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Conspicuous Waste:
The Practice of Communal Kitchen and Dumpster Diving
in the Context of Freegan Lifestyle and Identities in
Vienna

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Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute

Give us today our daily bread [Matthew 6:11]



Figure 1: Christian maxim embroidered in a picture from my parent's kitchen, made 1978 in Transylvania, Romania (© Eberhard 2011)

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1 Introducing Food and Dumpster Diving

Every time I return to my parents' home in Carinthia, there is one thing I can be absolutely sure of: There will be always plenty of food in the refrigerator, the larder behind the kitchen and our air-raid shelter in the basement. The fridge is normally packed and stuffed with edibles I rarely eat like tons of meat, cheese and other animal products. Our larder is a fine source of sweets, chips, canned vegetables, pastries, sugar, oil, vinegar, wine, different cereals and baking ingredients. When it comes to the air-raid shelter in our cellar it really lives up to his name as the amount of food often purchased on sale could feed a family for a whole month or even longer. Piles of canned vegetables and tuna, bottles of oil, wine, fruit juices and other stable food is stored on shelves or frozen in our big old deep freezer. Why do my parents store that much food if everything is available on the market?

My parents' attitude to food can be explained by various virtues: First, they do not waste food, secondly they always have enough food in stock and they try to get food on sale. The question is how can these seemingly contrary ideals fit together? Is it not the case that the very abundance of food produced by national and international food industries to meet their profits and the consumers hunger for apparently unlimited resources is the reason behind our contemporary food waste problem? The problem of food waste, which is turned into a virtue and lifestyle by others and the centre of my thesis, was not always the same. The attitudes of my parents fit together in the sense that they reflect their generation, individual backgrounds and food histories. Being born in a working class family as one of six children shortly after the Second World War, my father was a typical post-war child living on the economically deprived countryside in Carinthia in the South of Austria, with scarce resources and nothing to waste. Having had the experience of a one-sided and repetitive diet consisting of 'Sterz' (Austrian term for polenta) and other stable food, he enjoyed the freedom of eating and consuming more food (especially meat) in an ever-growing capitalistic society. In the 1960's a greater variety of food became available for almost everyone in Austria, given that he had enough money in his pocket. The situation was different in communist Romania, where my mother, a Transylvanian German, lived until she got married. With a collectivized agriculture and most of the industries nationalized, western consumer goods were rare and the constant availability of stable food not always granted. If certain quantities of meat or

other daily consumer goods were sold out, customers had to wait for the next supply as long as it would take, sometimes weeks or even months. Leaving her communists heritage behind, she was quite moved when she entered an Austrian supermarket for first time at the beginning of the 1980's, with all sorts of food and consumer goods displayed in a sheer unlimited availability. She told me that some of her peers immigrating to Germany were even bursting into tears at the sight of a supermarket. Taking these particular experiences into account, there is a special attitude to food; it is accumulated, highly valued, and barely wasted. It also shows how much global and local economies and our consumer culture concerning food have changed over the last 60 years.

After this introductive part and personal account on my parents' food behaviour, their values and relation to our most basic need I want to reflect on my individual and anthropological interest on food as it is one of our most essential material goods. I share my parents food taste and values only to some extent. My generation did not encounter any kind of food scarcity, the opposite is true. Food quantity is often replaced by food quality in form of fair-trade products or organic food. The more food available, especially meat, the pickier I got for example. I was never much of a great eater or fond of eating lots of meat, so I embraced a more vegetarian lifestyle and healthy diet over the years. In my cooking class at school I learned about the importance of food, although I missed a certain kind of variety as we always prepared main dishes with meat and traditional Austrian cuisine. So, for many countries the food industry is the largest sector of their economies and their major employer (Payer 2001). The pleasure of eating as well as food traditions, rules and norms are not only limited to the smallest social unit - the family, but are crucial for every society and culture and most important, food practices differ and change:

The human diet, past and present, local and global, is extremely diverse, and the social practices associated with eating are as various as the world's communities (Farquahar 2006:146).

Globalization offers different food styles and foreign cuisine. Regional and organic food is becoming more popular and directed towards issues of health, sustainability and environmentalism (Payer 2001). My interest as a student of anthropology lies in past and present ways of human behaviour and how they shape or challenge society in a new way. There is a focus on new identities, but also an interest in material

culture in terms of consumption and economic behaviour. At the beginning I was mainly interested in particular eating habits like vegetarianism, the consumption of organic food and 'Fair Trade' products in the context of urban life and individualism promoting new lifestyles and identities. Who is consuming organic and Fair-Trade products combined with a vegetarian lifestyle and what are their motivations? How does the movement look like and finally what role does organic and vegetarian food play for their identities?

