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HOW FOOD FEARS FRAME CRITICISMS OF THE FOOD SYSTEM. A CASE STUDY OF CUSTOMERS OF FARMERS' MARKETS

The article investigates food fears in the context of the everyday food practices of customers of farmers' markets in Małopolska Voivodeship, Poland. The qualitative analysis of 15 individual in-depth interviews mostly concerns topics of negative evaluation and narratives justifying the exclusion of specific products, food practices and institutions of the food chain. In particular, the study focuses on ways of defining food fears, such as chemicals in food, processed food, suspicious appearance and freshness of products and concerns associated with the place of purchase. An in-depth analysis of these topics reveals broader criticism of the food system within the narratives of the research subjects. This concerns redefinitions of relations between economic order and social institutions, removing particular cultural meaning from it, fragmentation and distancing of the production process from consumption, a lack of transparency in the food chain, and the associated ignorance. The diagnosis resulting from the interviews is expressed as food fears: it has ramifications connected to the engagement and practices of avoidance or minimisation of food threats and strategies of resistance. The analysis employs Mary Douglas's structuralist theory of defining through negation and Peter Jackson's food anxieties theory, as well as concepts of ignorance, distrust and social embeddedness of economic practices.

Keywords: food fears, consumption, shopping patterns, farmers' markets

INTRODUCTION

Two basic premises comprise the starting point for studying food patterns through negative indications. The first is Mary Douglas's argument from "In Defence of Shopping". Douglas shows that as individuals and groups we tend to define ourselves more precisely through what we do *not* do, buy, or eat, than what we *do* do, buy, and eat (Douglas 1997). According to this view, taboos and criticisms of food patterns and the food system formulated by consumers should provide information concerning the limits of what is approved. I explored the foundations of interpretation based on "negative definition" at greater length in another article (Kopczyńska 2017a). The second argument in favour of adopting a food fears/food

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anxieties perspective is the high and continually increasing significance of choice in the consumption models of contemporary capitalism. The model of the consumer as a decision maker, combined with the unpredictable consequences of these choices and the lack of transparency and variability of production and distribution networks, is generating a new, unique form of anxieties and uncertainties. This aspect of the modern age has been captured in the framework of such theories as the risk society, the age of anxiety, and liquid fear (Beck 1992; Douglas and Wildavsky 1982; Giddens 1991; Dunant and Porter 1996; Bauman 2006). The intensive flow of conflicting information, ever newer findings of scientists, doctors and food technologists, and a growing range of accessible ways of satisfying needs define the conditions of everyday consumption. The way in which individuals and communities cope with this situation is the subject of research on food fears, which is also the domain of this article.

The objectives of this study are to describe the main food fears in the studied group by presenting the role played by these fears in defining models of consumption and patterns of provision, and by reconstructing the framing using an analysis of the semantic connections of selected food fears. Also used was a small sample of 15 in-depth interviews with people purchasing food at farmers' markets in the Małopolska Voivodeship in Poland.

WHAT ARE FOOD FEARS? DEFINING THE NEGATIVE

Framings of food fears and food avoidances set social boundaries and constitute rules of cultural systems (Douglas 1997). Food fears have the power to demarcate and identify particular phenomena of the food system as real and endangering objects, agents or processes which should be removed, avoided, or mitigated. Food fears and negative definition are not a simple reversal of consumers' positive preferences. The results of a study on families in Copenhagen demonstrate differences between framing of positively and negatively evaluated food, and application of different categories for describing the two (Holm and Kildevang 1996). In the case of unfavourable products, the judgements of taste present in both categories were accompanied by more general statements, including references to retailers and producers. The negative criteria usually referred to industrially processed products, and applied to various stages and aspects of the food system, rather than just taste, smell and appearances. The study by Holm et al. poses the question of the role played by negative references and criteria of negative assessment in ordering the food culture, as well as about the way in which "rejected" food is framed.

The results of the Danish study, especially the conclusion about the relation between the industrial food system and food fears, can be illustrated by the vast literature on consumers as critics of contemporary food system (Blay-Palmer 2008; Pollan 2006; Levenstein 2012; Biltekoff 2013; Bonanno and Wolf 2017). They mostly refer to northwest Europe or the USA and to the challenges of the rapid modernization processes of recent decades. Few of them investigate past centuries (Ferrières 2006) and even fewer apply perspectives of non-western economies and cultures. In order to avoid repetition of industrial food production, global capitalism and critics of consumption culture, this study is founded on more general anthropological concepts and theories of framing food fears. The modernity paradigm and

the postsocialism paradigm are set aside. Social meaning of food is analysed in-depth as a cultural phenomenon (Smith and Jehlička 2007), a part of glocal cultural dynamics, but not necessarily as part of a unilinear, teleological "tradition-to-modernity" historiosophy.

Peter Jackson interprets social fears as referring to threats to the order of social meanings and to physical bodily integrity (Jackson 2015). Following Jackson, I define food fears as a bundle of collective emotions, values, narratives and social practices which emerge when individuals or groups perceive their social and physical safety within the food system as endangered. Food fears are therefore part of the cultural meanings system and cannot be seen as separate, individual reactions or impulses. Negative definition means marking and specifying the limits of what is acceptable, desirable, normal, and good. Consequently, for example the change in food habits concerning the popularisation of eating out or increased consumption of convenience food is not only an economic and dietary change, but above all a redefinition or questioning of the prime importance of family meals. The departure from daily home meals signifies a change in fundamental social roles, daily rhythms and relationships among household members. Such a change may bring uncertainty, a sense of threat and shaking of the elementary social structures that provide a sense of security, continuity and order. Framing processes also encompass actions geared towards limiting the negative impact of threats, or their removal. Food fears then stimulate social practices which aim to maintain the fundamental social structures of meaning and/or to ensure the physical existence of individuals (Jackson and Everts 2010). Food fears are an important factor in both social dynamics and conservative and resistant attitudes. The empirical questions are: what are these fundamental social structures? and how is physical well-being defined?

