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Governing Food: Media, Politics and Pleasure
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English summary

This thesis explores how the contemporary food movement uses food as a vehicle for social and cultural change, combining political concerns and pleasure in a form of political hedonism. Through a theoretical framework of governmentality and media studies, the thesis investigates how the food movement has politicized food and how this has produced a discourse of 'good food', 'eating right', and 'good citizenship', shaping the idea of a responsible, informed 'citizen-consumer'. The experts of the food movement aim to educate citizens by connecting knowledge, responsibility, and pleasure, which implies that having knowledge about food's origins provides a foundation for making responsible choices and for enjoying the pleasure of eating 'good food'. This connection is also referred to as 'political hedonism', whereby consumers use pleasure and self-interest as an entry point into wider political and ethical issues, such as sustainability, animal welfare, and social justice. To explore this connection, the thesis applies a theoretical framework of political and cultural theory including concepts such as governmentality, neoliberalism, micro-politics, and the citizen-consumer.

Through the theoretical framework of governmentality, this thesis indicates how the ideals of good citizenship, as promoted by the food movement, emerged in parallel to the rise of advanced liberal societies. From the perspective of political theory, the recent politicization of food can be understood as a form of micro-politics that has emerged under the influence of the globalization and individualization processes, as well as due to the rise of neoliberal societies. This has several implications for our understanding of politics and citizenship: new forms of citizenship and agency have emerged, whereby individuals are taking on powers and responsibilities from the government, leading to shifts in the political landscape. As a result, responsibilities are increasingly shared through multilayered networks which include governmental, non-governmental, and corporate actors, as well as individual consumers and citizens.

Furthermore, the connection between daily consumer choices and global issues has politicized 'private' choices and erased the division between the political and the economic spheres. Primarily, the rise of neoliberal governmentality – characterized by decentralization, economization, and self-regulation – has affected food politics and policy, causing food and the food movement to become 'governmentalized'. In this context of decentralization, non-governmental organizations and grass-roots movements have taken up food and its consumption as a vehicle to address wider problems and to effect social change. Governmentality, in particular, is a useful concept in understanding the changing notions of politics and citizenship. In advanced liberal societies ensuring personal well-being and being involved in food production are valued as social responsibilities, moral duties, and means of self-formation. New forms of citizenship and agency have been expressed not

only through the hybrid concept of the citizen-consumer, but also through the concepts of the 'co-producer' or 'eco-gastronome', which merge consumption and production practices.

Until now, governmentality theory has not been linked to food movements or food politics, but it has been applied to related objects of study, such as health, nutrition and obesity, lifestyle television, museums, and culture. Because this thesis examines the mediatization of moral food discourses, the corpus of studies focused on governmentality and media is most relevant (Bell et al. 2015; Lewis 2008; Ouellette and Hay 2008a/b). In advanced liberal societies media are fundamental to the process of education and self-formation. As traditional social structures and authorities decline, people look to the media and experts for advice and instruction in everyday life, where lifestyle experts are taking over the governmental work of social workers, educators, and other professionals. Subjects may be governed through civilizing technologies (i.e. education, literacy, and skills), as well as through the media and their pedagogies (i.e. reality TV and interactive media tools). For this reason, media are considered an appropriate cultural technology for 'governing at a distance' because they can guide and shape the lifestyle choices of subjects. From this perspective the thesis explores how strategies to govern at a distance are accompanied by new forms of knowledge and expertise, providing techniques and discourses of empowerment. In this way, the thesis also aims to contribute to a growing corpus of studies connecting governmentality to media, lifestyle expertise, and food (Bell et al. 2015; Lewis 2008/2010; De Solier 2013).

Combined with an analysis of the historical, cultural, and political context, this thesis analyses the production of discourses about food by three representatives of the contemporary food movement: Slow Food, Michael Pollan, and Jamie Oliver. The method combines discourse analysis with a specific focus on mediatization, making the assumption that media as well as discourse constitute and shape certain knowledge, practices, and moralities related to food. The three case studies investigate why and how these representatives of the food movement have politicized food; what kinds of knowledge and practices about food they have produced for the education and transformation of citizens; and how this knowledge and these practices are mediatized through diverse media forms.

The central focus of the first case study is the *cultural politics* of Slow Food: the way in which Slow Food uses food culture for political activism, as a guide to morality, and for education. This case study places the cultural analysis of Slow Food within a wider framework of political consumerism and governmentality and media studies. It highlights how Slow Food can be understood as a complex organization that combines politics, pleasure, morality, and economy, and how this combination creates tensions and contradictions in its public image. This chapter, in particular, analyses how Slow Food has incorporated pleasure in a progressive political discourse: by reclaiming pleasure from its hedonist, bourgeois context and redefining it as a political and ethical principle.

The second case study focuses on Michael Pollan as a food expert and activist who represents the American food movement, which has its roots in the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. Similar to the counterculture, Pollan's media texts have politicized 'private' consumer choices and have produced a discourse of 'eating right'. This chapter explores the various ways in which Pollan has politicized food: by exposing what is wrong with the food industry, by influencing the government to reform the food system, and by empowering consumers to vote with their forks. As a cultural intermediary, Pollan plays a crucial role in the education, popularization, and mediatization of food knowledge. This case study highlights how this mediatization creates an ambivalence in Pollan's work between his political activism and the more mainstream lifestyle advice he offers.

The third case study examines how Jamie Oliver's image has been transformed from that of celebrity chef to that of social entrepreneur through his engagement in social and ethical issues related to food and health. It explains how Oliver's new role may have emerged due to the particular political context and climate, one which promoted neoliberal values such as individual responsibility. The case study analyses how new lifestyle TV formats, such as the campaigning culinary documentary have enabled lifestyle experts and celebrities to use their status to intervene in a series of food crises. It also looks at how interactive media and media convergence can facilitate the 'government of the self' by guiding and shaping the lifestyle choices of subjects. Finally, this chapter discusses how the convergence of media enables and strengthens the hybridization of the profit and non-profit activities across the Jamie Oliver brand and enterprise.

What becomes clear from the analysis of the case studies is that 'the contemporary food movement' cannot be defined as a coherent, unified movement, or as an organization with a clear ideology and policy; rather it includes various grass-roots, bottom-up associations and initiatives. Despite these seemingly incoherent initiatives, the chapters throughout this thesis trace an increasingly coherent discourse across food media texts that constructs ideas about 'good' food and 'eating right'. It becomes clear that the representatives of the food movement have politicized food by defining norms for good food, 'eating right', and good citizenship, combining moral and aesthetic criteria. Despite their regional differences, the three case studies are embedded in similar political contexts: under neoliberal government policies which enable and encourage change through 'governing at a distance' rather than through regulation and legislation. When looking at the mediatization in the three case studies, we can conclude that the discourses and politics of the food movement have become integrated into the mainstream media and consumer culture, in which food also functions as a medium for the branding and marketing of lifestyles. This mainstreaming has resulted in the hybridization of commercial interests and political or ethical values, which has created tensions in the discourses and images of the representatives of the food movement.

This thesis concludes that food media today provide a central platform where the public visibility of discourses and practices in popular food politics is both enabled and constrained. This implies that the mediatization and mainstreaming of contemporary food politics generates the dominant discourses about food. In addition, media convergence and interactive media tools are also enabling and empowering 'foodies' and food subcultures to produce alternative narratives, ones which may potentially transform the food landscape.