experts and policy-makers but places them on the same analytical plane as everyone else. Our research also leads us to criticise the kind of deficit-thinking that pervades official advice on food safety and 'healthy eating', assuming that the public lack understanding and that more accurate scientifically-based knowledge will encourage less risky behaviour. We return to these issues later in the paper. First, though, we provide an introduction to the contested category of 'convenience food' and an account of the methods through which our research was conducted.

2 Convenience food

In many food markets, a trend towards convenience can be discerned, referring to the ease with which food can be purchased, prepared and eaten (Jackson 2015, 168). But 'convenience' has multiple meanings and can refer to spatial proximity, product choice, ease of use (saving time or labour), fit with daily routines and so on. In a narrower sense, the term also refers to a specific category of food, denoting foods which have already undergone some degree of preparation before purchase such as ready meals, tinned food or 'instant' meals that simply require the adding of hot water. While convenience food is a problematic term with multiple and contested meanings, it is usually taken to include frozen, chilled and canned food, snacks and confectionery, take-away food and ready-meals (Jackson and Viehoff 2016). Convenience foods are often compared disparagingly with 'fresh' foods, cooked from scratch using raw ingredients. In practice, however, most households combine different kinds of food and modes of cooking in their everyday culinary practices (cf. Marshall and Bell 2003). According to one industry source, convenience food and vegan options are two of the most salient trends in the German food market (Anuga 2015). Convenience foods command an increasing market share, although their market penetration varies significantly across Europe. For example, the UK accounts for 42% of EU sales of ready-meals, whereas Germany holds 20%, and it is estimated that 30% of UK adults eat ready-meals more than once a week (Mintel 2013).

While the trend towards convenience food provides the food industry with commercial opportunities to develop new products and generate new profits, it is also regarded as one of the least healthy and most unsustainable dietary options. As Margaret Chan, former director-general of WHO, puts it: 'Parts of the world are quite literally eating themselves to death… Highly processed foods and beverages loaded with sugar are ubiquitous, convenient, and cheap' contributing to the current obesity 'epidemic' and related health concerns (Chan 2014).

Consequently, diets have become recast as harbouring a major risk to public health, comparable to the risks associated with smoking, alcohol and drugs: 'An unhealthy diet is one of the major risk factors for a range of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and other conditions linked to obesity' (WHO 2017). While these findings are significant in themselves and the connection between convenience food and health risks might seem straightforward, we would like to encourage a more contextualized understanding of the consumption of convenience food in relation to the practices of everyday life and the spaces within which convenience food is purchased, stored, cooked and consumed. This leads us to identify the multiple places in which convenience foods can be risky as well as contrasting 'expert' risk assessments with the logic that informs 'lay' understandings of risky food.

3 Methodology

Our research on convenience food and food risks is part of a larger project on Food, Convenience, and Sustainability (FOCAS) involving empirical research in four European countries.[2)] The overall aim is to unpack the category of convenience food both in discourse and practice and to relate it back to the ways in which such foods are embedded in social practices and spaces. Our research focuses on the contexts and arrangements of convenience food including consumers' everyday routines and practices, and their competences and stocks of knowledge that are associated with its 'do-ability', both in terms of technical feasibility and cultural appropriateness (cf. Halkier 2010).

We make the analytical distinction between 'convenience' food as a marketing term which refers to a specific category of food and 'convenient' food which refers to a wider range of foods that may be regarded as convenient in different contexts. 'Convenience foods' refer to industrially produced, portioned and packaged food that allow customers to skip many stages of food preparation (such as chopping up raw ingredients etc.). 'Convenient food' refers to foods that can be conveniently adapted and integrated into busy schedules and daily routines. Of course, many convenience food products are designed to fit into this category. However, foods such as baby food, tinned and frozen vegetables, or canteen meals are not usually considered to be of the convenience type. From our practice theory perspective, however, the significance of convenience food for daily life can only be fully understood in the context of how food more generally happens to be or is made convenient in everyday life, a process we have referred to elsewhere as 'convenienciz ation' (Jackson et al. 2018).

Our current work builds on earlier studies that seek to situate food consumption practices within the context of people's everyday lives (e.g. Everts and Jackson 2009; Meah and Jackson 2013; Meah and Watson 2013). The following findings emerge from our empirical research in Germany and the UK with 28 households (see Tab. 1 for details of our research participants). The fieldwork was conducted by Valerie Viehoff and Angela Meah and involved in-depth interviews, accompanied shopping trips, kitchen tours, and video-recorded cooking observations. Fieldwork was undertaken in South Yorkshire and surrounding areas (in the UK) as well as in and around Bonn (in Germany).