This angle on the concept of food fears makes it one of the tools of sociological analysis of social diversity. Food fears in a sociological sense are related to the social situation and cultural processes, rather than being the result of a purely cognitive relationship. This is what distinguishes my approach from research into food risk. I focus on the social, rather than the narrow expert process of demarcating between good food and bad food. The contemporary studies on food risk and perceptions of food security (including food fears or food anxieties) frequently relate to expert knowledge concerning risk analysis, management and communication. Food-related science-based recommendations and legislations targeted at food security are raised within the public health discourse. However, qualitative perspectives tend to question the model of food risk as objective, abstract, scientific knowledge ("knowledge deficit model"), which should be effectively transferred to lay people (Hansen et al., 2003). They argue that since food practices and concepts – e.g. food hazards, food quality, food trust – are parts of cultural reality, they should be studied in terms of their full everyday complexity and historical background.

Food fears framing, expressed within "common sense" systems, can then be linked to different values and meanings, and food fears can be rooted in various systems of beliefs in different ways. Framings of food fears relate to social positions, politics and economies, social images of body and nature, ethics, and moral regulations (Coveney 2006: 161). Gender roles and other social statuses are also dialectically intertwined and embodied by the negative rules of the menu (e.g. Kopczyńska and Zielińska 2015). Social structure position can be efficiently examined as expressions and determinants of food patterns. Avoiding particular

groups of products varies in different socio-professional categories: for example, in Poland 61% of higher managerial and professionals and 36% of farmers declare that they avoid lard and pork fat (eta squared is 4.1%), while declarations of avoiding coffee are similar (eta squared is 0.3%) in these categories (Domański et al. 2015: 76). Further studies, including qualitative, are required to interpret the above data, but they definitely show that social positions provide some of the determinants of food patterns. A comparative interpretation of the food fears of people in distinctly different social positions indicates the social embeddedness of food narratives. Every community has its own diagnosis of food threats which refers to the institutions and structures crucial to its operation. Each group has its own definitions of the boundaries of the food system that should not be crossed.

Although the perspective referring to the order of structural positions provides systematic understanding, the role of individual expressions cannot be disregarded. Our relations towards food result from, on the one hand, our positions in the food system, e.g. what provisions we have access to, and on the other, our individual choices. These relations are actively shaped, and food choices are made on the basis of individual values, tastes and habits. We refer to our own experiences and those of other people, including past generations. We make lifestyle and identity choices, becoming the creators of the food orders in which we live.

Among the aspects of food fears – cultural, political, economic, etc. – there is also a geographical one. Studies on "Risk Issues" and "Food-Related Risks" conducted in 2006 and 2010 on behalf of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) show that the differences are profound, and depend on the type of threats identified by consumers (European Commission 2006; 2010). The results of the research present the frequency of identification of specific types of threats as concerning, and reveal both a general sense of anxiety and a sense of capacity to counteract these threats. These threats include contamination of plant products with pesticides and meat products with antibiotics, microbiological impurities, the presence of genetically modified organisms in food and drinks, the presence of additives – food colouring, aromas, preservatives etc. – as well as fears for quality and freshness and for the welfare of farm animals. Poles, in common with other new EU member states (accession in 2004 and later) and Mediterranean countries, declare a high level of concern for all the mentioned risk types, with their biggest fears being the presence of additives in food. They very rarely express concerns about farm-animal welfare, which is also a characteristic of the new EU countries: the border of ethical calm and unease runs almost perfectly along the former Iron Curtain. Comparison of the results of the surveys from 2006 and 2010 demonstrates a marked increase in food fears throughout Europe. This growth is the largest in the case of technological threats, with a drop in declarations concerning microbiological contaminations related to production hygiene, i.e. viruses (e.g. avian flu) and bacterial diseases (e.g. salmonella). At the same time, technological threats and chemical contamination are widely identified as the issues which cannot be countered – unlike dietary and health fears, where a relatively high level of self-efficacy is declared.

The above data can be interpreted in various ways: the increasing number of declarations of concern might point to growing threats from food systems (our food is getting worse), but also to a change in the language used to describe these threats. The popularity of topics concerning food risks in the media means that a particular way of naming and expressing

them is becoming homogenised and hegemonised. Firstly, therefore, the increase in food fears need not come with a higher food risk. Secondly, the (scale-based) survey methods that were applied result in a marked increase in the percentage of food fears when the results are compared to the same research using open questions (Gaskell et al. 2016). It therefore makes sense to use various methods at various levels of manifestation to study food fears, since only by compiling results do we receive a more complete and nuanced picture of this phenomenon.

The "Risk Issues" and "Food-Related Risks" surveys also contained questions on trust in various entities as providers of information on food. Overall, people trust their own doctor, family and friends most, as well as consumer and environmental organisations and scientists (in order, from 84% to 71%). EU inhabitants least trust entities in the supply chain: processors and vendors of food (35–36%). Farmers constitute a positive exception (58%). The answers of Polish respondents have a similar distribution, but are approx. 20 percentage points lower than the EU average, and in some categories (doctors and the EFSA) the lowest in the EU. The answer "I don't know" is relatively common in Poland in response to the question on the EFSA (European Commission 2010).