Anthropological concepts like material culture, the study of humanity and its relation to material objects, seemed to me a good theoretical starting point, which was also influenced by my choice to start with a Creole Master in social and cultural anthropology. Then in November 2008, I accidentally came into contact with vegan¹ people for the first time. It was during a visit to Graz, which is the capital of the southern Austrian province of Styria that my friend and I were searching for a place to stay after we went to a concert. She knew a place called *Spektral*, which turned out to be an open space and club for like-minded people. It was obviously a place for young left-wing intellectuals, students, animal rights and environmental activists. Many of them came from Vienna, the capital of Austria to participate in a demonstration for animal rights in the city of Graz. We soon were invited to stay overnight and to join them for breakfast the next day, which consisted mainly of vegetable, fruits and white bread. The practice of dumpster diving was mentioned, which means taking food out of a container, according to my friend's explanation. Discussions were also centred upon veganism and how the child of a vegan married couple living in Graz experiences her time in kindergarten, where she is confronted with more traditional forms of dietary. After breakfast and lively conversations a team of eight to ten people prepared for their return to Vienna, where I was again lucky to join in. We arrived in the outskirts of Vienna at some kind of club in a basement, where people already started to prepare tons of vegetable and other food, freely acquired, for an event called *Vokü* or *Volxxküche* (communal kitchen). A Russian movie team was also present to make a documentary about this recent urban practice of cooking in groups with food taken out from supermarket containers.

¹ The term vegan was introduced by Donald Watson, the founder of the Vegan Society in 1944, and defined as diet or lifestyle that consists neither of meat nor meat by-products, eggs and dairy products (Smith 2005:279-280).

With these new impressions I left the place, but was invited to drop by every time at another meeting place and open club organizing communal kitchens and dumpster diving trips every week. My personal and scientific interest was now directed towards vegan or more accurately freegan lifestyles and identities in particular and how their food practices can be described in terms of material culture, consumption and economic anthropology. Therefore I started to ask myself how are vegan lifestyles defined and practiced in Vienna. Who are the people that live vegan and what importance does play food in constructing their identities? How do communal kitchens and dumpster diving practices help to promote vegan or freegan lifestyles and identities, when and where do they take place? Who is participating in these practices, how did it start and become a social movement worldwide? What is the main reason for freegan groups to pursue a vegan or vegetarian diet, value food out of containers and challenge traditional ways of food consumption? With all these issues in my mind the following question for my thesis evolved: How does consuming waste within the practice of communal kitchen and dumpster diving is related to freegan lifestyles and identities in Vienna?

As a result the title of my thesis *'Conspicuous Waste: The Practice of Communal Kitchen and Dumpster Diving in the Context of Freegan Lifestyle and Identities in Vienna'* explores not only the quantitative reflection of our production and consumer behaviour, but particularly qualitative aspects of it, what people do and say about food and food waste and challenge traditional views of economic and consumer behaviour.

The freegan lifestyle contrasts a great deal with the rules and norms in mainstream society. I doubt that my parents could ever imagine how much food is going to waste nor would they ever consider taking food waste out of a dumpster, but this is exactly what so called 'dumpster divers' do, they look inside containers, mainly that of supermarkets in search of edibles, to make use out of waste referring at the same time to the overproduction of food. It is perceived as a consumer critical practice to back out of the cycle of mass production and consumption (Edlmayr 2009). For many of its activists, it is also a statement for a vegan and/or vegetarian lifestyle as a social, ethical, economic and/or ecological contribution to the world (Leitzmann 2009:10) and complemented by other views like anarchism and/or animal activism (Fieldnotes, 15.09.2009, Vienna).

The field of economic anthropology, which refers to the organization of material processes including activities of production, distribution and consumption (Narotzky 1997), is one way to look at the everyday practice of dumpster diving as economic activities are also centred round the organization of waste as a reflection of our production and consumer behaviour (Payer 2005). In the case of dumpster divers or freegans their economic activities are centred on the organization of material resources like food through the consumption of waste. The 'traditional' economic model is greatly challenged by this new kind of practice. With economic activities focusing basically on material things they lack a cultural perspective - that of cultural economics, which regards material life itself as human construction and consumption as expressive modes to be used for their own advantage (Gudeman 1996:211). Material culture looks at the activity of dumpster diving as meaningful practice. It is a useful tool to explore the meaning of waste and its relation to humans, their lives and identities, how consuming wasted food is essential for the self-realization of identities of individuals and groups, makes a difference and changes the meaning of things (Tilley 2006a).