Among some UK participants, video footage was recorded by participants providing additional information on how food practices are negotiated into the everyday life of a household. Households included families with children, single parents, pensioners, student flat-shares, asylum-seekers and food-bank users, varying in terms of age, ethnicity and socio-economic status. All of the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and coded, including (subject to agreement from participants) the use of photography and video recording.

Participants were informed of our interest in convenience food but our conversations with them covered a wide range of shopping, cooking and eating practices. The distinction we make between 'convenience' and 'convenient' food was not discussed with our participants and is an analytical construct that we brought to bear on the data. The

2) The FOCAS project was funded by the ERA-Net SUSFOOD programme and involved comparative research in Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the UK. Further information is available at: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/focas/.

Tab. 1: Research participants

Germany	UK
Thomas, Susanne and daughter ***Franziska*** (7): Professionals, university educated, both working full-time and living in Bonn.	***Ken*** *and* ***Val*** (72), he is a retired professional, she works part-time; homeowners; financially comfortable; rural. Foodwork shared, but undertaken mainly by her.
Klaus (former teacher) and ***Petra*** (former development worker), retired couple without children, have travelled/lived abroad, university educated, living in Oberwinter.	***Edward*** (48) and ***Deborah*** (46), full-time employed in low-skilled jobs; working class; no children; financially comfortable; homeowners. Foodwork undertaken by her.
Amara *and* ***Yarif*** (mid-40s), two primary school-age sons, Syrian refugees, living with the wife's brothers in third-floor flat in Bonn North, currently receiving state support and living off their savings. Before they fled Syria she used to be a teacher and he was an engineer.	***Gloria*** (47) and ***Jack*** (45). Working class; full-time employed; local authority housing; low income; unemployed adult son lives with them. Foodwork shared, but undertaken mainly by her.
Carl (23) and ***Maria***, student flat-share in Alfter, living off parental support and part-time job.	***Laura*** (69) and ***Ted*** (71). Middle class; retired professionals; financially very comfortable. Foodwork shared; cooking done mainly by him.
Nora, Ricco *and* ***Hannes***, live in a student flat-share in Poppeldorf, all in their final year of their bachelor degree, not receiving student loans.	***Tameka*** (25). Working class; works part-time; single mother (one child under 6); local authority housing; income topped up with state benefits. Black British of African/African Caribbean descent.
Oscar, Linda *and* ***Harald***, flat-share in Bonn Endenich with a student, a gardener and a person about to start a MA, aged 25-30.	***Jem*** (31). Middle class; professional; good income but has debts; living in shared privately-rented accommodation; non-resident partner.
Rudolf, divorced man with new partner. He lives in Brohl, she lives in Lohmar. Food bank customer, late 50s, skilled worker, injured in road accident in 1983, currently not working.	***Phil*** (44). Working class; unemployed; living in a supported community for people with alcohol and substance misuse issues; very low income (from state benefits). Mixed race.
Minna (59), food bank customer, mother of three grown-up children plus one child born when she was 17, given up for adoption against her will. Now separated, lives alone. Used to work as a care nurse, suffers from severe back pain. Very basic education.	***Rageh*** (30). Seeking asylum in UK; very limited income; living in temporary charitable housing; unable to work; non-resident child under 3. Somali.
Lena (37) and children: ***Birk*** (3) and ***Maya*** (1.5). Children's father is in prison; she is an ex-drug addict, currently unemployed. Living in a small second-floor flat. Born in Thüringen (East Germany), family moved as soon as the border opened in 1989.	***Maryam*** (39). Middle class; works part-time; married; 3 children aged 9-15; homeowner; financially comfortable. Foodwork done largely by her (husband does some top-up shopping). Pakistani.
Nicol (late-30s) and ***Karsten*** (mid-40s), children ***Felix*** (11) and ***Johanna*** (13). She works for a charity, he is a soldier, currently working in Bonn. Dual income, two cars; consider themselves middle class, university educated.	***Tony*** (56). Middle class; professional; good income but has debts; recently separated; child under 14 who visits a couple of times a week; private rented accommodation.