Generalised trust and trust in institutions are linked to a lower level of concerns, including food fears (Gaskell et al. 2017). For years, Poles have been characterised by a very low level of generalised trust (less than 20% claim that "most people can be trusted"), far behind other European countries (NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data for ESS ERIC, 2014) (Czapiński and Panek 2015). In particular, the low level of institutional trust, in both market institutions (entities in the food chain) and state institutions, correlates with anxiety over various types of threats (Kjærnes et al. 2007). Extensive literature on trust and distrust in food provides indications as to how various types of trust influence risk perception and consumer decision-making (Hobbs and Goddard 2015). Detailed case studies also indicate that trust goes beyond a narrow economic model of rational estimation and prediction of the behaviours of others, and can be based, for example, on an emotional bond or shared experience. Some authors emphasise that the significance of trust is not solely about a prize earned as a result of trust-based practices, but that these practices are themselves significant (Dunning et al. 2012). Trust may also occur in situations that are hopeless from an economic perspective. Other approaches concern trust and distrust not only as a type of strategy constructed "on the spot", but as a cultural resource, capital, one of the pillars of the community, which on the one hand grows on historical experiences, and on the other is embedded in patterns of social and institutional relations (Sztompka 1999). As in the case of exchange, trust and distrust are social acts in themselves (Mauss 1954). Just as the Trobriand Islanders participated in the Kula to maintain relations among scattered communities (Malinowski 2002), trust has a structural and functional meaning. The cultural perspective also reinforces a conceptualisation of distrust that is not simply a negative reflection, the simple absence of trust, but can be understood as a particular, historically, culturally and institutionally established aspect of relations, an element of the framing, enabling and ordering of relations.

Distrust, denial and avoidance as a basis are increasingly conceptualised within ignorance studies: from Georg Simmel's category of *Nichtwissen* and the significance of ignorance in science for Merton, via Giddens's non-knowledge and Beck's risk society, to contemporary, more detailed concepts of ignorance, such as Eviatar Zerubavel's study of collective, active

avoiding (Zerubavel 2006) or Joanne Roberts and John Armitage's concept of the ignorance economy (as parallel to the knowledge economy) (Roberts and Armitage 2008). Not to mention other streams of theories, e.g. the rich Marxist tradition of false consciousness or anthropologists' reflections on knowledge: Levi-Bruhl's "primitive" or "mystic" mentality, Levi-Strauss's "savage mind", and Evans-Pritchard's relativist anthropology of knowledge. Below I shall make use of a systematic categorisation of various areas of ignorance (Gross 2007): from nescience and total unawareness, via non-knowledge and negative knowledge, to extended knowledge.

An excellent example of application of the concept of ignorance to investigate the perception of contemporary threats is Kari Marie Norgaard's in-depth research into a small Norwegian community (Norgaard 2006; 2011). Norgaard explains how knowledge on climate change remains at a level of denial, despite its widespread nature and the fact that the research subjects have experienced it directly themselves. This cognitive "denial" is related to a sense of threat to one's ontological security and identity. The former leads to the question "how will we live if our previous ways of survival stop being effective?", and the latter to the question "who will we be, if our previous 'Norwegianness' ceases to exist?". Norgaard also describes the sense of helplessness and guilt, which increases anxiety, but along with an inability to find social practices allowing one to deal with it. The coping strategy is therefore geared towards framing (cf. Jackson's food anxieties model): selective attention and perspectival selectivity (Norgaard 2006). The elephant in the room is actively ignored (Zerubavel 2006), but continues to lurk, and is an even greater concern the more powerless we are to deal with it. This is the same relationship indicated by the "Risk Issues" cited above (European Commission 2010).

METHODS, DATA AND ANALYSIS

The empirical material used in my study is 15 individual in-depth interviews with customers of farmers' markets in the Małopolska Voivodeship.

A discussion of the characteristics Polish food markets has been provided elsewhere (Kopczyńska 2017). Analysing the data with food fears theory needs emphasizing that farmers' markets and food bazaars are the most traditional and long-lasting supply channel in Poland. Compared to farmers' markets in most western European countries and USA, Polish markets are more inclusive, as they provide more affordable and diverse produce. Therefore they cannot be considered a niche of quality consumption for economically privileged consumers. There are definitely differences between particular markets in Poland, mostly depending on their location and profile, but most of them regularly provide a wide choice of fresh, seasonal everyday food at moderate prices.

The markets were selected to include small, local ones from small towns (Wojnicz, Brzesko, Wieliczka), urban district markets (plac na Stawach, targ przy ul. Rydla), and the largest, most popular markets in Małopolska (plac Imbramowski). Only regular markets taking place a minimum of once per week were included in the study. The interviews usually lasted 40–60 minutes and were conducted during and at the place of the shopping. The interview script encompassed questions associated with providing food to a household, with the situation

of the shopping itself, the farmers' market understood as a social space and food as a thing and process. The quotations cited here are given with the following information: (a) the market in question or place of the interview ("Krze" – Krzeszowice; "Wie" – Wieliczka; "Kra" – Krakow; "Wo" – Wojnicz; "Brze" – Brzesko; "Pro" – Proszowice), (b) the form of provisions to which the interview applied (here: "M" – market), (c) gender and (d) age of the interlocutors (nd – no data).

