

# Hunger as a topic in the German Society?!

Food skills and eating behaviour of people in social neediness – and societal and political reactions.

PD Dr. Sabine Pfeiffer (ISF Munich)  
Tobias Ritter (ISF Munich)  
Dr. Andreas Hirsland (IAB Nuremberg)

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## Paper Background and approach

Quantitative and theoretical approach: my habilitation.

Qualitative data: research project.

## Poverty Dynamics and Labour Market



Funded by Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.  
January 2006 – December 2012



Research Institutes:

IAB Nürnberg (Institute for Employment Research)

HIS Hamburg (Hamburg Institute for Social Research)

ISF München (Institute for Social Research Munich)

# Poverty Dynamics and Labour Market

Project aims on the processes of...

formation, hardening and overcoming of neediness among persons able to work

in terms of SGB II:  
ALG II (so-called Hartz IV).

Hunger and food shortage

were no initially intended issues.

## Qualitative longitudinal study

Biographic-narrative interviews at home.

Starting interviews about 3 hours.

4 waves in 4,5 years.

3 of 4 interviewing waves completed.

Actually 329 interviews and 86 „living“ cases.



There are hunger and nutritional poverty – in the midst of our supposedly affluent society.

Germany

No mass problem, but...

...existent and spreading.

Mostly overseen and neglected...

...in public and scientific awareness.

One reason for that:

No systematic and regular surveys on nutrition in Germany.

## Nationale Verzehrsstudie (NVS) (National Consumption Study)

Brombach et al. 2006; Max Rubner-Institut 2008

Only two surveys:  
↳ 1980s (NVS I)  
↳ 2005-2007 (NVS II)

main problem / critique

- ↳ poorer population strata are largely lacking
- ↳ population groups at higher risk of nutritional poverty were deliberately excluded
- ↳ unemployed households are underrepresented.

Kaiser 2001; Pfeiffer 2009

Due to this systematic lack of satisfying data...

...we rely on „circumstantial evidence“

↳ facts and figures from a variety of resources

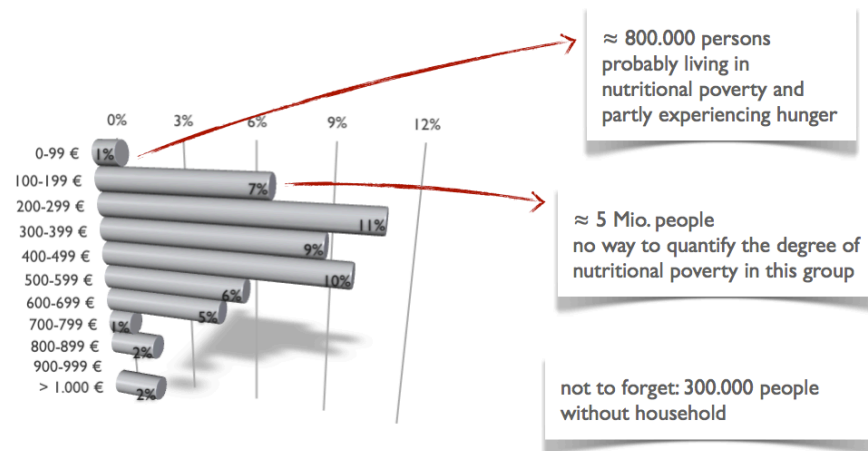
## Quantitative hints

hunger and nutritional poverty in Germany

### circumstantial evidence I

Too many people  
have too less money  
to spend on food.

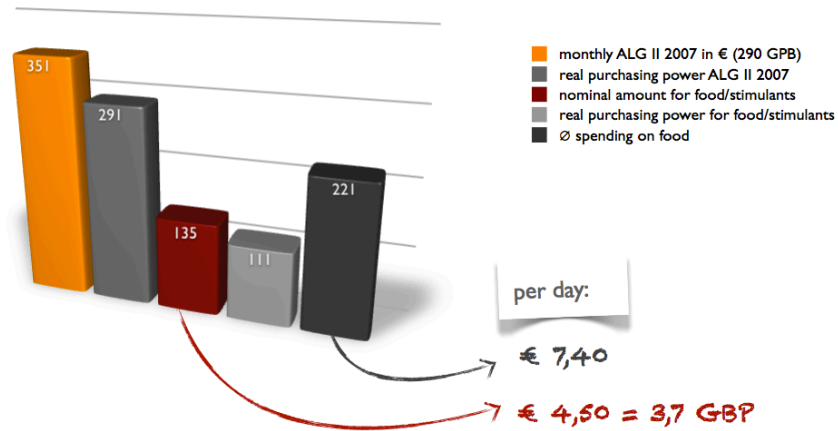
## Monthly household expenses



### circumstantial evidence 2

ALG-II benefits for food  
are ridiculously small dimensioned.