Gudrun (63), single woman, lives alone in a bungalow on a campsite, receives victim support and state benefits (Hartz IV), university educated, also completed apprenticeship in bakery/confectionary and is a trained equestrian instructor.	***James*** (49). Married; professional; homeowner; good income; two children aged 15+ from previous marriage (dependent child visits); has indirect caring responsibilities for elderly parents, one of whom has advanced dementia. Foodwork shared but wife does all the cooking.
Stephan, mid-40s, vice-president at a tele-comms company.	***Melanie*** *and* ***Tom*** (late 20s). Both in full-time employment.
Greta (late 70s), grew up in Bonn, married twice, but divorced and now lives on her own. Recently moved to Remagen, lives in city centre. Previously worked as an estate agent.	***Laurentio*** (late 30s). In full-time employment, living in a house-share. Italian heritage.
Michelle *and* ***Kirsten***, food bank customers.	***Michael*** (late 30s). Full-time employed, has a long-term partner but live in separate households.

research also raised significant translational issues about the meaning of 'convenience food' in the UK and Germany where words such as *Schnellgericht* and *Fertigessen* do not correspond exactly to the English term.[3] The research was given ethical approval by the University of Sheffield (UK), based on the principles of informed consent and confidentiality, with the use of pseudonyms to protect participant anonymity.

4 The riskscapes of convenience food

Risk is an important concept in academic and political food discourse. Food risks are associated with hygiene practices, foodborne illness and diet-related diseases, general health and sustainability (cf. Fabiansson and Fabiansson 2016). In terms of health and sustainability, 'expert' discourse often blames 'lay' people for being ignorant of the risks they create for themselves and others through their consumption practices and choice of food, assuming a deficit of knowledge or a lack of understanding (cf. Evans 2011, Meah and Watson 2014). For example, Fabiansson and Fabiansson (2016) refer to specific consumer practices such as 'inept handwashing' and 'avoidable lifestyle hazards' which, they argue, increase the risk of foodborne illness. We challenge this deficit model of consumer understanding and argue that, even where risks are well understood, consumption practices may follow different but nevertheless coherent logics which are embedded in everyday life situations. Accordingly, we are keen to learn from our respondents which risks in relation to food matter in everyday life and how different risks are negotiated in practice.

Our research shows how households combine different kinds of foods and cooking methods rather than consistently cooking from scratch or making exclusive use of convenience foods. The data confirm that certain kinds of convenience foods such as ready meals or frozen pizza are highly moralized within the context of 'feeding the family' (De Vault 1991), subject to socially sanctioned ideas about appropriate food, set within a discourse of decline (regarding cooking skills and culinary traditions). As a result, participants often felt the need to apologize for their use of convenience foods or for taking culinary short-cuts, aware that the use of convenience food is 'tinged with moral disapprobation' (Warde 1999, 518). The following sections identify three food riskscapes, illustrating how participants negotiate the perceived risks associated with convenience food use, highlighting the logic that informs their practices which often departs from the rational scientific logic underpinning official risk assessment. We present and explain the three riskscapes separately before turning to more complex overlaps between them.[4]

[3] There is further discussion of these issues in Jackson et al. (2018).

[4] We should also note that for this paper, we restrict the concept of riskscape to the household level in the Global North. In previous work, the concept has been mostly employed in

4.1 Food availability away from home

The first riskscape we identified in our data is related to such practices as travelling, eating out, eating on the go and snacking. Sifting and sorting through our data, we realised that many respondents were concerned with the availability and quality of food while they were away from home. The availability of safe food (or food in general) forms a first important part of the riskscape associated with convenience food. Among many consumers – particularly those with children - learned, internalised and tacit knowledge is frequently drawn on when making decisions about where to procure and consume food that is safe to eat. Here, safety includes concerns about pathogens, toxins and other harmful components, as well as those particular to food allergies, dietary needs and lifestyle choices. For some, taking food from home to consume elsewhere addresses this aspect of the riskscape. While this was particularly evident in work concerning commercial baby food undertaken by our Swedish colleagues (Brembeck and Fuentes 2017, Fuentes and Brembeck 2016), participants in other countries also spoke about how convenience foods enabled them to negotiate access to food not only when they might be away from home, but perhaps also away from a kitchen or a shop.

Our data includes many examples of participants bringing lunch to work, buying school dinners for their children or using a workplace canteen. For some, convenience foods enabled them to eat while on the move. For example, Edward, a 47-year-old postal worker, did not have time to have breakfast before leaving home at 0630. To sustain him through the morning, Edward explains 'I usually take something like scones or tea-cakes and have these at work in my break'. His wife reported that she would like to have time to make these herself, but since she also works full-time, she buys breakfast biscuits and other snacks instead. For Edward, the risk of not having enough energy to sustain him through a day of physical work outweighs the risks associated with the consumption of high calorie, sugary snacks; in his mind, being 'on the go all the time' warrants that risk.