The qualitative analysis, i.e. coding, categorisation and comparison of codes, was carried out on the parts of interviews that contained elements of negation, particularly: defining food by negation, negative examples and experiences, motifs of lack of knowledge, ignorance, distrust, criticism of food and food systems, threats, avoidance, substitution and other coping strategies related to the limitations of the food system. The coding was conducted on an open basis. During the categorisation of the codes, the least common (one or two indications) were removed, leaving 32 codes, containing between 3 and 70 extracts. The coding book and numbers of instances are presented in the table below. The final column of the table sorts some of the codes into Eurobarometer categories (European Commission 2010; Gaskell et al. 2017). The field of my research exceeded food-risk perception, encompassing narratives of negative definition, avoidance and criticism, which is why the last column is not fully covered.

Table 1. Codes, categories and numbers of coded segments

Code	Coded segments	Coded segments [%]	Documents	Parent code	Categories by (Gaskell et al. 2017)
Processed food	10	0.43	5	products	adulteration of food
Not fresh	33	1.42	11	products	food origins and quality
Product's life	13	0.56	9	products	food origins and quality
Suspicious appearance – "too much"	31	1.33	12	products	adulteration of food
Bad taste	24	1.03	11	products	–
Coping	7	0.30	3	coping strategies	–
Avoiding (products)	12	0.52	3	coping strategies	–
Sugar	4	0.17	2	coping strategies\avoiding	chronic food-related illness
Meat	5	0.21	2	coping strategies\avoiding	chronic food-related illness
Chemicals	54	2.32	14	dangerous (external) factors	chemical contamination
Microbiological contamination	7	0.30	5	dangerous (external) factors	acute food-related illness

Table 1 cont.

Code	Coded segments	Coded segments [%]	Documents	Parent code	Categories by (Gaskell et al. 2017)
Came from the West	4	0.17	2	dangerous (external) factors	food origins and quality
Disgust	8	0.34	4	bodily well--being	food origins and quality
Poisonous	8	0.34	6	bodily well--being	acute and chronic food--related illness
Diseases	19	0.82	6	bodily well--being	acute and chronic food--related illness
Stocking up	4	0.17	4	food system	
Out of season	10	0.43	7	food system	adulteration of food
Intermediaries	4	0.17	3	food system	food origins and quality
Expensive	10	0.43	3	food system	
Distant origins	22	0.94	8	food system	food origins and quality
Malpractices and frauds	27	1.16	11	food system	
Industrial breeding	8	0.34	5	food system	adulteration of food/animal welfare issues
Consumers are alienated from food system	9	0.39	6	food system	–
Lack of access to some products	14	0.60	6	food system	–
Something is wrong with shopping venue	70	3.00	15	food system	–
Something is wrong with food economy	18	0.77	8	food system	–
Fast (-food, -life)	4	0.17	3	food system	–
Lack of control	5	0.21	5	ignorance	food origins and quality
I don't know, but I eat it	14	0.60	8	ignorance	food origins and quality
I know/don't know, I don't ask	19	0.82	12	ignorance	food origins and quality
I don't know, so I don't eat it	14	0.60	7	ignorance	food origins and quality
Nobody knows what's in it	21	0.90	9	ignorance	food origins and quality

In total, concerns regarding products themselves were identified 111 times, coping strategies (e.g. avoidance) 28 times, external factors compromising product quality 65 times (mostly chemicals), directly endangered bodily well-being (illnesses, poisoning) 35 times, irregularities of the food system 200 times, and consumer ignorance 73 times. The most critical references in the research sample concerned in particular: the place where shopping is done, so-called chemicals, the question of freshness, suspicious appearance and taste of products, and malpractices and frauds. The relatively large collective category of ignorance was divided into individual codes at the coding stage, but below it will be analysed as a group comprising in total almost 3% of the empirical material. The subsequent analysis will focus on these topics.

The frequency of negative references concerning shopping venue characteristics results partly from the research design and interview protocol. The interviewees were asked directly about their reason for choosing a farmers' market, their opinions and emotions associated with it, and their shopping preferences. The prevalence of this topic is therefore not surprising, but referring to supermarkets when asked about farmers' markets is a perfect example of negative definition. Supermarkets appear spontaneously, are part of the semantic structure, and lend meaning to frequenting the market and to the products purchased there. "Researcher: why do you come more often in summer? Interviewee: Because there are fresh fruit and vegetables. That's why. Delicious, fresh fruit that is not supermarket fruit" (Kra/M/m/50). On the one hand, definition through juxtaposition immediately identifies the products and shopping venue, placing them in a ready semantic structure, while on the other it creates a dynamic framing. This juxtaposition naturally leads to specific shopping practices, consumer choices, critical attitudes and engagement. The interviewees' statements about supermarkets comprised a coherent picture – the archetype and antithesis of good buying. They constituted not only the key characteristics of products, including freshness and full taste, but also vendor-customer relations and vendors' relations with their work and the products they sell. According to these statements, supermarket employees lack the motivation to care for products and the people buying them, and can be impolite and reluctant to form any relationship. Products are not fresh because of the spatial and temporal distance from the place of production, and their impeccable appearance represents only apparent quality, which is exposed during consumption. Criticism of supermarkets also concerns their position of power and control over the buying process. Farmers' markets enable the purchaser to choose not only the product directly, but also the vendor and means of production, and although the food supply channels at these markets are not entirely transparent, the shift in decision making towards the buyer is cited as a virtue. In the aforementioned European surveys on risk, the possibility of taking steps to reduce threat involved reduction of concerns. This is also how the strategies of choice at farmers' markets should be interpreted (for more on these strategies see: Kopczyńska 2015). In Jackson's model, choosing at a farmers' market is therefore an action that reduces the threat to the social order and physical well-being.