## Spendings on food



Jaquemoth 2008; Hüneck et. al 2004; graphics: Pfeiffer 2009.

circumstantial evidence 3

Germany experiences a food bank „explosion“.

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## Food banks in Germany

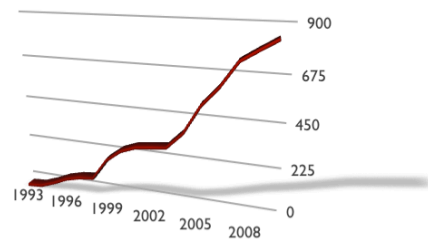
100,000 tons of food

1,000,000 people

848 foodbanks



- social welfare
- unemployed
- homeless
- retired persons
- migrant
- „German“ migrants (Aussiedler)



Normann 2003; Selke 2009; Bundesverband Deutsche Tafeln e.V.; graphics: Pfeiffer 2009

3 circumstantial evidences

There must be hunger and nutritional poverty in Germany.

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# Alimentary participation

eating out as example

Eating is a deeply social act.

due to our "truly impressive nutritional versatility" (Beardsworth/Keil 1997)

→ the most basic decision is a social one: Is something edible or not?

Food

bond between culture and nature

cultural and symbolic sign

important role

↳ construction of identity (Beardsworth/Keil 1997)

↳ development of the self and of emotions (Lupton 1996)

↳ socialisation process (Pahl/Setzwein 1999)

=> alimentary participation

= most basic and central mechanism of social participation.

Eating out

great upswing since the 1980s

(Beardsworth/Keil 1997;  
Finkelstein 1999; Mennell 2003)

= point of culmination of alimentary participation.

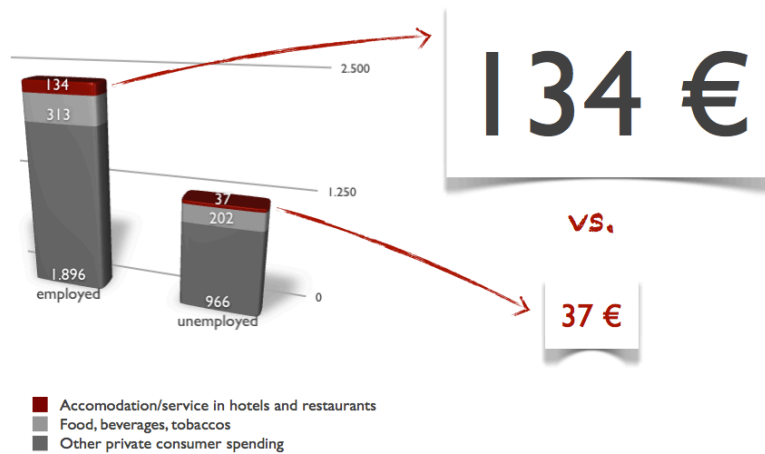
- ↳ Where, how, with whom and on which occasions we eat out
- ↳ how we dress and what we spend
- ↳ which cultural setting we choose
- ↳ whether we are in command of appropriate table manners
- ↳ whether we know which food is hip
- ↳ whether we are able to follow the permanent changes in food trends

determines, reveals and enables our belonging  
to an individualised and pluralistic society.

circumstantial evidence I

Unemployed households' spendings  
on gastronomic services  
are way down the average.

## Household expenditures 2005



Destatis 2008; graphics: Pfeiffer 2009.

circumstantial evidence 2

On eating out, there is no food choice for unemployed households whatsoever.

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Typical ALG II household with around 1.200 € private consumption



37 €



average bill for eating out per person

14,50 €

58 €



four persons eating out once



37 €



average bill for eating out per person

14,50 €

food „choice“

Dine out once a month and leave one at home?