In another example, Val, an elderly British woman showed the researcher a jar of cooking sauce while she was unpacking her shopping. Val explained that 'every week, I buy something… to make up a food parcel' for one of her granddaughters who was studying at university. While such items might be regarded as high in sugars and additives, constitutive of lazy or unskilled cooking, Val rationalizes her actions as doing care at a distance. This is just one example where our participants had to navigate multiple risks, facing possible criticism for feeding family members foods that are widely perceived to be unhealthy compared to the rewards of being seen to be a generous and caring grand-parent, providing tasty treats for a family member currently living away from home.

In other examples of risk negotiation, convenience foods are used to manage the uncertainties associated with being out of place, where food may be unfamiliar or culturally unacceptable. Susanne, for example, is a middle-class professional in her mid-40s who lives in Bonn with her husband and school-age daughter. When shopping for food, she buys individually wrapped packs of rye bread which might be considered convenient as it is ready-to-eat, can be stored for several days and can be eaten on many occasions, without the need for cutlery, a plate or table. Industrially-produced and wrapped in foil or grease-proof paper, such products are transformed from convenient to convenience food (cf. Bobrow-Strain 2012). It no longer needs to be sliced, it can be stored much longer and is ready to take away without the need for any further wrapping. In this case, Susanne buys the bread to take on her work trips because 'you never know when and what you will get to eat there'. Susanne negotiates the food riskscape in terms of potential food safety issues but also in terms of her culinary preferences and notions of taste and quality, ensuring a secure and sufficient supply of culturally appropriate food.

4.2 Food at home – being prepared for visitors

The second riskscape we identified relates to the foodscape of home. While it seems natural that being away from home harbours all kinds of dangers in relation to food availability and quality, our respondents also conceptualised their homes as places that are at risk of being understocked in general or having the wrong kinds of food.

Although convenience foods may provide the security of being able to eat while on the move or away from home, they were also reported as serving

studies of how people negotiate disaster risks in developing countries or regions (e.g. Blok 2016, see also articles in this and the previous issue by Aalders 2018; Bohle 2018; Stephan 2018; Gebreyes and Theodory 2018). Perhaps the closest to our approach is Lundgren, who studied the personal and individual riskscapes of students returning home from Georgia to southern Abkhazia and how they negotiate the post-conflict riskscapes of borders and home (Lundgren 2017).

an important function in terms of preparedness *within* the home. Our fieldwork includes many examples where various kinds of convenience food are stocked up in anticipation of unexpected demand, with some British participants referring to their store cupboards as a 'nuclear bunker' or a 'war chest'. For participants of all ages, frozen, canned and dried goods had a 'just in case' function, enabling them to prepare a hot meal quickly. This might be for the participant or other household members. However, having a stock of convenience items – especially frozen goods – was particularly important among retired people who often found themselves having to feed visiting children or grandchildren who they might have to cater for unexpectedly. This was also the case for Tony, a 56-year-old British man whose 12-year old daughter, Georgia, did not live with him full-time. Having in stock a selection of snacks and 'things that Georgia liked, desserts … sweet things … and all that sort of crap' meant that Tony always had food in the house that his daughter might be prepared to eat during her visits. There is a particularly complex riskscape at play here as Tony is well aware that food choice is morally laden, that some foods pose health risks and that certain practices are regarded as 'shameful'. His decisions are also shaped by his daughter's anorexia and the knowledge that she is unlikely to eat 'proper' meals. The risks of offering her 'unhealthy' food are offset against the more immediate risk of her not eating at all.

Quite a different example was presented by Petra, a German woman in her mid-60s, who was especially anxious about the food she stocks at home. Petra always has a selection of convenience food in her freezer including East Asian meal components such as mini spring rolls, vegetable mixes and mini chicken skewers. This food is not for her own consumption or for her husband. Very often, she has guests in the house to entertain and feels anxious about serving them appropriate food, conscious of her responsibilities for the welfare of her guests. Petra uses convenience food to comply with her self-image as a worldly, well-travelled person who used to live in South-East Asia where her work experience made her more familiar with 'international' cuisines than many of her friends. These pre-prepared ingredients allow her to provide what she regards as appropriate food for her guests confirming her cultural capital and knowledge of exotic food.