The statements regarding shopping venue reveal above all concerns regarding the social order, especially the economy. According to the respondents, the relations constituting embeddedness for food shopping, i.e. the stream of economic exchanges, should go beyond trade in a narrow sense. We can call this "social surplus" trust building, as long as we

understand trust in broad terms, and not just as calculation. The following statements present certain characteristics of the endangered social order:

> You know what, actually I choose this market because it's a market, and not a hypermarket. *I don't like the whole package*, I don't like the place, don't like the distance, don't like the people. I don't like going to hypermarkets, I prefer going to the market. I suspect that even if they sold me exactly the same thing as there, and just said it was from a different place, I'd be able to believe it (Wie2/M/f/40).

> I hope it will always be like this, that the hypermarkets won't destroy it. That they won't destroy this form of sales, because I think it's also a kind of tradition. You're not anonymous then. You go to the market, the vendor knows you, he's known you since you were a child. Sometimes he knows your family, because you come with your young child, then the child gets bigger and you talk about school, talk about life. My son is 14, and I was going to them, I remember, when I was pregnant, even earlier I went to them, so you could say that my family has grown with them. I see them develop, they see my children growing up. We're not anonymous, like going to the hypermarket, quick, quick, doesn't matter if it's good or not good (Wie/M/f/35).

The latter statement is an example of trust as a relationship/resource located in time, and yet also providing a social framework to the passage of time. Meanwhile, the "package" referred to in the former statement concerns the social framework, the particular embeddedness (Kopczyńska 2017b), that the research subjects miss and which they claim is threatened by supermarkets and their anonymity. In the above comments, criticism of changes goes beyond criticism of products, and even attaches less importance to them, giving a higher status to social order than that of a narrow understanding of consumption. The desirable, proper order is one in which the economy is closely related to other spheres of local life, vendors are also acquaintances, shopping time is also a time of social life and relaxation, and the transfer of goods is also communication, a transfer of meanings and values, and social exchange. The proper social order is one in which consumers' decisions are not reduced to economic calculation, but have a moral and political meaning:

> I prefer to give money to a vendor who, well... Working at a market doesn't bring enormous financial benefits, so rather him than some corporation, some behemoth supermarket which has too much and is too big anyway (Wie/M/m/30).

The criticism of socio-economic changes contained in negative references to place of purchase also often betrays elements of historical diagnosis.

> I've been trying to [shop at markets] for some time. I don't claim that this has always been the case, that I've always shopped at markets, because when supermarkets started to emerge, people relished the choice, how beautiful the vegetables looked. But then it turned out that they weren't necessarily good in terms of taste, because actually the taste of a carrot, especially raw, from the market from a lady that I know, and the taste of a carrot from a supermarket, it's a huge difference. Really, you can grate one, grate the other and try. The one from the supermarket doesn't taste like a carrot, just like who knows what (Wie/M/f/60).

This "relishing" here refers to the availability, diversity and attractiveness of goods that came with the transformation and full incorporation into global capitalism. The initial fascination, openness and trust towards liberal capitalism, experienced by the consumers of Eastern Europe in the 1990s, acquires negative overtones. Analogously to the case of the Hungarian pepper market analysed by Zsuzsa Gille (2016), the decision to join the progressive stream (here – the free market, there – the European Union) taken from a position of a "backwards" developing economy, ceases to be viewed as unequivocal progress. The cited statement points to disappointment at ostensible quality, "beautiful vegetables", and a range that, under the gleaming skin, conceals a taste of "who knows what". The story of the beautiful vegetables is therefore a criticism not only of the contemporary global food economy itself, but also of the way in which this economy spreads (globalises), using dubious arguments and offering the illusion of quality. For this respondent, the farmer's market is her response to contemporary food threats, a place of resistance, chosen deliberately and in opposition to the dominant order of supermarkets.

With the critical diagnosis also comes rationalisation of this seduction, and perception of the rationale of the changes. The overriding value of these changes is firstly the opportunity to choose, and secondly an increase in comfort of life associated with convenient shopping and convenient products. Although the eating culture in Poland continues to be based on home cooking, with eating out and buying ready meals comprising only a few percent of food consumption (Domański et al. 2015: 122–132), dynamic changes are visible in eating habits. The choice of "convenience" is manifested in the choice of shopping venue, as predictability, regularity and savings all count in the supermarkets' favour. In the interviews, however, choosing a supermarket is treated as deviation from doing the right thing, as a compromise between the desirable socio-economic order and the value of nutritional security:

> Researcher: I take it that you don't tend to shop in hypermarkets? I: Not really. Although I can't rule it out completely, because it's winter, and at the markets you can't buy everything [laughs/sighs]. And since I eat vegetables all year round, in the winter I'm forced to buy them at a supermarket (Wie/M/f/60).

> Sometimes, just sometimes, when I'm really hard up, I'll shop at a grocery shop. But for many years now I haven't gone to big shops or supermarkets (Krze/M/f/nd).

> But sometimes for purely economic reasons you have to go there and unfortunately [sighs] I sometimes buy meat at a hypermarket. For economic reasons (Wie/M/f/35).