Or only every two months with all four?

Or the occasional McDonalds visit with all?



CHD Experts 2009.

circumstantial evidence 3

The great majority of unemployed households is never ever eating out.

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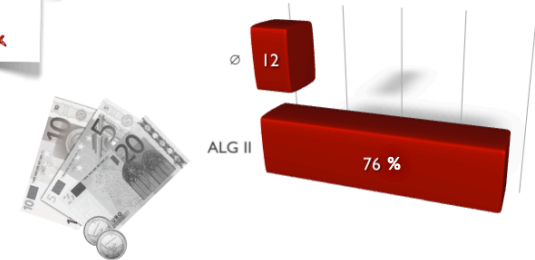
## Not affording dining out at all

average eating out occasions  
per person per year

85x

per month =

7x



European Quality of Life Survey (2003) und Bernhard (2008); graphics and combination: Pfeiffer 2009.

3 circumstantial evidences

ALG-II recipients are systematically excluded from alimentary participation.

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## Qualitative insights

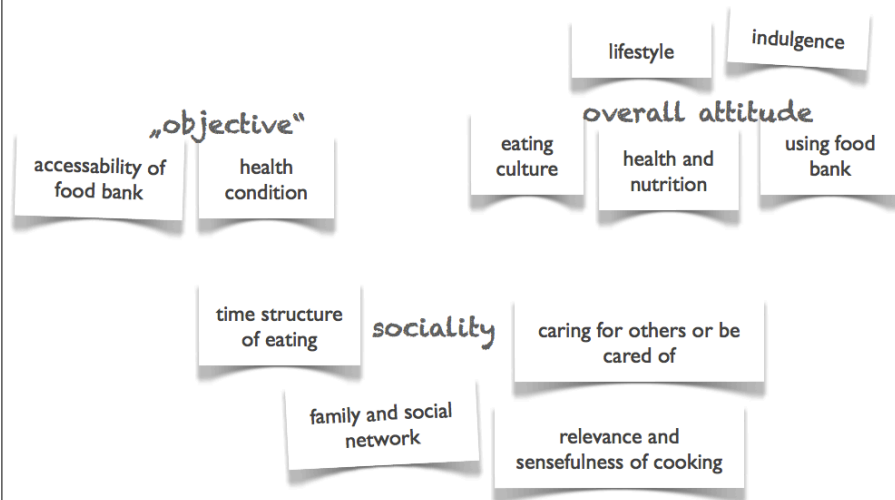
variety of individual coping

due to lack of societal/governmental coping

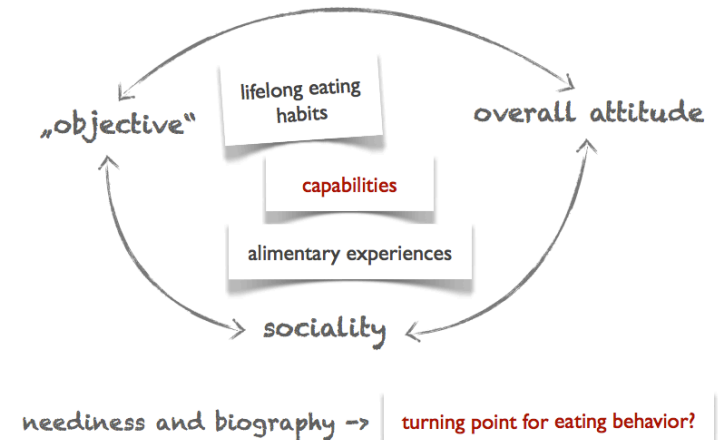
PD Dr. habil. Sabine Pfeiffer

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## factors for type building



## factors for type building



## variety of individual coping types



## conclusion

### Living with ALG II means

- risk of nutritional poverty and occational hunger
- systematic exclusion from alimentary participation (e.g. eating out)
- individual coping strategies instead of societal/governmental ones

⇒ German society and social science are to meet this threatening challenge



Thank you - looking  
forward to the discussion!

@

sabine.pfeiffer@isf-muenchen.de  
twitter.com/sabinepfeiffer

tobias.ritter@isf-muenchen.de

andreas.hirseland@iab.de

www

www.sabine-pfeiffer.de

www.isf-muenchen.de

www.iab.de