Here, the potential risk is of being unprepared for unexpected guests. As the one who manages the household, Petra feels responsible for everyone passing through her home. Provisioning is her task and an empty freezer risks exposing her as a bad host. Guests coming to the house are a risk to Petra's integrity as a caring host and the home is a fragmented riskscape of potentially empty cupboards, fridge and freezer which need to be attended to constantly.

4.3 Trusted places for food purchase

The third riskscape is related to shopping for food. Most of our respondents were dependent on buying food, with very few having access to home-grown produce. Although poorer respondents regularly used food banks, most food shopping occurred in supermarkets and, to a lesser degree, traditional or farmers' markets. While discussing shopping practices and accompanying trips to supermarkets, participants discussed the negotiation of various shopping-related risks. In general, these risks are tied to concerns over price, taste, quality and ethics. Next to the home and places away from home, supermarkets and other retail outlets such as market stalls and corner stores are a third element in the food riskscape, afforded varying degrees of trust and associated with variable levels of risk. For example, Nicole, a German woman in her mid-30s, who has two children and works full-time, went on an accompanied shopping trip where she bought Fairtrade bananas which were on offer. She explained that this was an uncommon purchase for her as she usually finds them too expensive. She also avoids them because of their plastic wrapping, which Nicole dislikes for their negative environmental impact. In this case, it seems, Nicole can afford to purchase food that is consistent with her ethical commitments, avoiding the social and environmental costs she associates with non-Fair Trade produce. This is a complex riskscape involving conflicting notions of fairness and cost, showing a concern for the environment (avoiding excess packaging) while not exceeding her budgetary limits. The example also involves other risks, about who to trust and how to negotiate trade-offs between potentially competing social and environmental commitments. Again, our data have many similar examples of complex food riskscapes involving varying priorities and competing responsibilities.

Consumer trust has become a key issue for food retailers in recent years following 'food scares' such as the horsemeat incident in 2013 where many convenience food items, such as burgers and ready-meals, were shown to have been adulterated or, more recently, the case of the Two Sisters chicken processing plant where date labels were tampered with and

simple hygiene principles were blatantly disregarded (BBC News, 29 September 2017: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41440020). Anxieties about the trustworthiness of food manufacturers and retailers have encouraged the development of alternative food networks and associated outlets such as farmers' markets. Questions remain, however, about whether smaller-scale outlets, such as corner shops, based on personal interaction with their customers, are inherently more trustworthy than the impersonality that is associated with larger supermarkets (cf. Everts 2010).

5 Overlapping food riskscapes

In the following sections, we provide two examples of complex and overlapping riskscapes. While the distinction between home, away from home and shop seems straightforward, in everyday life these riskscapes are entangled and influence each other. The following two examples illustrate how different situations – socio-economically and over the lifecourse – engender specific entanglements of riskscapes.

5.1 Food poverty

Those living in poverty are exposed to a wide range of food-related risks as a result of their situational vulnerability (cf. Jackson and Meah 2018). Besides the insecurity of having insufficient food of adequate nutritional quality, there are a variety of additional food safety risks. Here, the possibility of eating food which might not be safe is a calculated risk when faced with pressing hunger. In such circumstances, wider social anxieties about the burden of diet-related ill-health are unlikely to occupy the immediate thoughts of individuals who must feed themselves as well as they can on limited resources and/or with the support of food banks and charities, a sector that is largely dependent on the donation of processed foods requiring minimal preparation.

Research on food poverty consistently shows how those in need of emergency food aid are often faced with a monotonous diet of processed (canned, dried and tinned) food which is easier for food banks to store and distribute safely than a more varied diet including fresh fruit and vegetables. Such research also shows the value attached to culturally appropriate food, not just meeting basic calorific needs, and the social stigma attached to receiving food charity (Riches and Silvasti 2014; Lambie-Mumford 2017). These are complex riskscapes with many competing values at play. Data from both Germany and the UK revealed the ways in which food poverty contributed to participants' provisioning practices, via which they negotiated a range of risks. In some cases, such risks were related to their health and well-being. In others, decisions about whether to purchase fresh or convenience items converged around the impacts on household economy.

For example, Tameka, a 27-year-old single mother with a 5-year old daughter, is employed part-time in a low paid administrative job and receives no financial support from her daughter's father. Her income is topped-up by tax credits and she had previously used a local food bank for support. She does a big 'pay-day shop' once a month. However, she found that fresh vegetables were perishing before the end of the month if she did not use them straight away. Referring to her specific financial situation, rather than a more general environmental concern, Tameka explained: 'it really hurts me when I waste vegetables'. Because of this, she had started buying frozen vegetables which she preferred to the fresh alternative since this meant that she no longer 'waste[s] vegetables, and they don't go off'.