The second topic with a strong presence in the collected materials, and also encompassing various meanings, is chemicals. This is the most important characteristic distinguishing good from bad products. Chemicals are understood in various terms – as an unnatural, improper means of production that reflects on the taste and quality of food. Use of chemicals is treated on the one hand as a necessity and an obvious element of modern economies, but on the other as something unnatural, wrong and harmful. The aversion to chemicals refers to the experience of traditional food production, the past, and naturalness, including unpredictability. Regularity is strange, suspicious, and a constant source of concern, as the traditional economy

is regarded as the norm: "Yes, in chains of shops these products are the same in each shop. It's a little odd, something must be wrong with them. They must have something pumped into them or specially selected in some way, stored in some kind of gas chambers, I don't know" (Wie/M/m/30). In response to the threat, complex avoidance strategies appear within the framework of shopping patterns. One such strategy is avoidance of "beautiful vegetables", anything that is too attractive and regular.

"In my opinion it's not apple season now, those are last year's apples, and those apples, in my opinion, as I say, I might be wrong, they can't be so super bright red, rosy, juicy any more, as if just picked from the tree, because for the whole autumn and winter and spring they've been lying somewhere in crates. If I'm going to buy apples now, actually I'd rather buy some imperfect ones with some blemish or spot on them – because I know they haven't been enhanced, or had something sprinkled or sprayed on them. They have ugly skin but they taste great. In fact it's my husband who's the apple expert, and he has this theory that the best are the little ones with a spot on them, or a little gnarled stalk, or a strange shape, and not those lovely big apples that tempt you with their shape but aren't necessarily all that healthy and tasty and juicy" (Wie2/M/f/40). "I say: I don't buy beautiful vegetables, big ones without stains or blemishes. Because they're not healthy" (Wie/M/f/60).

The category of chemicals includes processed products and their use in preparation of home meals: "Well sometimes you need to buy something quick. But as soon as, for example Mum's cooking and I go to work and – like recently – I tried borscht. And I say: 'oh dear, you added something not quite right, you added something, some chemicals', and she says: 'I put this cube in, I put something in'. You can taste straightaway that it's not natural, that there's something there" (Wie/M/f/35). It is particularly taste and health that are endangered by chemicals, i.e. the order of corporeality and the welfare of family members, especially children.

Almost all the topics identified in the coding overlap, co-occur and are semantically related. The interviewees explain food threats in bundles, placing the emphasis differently. Yet we can speak of a fairly distinct common base structure founded on several evident facts: none of the interviewees claims that food additives are healthy and tasty, although some see their sense as a guarantee of availability of food; everybody is critical towards supermarkets, although some of the people regularly shop in them; in all interviews there is uncertainty and concern over the need to make choices despite a lack of information.

Figure 1 demonstrates the mutual overlapping of codes and their co-occurrence in parts of the interviews. The size of the dot shows how often two given codes co-occurred, in how many extracts respondents referred to several issues at once or used one to explain another. For reasons of legibility, the table only takes into account the most common topics (10 indications and more).

The thickest semantic bundles are concentrated in the *chemicals* category. This is most frequently connected to two others that often occur in the interviewees' statements: the suspicious appearance of products (usually vegetables, 32 cases) and ignorance (35 cases, following consideration of the mutual overlapping of codes from the ignorance group). Both indicators refer to the lack of transparency of the food system. The term "chemicals" therefore denotes a factor that hinders assessment of the product, and is a distorting element, combining positive and negative characteristics of the product so that it cannot be classified.

Chemicals make food into mixed types, analogous to those about which Mary Douglas writes in "The Abominations of Leviticus" (Douglas 2003), interpreting the Old Testament logic of the rules of impurity. The anxiety inherent in the term "chemicals" results from the cognitive helplessness when previous, stable and tested evaluation criteria cease to be useful. The aforementioned category of "beautiful vegetables" is a way of coping with this mixing. A way of recognising good food under the layer of ostensible ripeness is to compare it to direct experience and one's own growing. The "beautiful vegetables" look healthy, ripe and tasty, but do not pass the test of comparison to one's own garden. This is a test that exposes appearances, provides order, and enables corresponding classification. It shows the truth: "just water inside", "it tastes like who knows what". Distrust towards industrial production need not therefore be a result of conservatism and attachment to traditional farming, as a lack of trust results in the need to reach for the most elementary, unquestionable resources – the collective memory of self-provisioning of food.