Among regular food-bank users in Germany, Gudrun, a retired woman who lives alone, joked about the 'boutique rouge' items in her fridge. This was her ironic term for items with a red sticker, denoting their reduced price. Gudrun negotiates a complex food riskscape including trade-offs between price and quality, availability and shelf-life. She acknowledges the potential trade-off between date labels, where food is close to or beyond its use-by date, and the imperative to avoid wasting food. Another example is Kirsten, in her late 50s, recently widowed and living off disability allowance and other state benefits. She showed us her store cupboard which was filled with tins to make sure that she had enough food for when her daughter was unable to shop for her.

A more extreme example can be seen in the case of Rageh, a 30-year-old Somali man seeking asylum in the UK. His uncertain immigration status meant that he was simultaneously ineligible for state benefits and prohibited from engaging in paid employment. At the time of interview, he was living in shared accommodation provided by a charity supporting asylum seekers and received £20 (c.€23)

a week from another charitable organisation. Once he had paid for his weekly bus travel to/from his voluntary work, Rageh estimated that he had approximately £7.50 (c.€8.50) left to spend on food. He spoke of his experience of 'queuing for food or going to a food bank' which he felt embarrassed to do. Rather than suffer the humiliation and social stigma of seeking charity, Rageh cut his expenditure to the minimum, consuming just one meal a day. This consisted of a monotonous cycle of cheap frozen chicken pieces, combined with fresh onions and some frozen mixed vegetables, seasoned with spices and served with rice, pasta or maize. During a tour of his kitchen, he showed the researcher a packet of instant mash potatoes, made by adding boiling water, acknowledging that sometimes cost outweighs food's nutritional or moral value: 'instant mash is cheaper than potatoes. Even frozen chips are cheaper than potatoes. I can get three packs of instant mash for the price of one bag of potatoes'.

In another UK example, Phil was recruited via a community health project and was living in a supported community for people recovering from drug and alcohol problems. Since he was unable to work due to ill-health and his only income was from state benefits, his diet was characterised by cheap, processed foods which he acknowledged might not be helpful in managing his diabetes. He attended a 'cooking on a budget' class which made no acknowledgement of the lack of choice rendered by being on a low income. He reports that the facilitator had instructed them to 'eat more vegetables… make plenty of soups'. Phil's response was unequivocal: 'You give me the money and I'll go out and buy a bag of vegetables'.

As these examples show, the riskscapes of food poverty are complex and overlapping. While the home can be a risky place where someone is trapped without food, other places can be risky, too. Spending money on the wrong item can have disastrous consequences and food products, price tags and shops can be difficult riskscapes to navigate especially for those with little money.

5.2 Feeding the family

Our final examples concern the moral risks of consuming convenience food. Existing research has documented how middle class mothers negotiate the pressures they experience to enact an appropriate model of 'feeding the family' with healthy, tasty food which simultaneously demonstrates an awareness of perceived environmental obligations and other ethical commitments (cf. Carrigan and Szmigin 2006). But it is their working class counterparts that have been subjected to more public scrutiny and, in some cases, vilification in the media for their improper food choices (cf. Fox and Smith 2011, Rich 2011, Piper 2013).

That participants were aware of the judgments that were potentially being made of their culinary practices by the researchers was evident in statements such as 'it sounds as if we eat convenience food all the time [laughs]'. Here, Gloria, a 47-year-old woman laughed with seeming embarrassment as she listed the ingredients of the previous evening's meal. However, she and her husband cooked in ways which reflected the time they had available on a given evening, as well as the content of their fridge, freezer and larder. For example, while she was happy to make her own short-crust pastry, she reported that: 'I never mess about making my own puff pastry; it takes hours and I ain't got the time'. Drawing on video evidence, recorded by the participants when the researcher was not present, Gloria began a filming session by saying direct to camera: 'Today, we're having convenience food'. Explaining her choice of meal components, she continued: 'I've been to the gym; I'm tired [laughs]'. While her meal choice required no justification or apology, Gloria nonetheless felt obliged to explain it for the benefit of 'other people who might be watching' and who – in her mind – may be judging her practices.

In other cases, certain kinds of convenience food helped consumers negotiate competing time pressures, providing acceptable short-cuts while maintaining a commitment to (some degree of) home cooking. Carrigan and Szmigin (2006) refer to women in these circumstances as 'mothers of invention', creatively negotiating the time pressures involved in managing their household.

An awareness of the risky moral terrain in which children's food choices are located – along with parallel inferences about 'good' and 'bad' parenting – was particularly evident in our work with Lena, a 37-year-old German woman and her two children, aged 3 years and 17 months. While the younger child is reported as having a good appetite and being willing to eat anything, the older child, Birk, is more problematic. Lena experienced multiple challenges in attempting to care for her children: she is a lone parent and in receipt of social welfare payments. She has limited financial resources and no support from the children's father. Having spent part of her own childhood in social care and having

no contact with her own mother, Lena's only support in navigating the morally-laden path of caring for her children is a social worker who takes her shopping once a week. However, Lena rejected any potential suggestion that she needed parenting advice, asserting that 'nobody needs to tell me anything', least of all concerning 'good' food choices. She is aware of what a nutritious diet looks like and endeavours to provide her children with fresh fruit and vegetables, but this has to be negotiated within the constraints of her budget and – more importantly – what her son is prepared to eat since 'you often have to force him'. As with Tony's daughter – discussed above – the risk of not eating anything outweighs the risks of eating the 'wrong' thing. As Lena commented:

> 'I mean, they already eat too much pizza and that for my liking, but, still… For me it's important that Birk has one warm meal a day... And if that's pizza or chips with chicken nuggets… then that's the way it is. The main point is that he eats something warm once a day.'

Convenience foods are frequently rationalised as a way to meet the diverse needs and dietary preferences of different family members, to deal with complicated domestic schedules where food is needed at different times or where children need to be fed while their parents are out of the house. Convenience food can allow parents to spend more quality time caring for their children, to experiment with food that children may be reluctant to eat or to reduce the likelihood of food being wasted. For all its benefits in terms of ease of use and time management, the moralization of convenience must always be negotiated with care.[5] These examples all point to the multiple riskscapes that our participants experience, including many that go beyond the food safety and food security risks that are the principal concerns of health authorities and government advisors.

6 Challenging deficit models of risk

The examples in the previous section demonstrate the multiple risks associated with the use of convenience food, ranging from concerns about food safety and security to questions of trust and competing ethical commitments. Health authorities and agencies with a responsibility for promoting food safety or environmental sustainability often assume the public lack knowledge about the actual risks associated with particular kinds of consumer behaviour. Couched in terms of a deficit of knowledge or a lack of skill, such approaches provide the underlying logic for a range of 'behaviour change' interventions which have been criticised for their individualization of risk and for the assumption that filling the 'knowledge gap' will, in and of itself, lead to change.[6]

Deficit thinking is also linked to the ABC paradigm of behaviour change which assumes a direct, linear connection between attitudes, behaviour and choice – a model that has been thoroughly critiqued from a social practice perspective, emphasising the socially-embedded, institutionalised and routine character of much human behaviour (cf. Shove 2010). Our research contributes to this debate, challenging deficit thinking and seeking instead to understand the logic that underpins people's everyday actions. While 'lay' understandings may differ from the 'expert' knowledge that supports formal risk assessments, we argue that there are often 'good' reasons for behaviour that might otherwise be considered badly-judged or ill-informed.[7]

Those responsible for issuing official health advice often pose the question of whether consumers understand the risks associated with their actions, including their use of convenience food and other dietary options that are regarded as unhealthy or unsustainable. The question implies that consumers misunderstand or ignore risks – a position that is often characterised in terms of a 'deficit' of knowledge or understanding. This is then used as justification for behaviour change initiatives and other interventions, providing individuals with the information needed to make better-informed choices.

Our research supports a different (assets-based) approach, grounded in the 'stocks of knowledge' that consumers use to make sense of the world, whether or not this corresponds to scientifically-based assessments of the 'true' risks they face. The

[5] For an argument that challenges the conventional opposition between 'convenience' and 'care', see Meah and Jackson (2017).

[6] For a more detailed critique of deficit thinking and an outline of alternative assets-based approaches, see Jackson (2015, chapters 8 and 9).

[7] We are grateful to Anne Murcott for this formulation of 'good reasons for bad behaviour'. For an example of research that opposes expert and lay knowledge, distinguishing between 'real' and 'perceived' risks, see Fabiansson and Fabiansson (2016).

question then becomes: *In what ways do consumers make sense of convenience food and the associated food risks?* Rather than blaming consumers for making poor dietary choices, the imperative is to understand the logic that informs their 'choices', the circumstances that justify them, how they are rationalized and the context in which they are made.