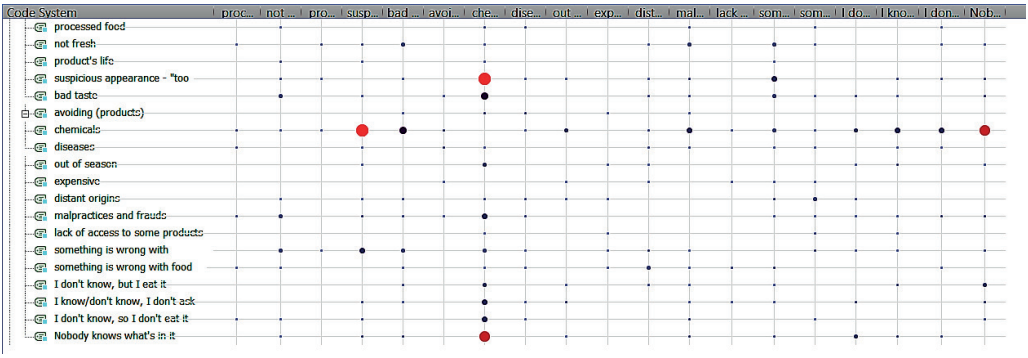

Figure 1. Co-occurrence of selected codes

By discerning the links among chemicals, suspicious appearance, and ignorance, we can understand how knowledge about food can work in the social context of the everyday. Chemicals are not defined here as particular chemical compounds identified by food supervision institutions, but as a property of a thing situated in a specific place in the social food universe. They are also something that disturbs the proper order, driving specific foods from their normal place by disrupting the obvious order and the normal combination of their characteristics. Food looks fresh and yet has been in a warehouse for months, looks ripe but inside is unripe, bland and tasteless. Chemicals ensure that perfect regularity "as if from a child's ABC" (Wie2/M/f/40), which in nature is something extraordinary, becomes commonplace. This shift means that the "beautiful vegetables" of industrial production cannot be the same as real – rare – beautiful vegetables. The food fears associated with chemicals entail a changed semantic structure, the need to redefine both categories, to place them along another axis, and identify new juxtapositions.

Freshness of food, another characteristic that though cited less frequently is still important and present in 11 of the 15 interviews, has an analogous meaning. Concerns related to a product's

lack of freshness have a crucial and direct link to consumer decisions. "I might not like the strawberries, for example, as they're too squashed, or too big, attractive and shiny, then I look for those that look like they've been picked in a field" (Kra/M/f/30). The dual meaning of lack of freshness is analogous to that of "beautiful vegetables". Non-fresh products are those whose journey from field to plate is too long, yet this loss of freshness may be either visible or invisible. The visible process is easy to recognise and avoid: off meat, bruised strawberries, withered lettuce, soft carrots. Invisible lack of freshness causes more problems. Foodstuffs that naturally should age but remain perfect arouse greater tensions, greater unease, and are also accompanied by less self-efficacy from consumers. These products looks fresh, but in the eyes of the interviewees are just as bad, if not worse than those that are simply no longer fresh. Lack of freshness includes processed products, prepared in an indeterminate way at an indeterminate time. Freshness is a guarantee of taste (as in the statement on the homemade borscht to which the interviewee's mother had added a stock cube) as well as of safety – but also recognition of homemade meals, one's own food work, regularity and continuous engagement. The culture of freshness, much more broadly than a product's property, requires readiness, personal participation, and control; food is at the centre, an everyday and family matter. Non-knowledge, chemicals and processed food in this narrative mean moving away from food and handing responsibility and agency to producers, intermediaries and authorities. Disquiet is caused by cultural-economic change, changes of institutions and social spaces, changes in consumer status and the rhythm of life, and ruptures in the continuity and coherence of individual and collective experiences, and not by changes in a product's ingredients alone.

Chemicals and freshness are linked to four codes of the category of ignorance, and particularly the last: one doesn't know what is there. The statements coded with this phrase contained not only an element of ignorance, but also helplessness. In a situation when it is impossible to credibly determine the means of production of a given item, one is consigned to searching for clues or facing up to the random nature of the choice.

> You can say all kinds of things, right? While driving the car I see beautiful lettuces by the motorway, I've never seen the like, a lot of these lettuces. And those people definitely sell them. At the market the salad might be from that area too. But that's the way it is, unfortunately... (Wie/M/f/60).

The "nobody knows what's in it" code has characteristics of non-knowledge from Gross's distinction: certain information on food is beyond the limits of consumer knowledge. In a specific food system, specific information on ingredients, origin, means of production, effect on health etc. might be available to a consumer or not. The scope of this information is affected by legislation and economic factors, packaging and labelling rules, forms of communication (e.g. terminology used on packaging), food education, consumer expectations, food habits and other aspects. In the customers of farmers' markets included in the study, the extent of ignorance was clearly specified and strategies of coping with this situation were also visible. In addition to reference to one's own garden, these strategies are building trust, forming social relations with vendors, and changing shopping patterns in the seasonal cycle (cf. Kopczyńska 2017b).

The extracts coded with other types of ignorance also demonstrate an enforced agreement to unpredictability. From the point of view of the model of food fears applied here, it

is particularly interesting to note those which show respondents attempting to give order to the unknown, to manage their own ignorance, conjecture, surmise, and make allowances for knowledge.

> R: Do you ask about where the product comes from? I: Yeah, of course. I don't know if they tell the truth or not, but yes (Wie/M/f/60).

> I think that at those markets there are more and more people who get their stock at Rybitwy [wholesale market]. Than those who used to have all their products from their own garden. Of course, people take the easy route. I think so. But I might be wrong (Wie/M/m/30).

> For example with strawberries you can see that they bring fresh ones, that... well, maybe not [contemplates] I'm not a hundred percent sure, but I think that most are theirs (Pro/M/f/45).

The quoted extracts reveal various emotions and cognitive strategies associated with the lack of transparency of the supply chain and distrust. We can also observe negative knowledge, i.e. recognition that sometimes it might be better not to know or ask questions. One might be satisfied by the answer, but it may also often not be credible or convenient, and may cause discomfort and inner conflict. This is a similar situation to Norgaard's account of the Norwegian community ignoring climate change, a kind of "cognitive denial". In a sense the vendors and buyers, by playing their roles, maintain the identity of the farmers' market as a place where one buys directly from the producer, where one chooses, trades, and builds relationships. Stepping outside this role and showing excessive curiosity can even be perceived as a destructive act, a kind of confrontation, undermining the socio-cognitive order.

> You know what, one doesn't have the time to stand, talk, enquire. *Perhaps somebody wouldn't even want that, because if they couldn't explain it, that it's from their farm, or their field, and it's only bought and what, they lose a customer if they wanted to tell the truth. Of course, you can make it up, so what. I don't really enquire where the products are from. I just guess.* But I have my favourite, Marysia and her stall. She's from so far away that it's hard to say whether she has her own or not, but I like buying from her. Maybe she gets it from elsewhere, I don't know where from, but in any case she has slightly different goods from the others – that's why I like buying from her. And sometimes I walk through the whole market to get to her stall, and there's always a queue for it (Wie2/M/f/60, my emphasis).

Precise knowledge about products is sacrificed on behalf of other values: friendly relations, atmosphere, the ease and freedom associated with the semi-formal economy, sociability and "more human" trade – Those values are precisely the "package" mentioned by one of the first interviewees quoted. The subject of conversations at market stalls is the products on offer, but the significance of the shopping certainly goes beyond the quality of the food itself. Food fears at farmers' markets involve not only new production technologies, harmfulness, contamination and bad taste of food, but also the social spaces related to trading, the unique social and economic relations in the arena of farmers' markets, the continuity of social institutions, and also maintaining the cognitive order, which permits competent and efficient functioning in the consumer sphere.

CONCLUSION

In the research sample, food fears were treated as an element of a wider culture of domestic resource management. Anxieties regarding food itself and the consumption thereof resulted firstly from "chemicals" and the associated non-knowledge, secondly from the category of "unnaturalness" of food, which can be a kind of criticism and resistance towards the changes in the food system, and thirdly from the broad concept of freshness, which is a characteristic of supply chains, and not just the final product.

Studying food fears in the social context demonstrates their embeddedness in the institutional and cognitive order. The anxiety concerning infringement of the physical or social order is something like a tension in the fabric of everyday practices, social doings and sayings. This tension provokes new framings, intensive links of meanings, reinforcing and weakening concrete practices. In the sample, such a reinforced practice was the introduction of the cognitive category of "beautiful vegetables" and the associated procedure of comparison of apparent quality with the true quality based on one's own experience of gardening. Another practice might be variability of shopping habits in the seasonal rhythm or building trust and sociability in the course of the exchange. The analysis of negative definition clearly indicates threats to the socio-cognitive structures and categorisation systems enabling people to function in the sphere of food exchange and consumption. Food fears directly concern cognitive boundaries, and maintaining and transgressing them. The changes to the food system make it necessary to go beyond the generally accepted, "natural" categories and social actions. The materials cited here allow us to identify not only the main areas of engagement in which what is known and not known is framed, but also what is uncertain, sensed (assumed), concealed and suppressed. Cognitive structures are related to social practices: playing by specific rules, and reinforcing specific supply patterns while avoiding and entering others. In the research sample, such avoidance was deliberate withdrawal from the role of a mass consumer and treating shopping at a market as a resistance strategy.

The criticism of the food system made in the interviews was not expressed directly in the form of a political or economic narrative, but was located in descriptions of products. The respondents' strategies for coping with the weaknesses of the system and their adoption of strategies of resistance comprised micro-practices in everyday management at the household level. However, the analysis and interpretation of negative references made here points to a significant critical potential of these micronarratives, their reference to macroprocesses and their social embeddedness. Owing to the method employed here and the small sample size, we cannot generalise regarding the extent of these specific strategies and narratives. But we can recognise the key importance of food fears and negative references for framing food practices. Further research using other methods could show to what degree anxieties about freshness, chemicals and lack of transparency are specific concerns, and how common they are for customers of farmers' markets in the voivodeship or country. To further test the hypotheses, it would also be useful to investigate the fears expressed and practised by entities in other positions in the food system. Such research would allow us to link specific types of framing of food fears with determinants of social positions. Using such an analysis, we could therefore identify the main localised failures of the contemporary food system from the point of view of the participants of this system themselves.

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JAK OBAWY ŻYWIENIOWE WYZNACZAJĄ KRYTYKĘ SYSTEMU ŻYWIENIOWEGO? STUDIUM KLIENTÓW TARGOWISK

Artykuł dotyczy obaw żywieniowych w codziennych praktykach klientów małopolskich targowisk. Jakościowa analiza piętnastu wywiadów pogłębionych skupia się na negatywnych ocenach i narracjach uzasadniających unikanie określonych produktów, praktyk i instytucji rynków spożywczych. Obawy żywieniowe kierują się zwykle na chemiczne dodatki do żywności, produkty wysoko przetworzone, podejrzany wygląd, świeżość jedzenia i miejsce jego zakupu. Przeprowadzona analiza ujawnia ponadto wyrażony tymi obawami głębszy krytycyzm badanych wobec systemu żywnościowego. Jego przedmiotem jest relacja między porządkiem gospodarczym a innymi instytucjami społecznymi, zanik kulturowych znaczeń jedzenia, fragmentaryzacja i oddalenie procesu produkcji i konsumpcji, brak przejrzystości łańcuchów żywnościowych i związana z tym niewiedza. Diagnoza systemu żywieniowego wyrażona w obawach ramuje praktyki unikania lub minimalizowania zagrożeń żywieniowych oraz strategie oporu. Interpretacja materiału empirycznego wsparta jest na tezach strukturalizmu Mary Douglas o definiowaniu poprzez negację, teorii niepokojów żywieniowych Petera Jacksona, a także na kategoriach niewiedzy, nieufności oraz społecznego zakorzenienia praktyk gospodarczych.

Słowa kluczowe: obawy żywieniowe, konsumpcja, wzory zakupów, targowiska