In the case of convenience food, we hypothesize that there are many different contexts to be explored before attempting to answer these questions. We further hypothesize that these contexts are constituted by everyday life, the rhythms and constraints of daily routines and practices, and material and financial resources.

An example of deficit thinking in relation to food-related risks is the perceived food risk index (PFRI), which has been used to chart consumers' apparently irrational concerns and to suggest ways of introducing scientifically-based risk analysis to the lay public (Kirk et al. 2002). This approach has been criticised by a number of social scientists (see, for example, Hansen et al. 2003). In particular, it is argued that scientists' and policy-makers' conceptions of 'the public' are overly simplistic and insufficiently attuned to the depth, variety and nuances of consumer practices:

> If we are to build a complete picture of consumer attitudes toward food safety, we will need a broad understanding of the symbolic meanings that attach to different types of food, the circumstances in which it is bought and consumed, and the wider societal context in which its production and consumption takes place. This additional, contextual dimension of lay risk perception cannot be incorporated within a psychological model. It requires sociological [and, we would add, geographical] investigation (Hansen et al. 2003, 120).

In order to do so, we need to challenge the way that consumers are cast in the role of victims who can be held individually responsible for their dietary choices. According to Halkier, this is a standard trope of food policy:

> Consumers' constructions of their role are dominated by ambivalence whereas public constructions of consumers' role represent hardly any ambivalence and primarily, although definitely not exclusively, ascribe to consumers the role of victim in need of assistance from other social actors (Halkier 2001, 221).

The construction of food risks is one of the ways in which this process occurs, blaming consumers for their poor lifestyle choices. As Deborah Lupton asserts:

> The dominant theme of lifestyle risk discourse is the responsibility of the individual to avoid health risks for the sake of his or her own health as well as the greater good of society. According to this discourse, if individuals choose to ignore health risks they are placing themselves in danger of illness, disability, and disease, which removes them from a useful role in society and incurs costs upon the public purse (Lupton 1993, 429).

Convenience food has clearly become incorporated in the discourse of lifestyle risk. The rhetoric of 'informed consumer choice' suggests that the consumption of convenience food is an act for which individuals must take full responsibility, with or without knowing about the negative consequences of their consumption practices. This framing of individual risk and moralized blame can be avoided, we argue, through an ethnographically-informed understanding of the socially embedded nature of consumer practice.[8)]

7 Conclusion

This paper has deployed the concept of food riskscapes to highlight the spatial dimensions of risk. Taking a range of examples from our ethnographically-inspired work in the UK and Germany, we show how consumers negotiate the risks associated with consuming food away from home; planning for unexpected guests; deciding which retailers merit their trust; dealing with poverty and food insecurity; and navigating the moralized risks that arise in the context of 'feeding the family'.

The paper shows how consumers negotiate these multiple food-related risks including their moral and ethical dimensions as well as more practical questions of food safety, health and hygiene that are at the heart of formal risk assessments. Our evidence suggests that it may be unhelpful to privilege scientific knowledge and expert opinion over lay people's

[8)] There are now multiple examples of the reframing of consumer choice within practice theory, avoiding the blaming of those who might be construed as the victims of those choices, whether in relation to food waste or food safety (Evans 2011; Meah and Watson 2014).

everyday understanding and that this can have unintended consequences in terms of the attribution of blame through the uncritical adoption of deficit thinking. By focusing on the way consumers negotiate the multiple risks associated with convenience food, a more nuanced (sociological and geographical) understanding of food riskscapes emerges.

Our argument extends beyond the emphasis on health and safety associated with formal risk assessments to include a range of other risks such as a loss of face, the risks of appearing a bad host or an uncaring mother. It is in relation to this extended notion of risk that the concept of 'riskscapes' has most analytical purchase, also drawing attention to the spatialized nature of many food-related risks.

Finally, we want to stress that consumption practices and their associated riskscapes are embedded in personal circumstances and social contexts. As our food bank examples show with stark clarity, choices can be very restricted. The same is true for those with limited time resources. What the dominant deficit-based policies often neglect is the context of time-scarcity and resource constraints, including material poverty, that are ubiquitous in contemporary capitalist societies (Rosa 2013; Caplan 2016). This societal context provides the horizon for a number of riskscapes whereby the struggles for food to eat, time to live and places to socialize compete with other imperatives such as personal health or environmental sustainability. Our research on convenience food provides just one example of the usefulness of the 'riskscape' concept in highlighting the uneven power-geometries of contemporary society and how the inequalities of gender, class and race continue to shape our everyday lives.

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