Our present conspicuous consumer behaviour, which causes pollution and creates massive amounts of waste along the whole economic cycle of production, distribution and consumption, is criticized by Annie Leonard in her *Story of Stuff* (2010) as a 'Take-Make-Waste' model. She probably would have never thought of a simple 'Take-Waste-Model' as means of food provision in the case of dumpster divers, but to be able to consume and take food waste as a material resource there has to be a surplus. Although nations should aim to supply 130 % of nutritional requirements in order to guarantee food security, European countries and the U.S. produce about 100 per cent of food surplus, which increases over 200 or 300 per cent adding the edible grain currently fed to livestock (Stuart 2009:174-175).

This oversupply of food causes massive amount of food waste and it is not only recently that environmentalists talk of a global garbage crisis. It is absurd that on the one hand food gets wasted, but on the other hand food prices also rise globally. The *Time* magazine reports (Foroohar 2011:13) that the so-called food crisis of 2007 and 2008 resulting in higher food prices (Stuart 2009) is repeating itself at the beginning 2011 causing numerous conflicts in the Mid-East and other regions of the developing world. Poor countries spend a much higher percentage of their incomes

on food for example Pakistan 46%, Kenya 45 %, Indonesia 43%, Nigeria 40 %, Egypt 38 % or Tunisia 36 % in comparison to 13 % in Austria (Bruckner 2011). Numerous articles in Austrian newspapers follow up on this food crisis, which is not only limited to the beginning of the year, but also present in the following months. Grain and basic food like sugar or vegetable oil, which is traded on the world market is vulnerable to price changes, especially since there is more demand in developed countries to use crops like corn or wheat to produce biofuel.

These recent developments indicate that food is an important material resource, a factor of conflict on a global scale and with a higher demand for biofuel, food prices will continue to rise in the future and make the production, distribution and consumption of food even more unequal with tons of food going to waste nearly every day, almost invisible for the western consumer. The following work is therefore an attempt to address our attitude to waste and food and what social and cultural theorists have to say about our most basic material evidence and needs. It is also the centre of my thesis to make the invisible practice of dumpster diving and freegan lifestyles more visible and to show how the problem of food waste is addressed by a group of young urban citizens within the city of Vienna.

2 Methodology

To further investigate food practices and daily activities like communal kitchen and dumpster diving in the context of freegan lifestyle and identities in Vienna ethnographic fieldwork methods were applied as 'ethnographic research aims to get an in-depth understanding of how individuals in different cultures and subcultures make sense of the lived reality' by observing and recording the social life of its members (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006:230). 'Participant observation' is my basic research approach, which allows me to participate in an unfamiliar social reality and to produce written records or texts about this reality by active participation and observation.

Active participation and close contact to one's informants in the field is crucial for the empirical² research method of participant observation, invented by the British social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. This primary research tool requires the researcher or ethnographer to live or to make extensive visits to their fields of study, observing as well as well as participating in the activities of those in the field (Barnard 2000:66), which in my case were centred round the everyday activities of dumpster diving and communal kitchens. As the word ethnography literally means 'writing culture' (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006:230) I tried to record the detailed accounts of my participant observation during or after every activity involved by writing 'field notes' in a field diary: accumulated written records of observations, experiences (Emerson et. al. 1996:1) and conversations from the field ordered by date, place and occasion see Appendix.

My field notes are complemented by written 'records of conversation', informal conversations, taking place during my participant observation with the actors in the field. Further qualitative methods applied for my thesis are guided or open-ended interviews that were recorded and transliterated, to relate to vegan food and consumption habits, identities and everyday practices. Guided interviews enable to get into more detail about a certain topic or more intensive engagements with subject matters and informants. They are less standardized, which means that questions are posed open-ended and no given answers are provided (Kromrey 2009:365).

² Empirical science is based on what is experienced by the human senses, in broad terms its perception and observations (Kromrey 2009:27).

The inductive principle (Kromka 1984:43) was applied in the first place, which means the focus was directed towards observations in the field: individual social actions and how they interrelate to social structures and processes that eventually develop and influence theory. The concept of interpretative social research³ as one possible access to get information of reality is also relevant for my thesis. The aim is to collect authentic experiences from the field, which is defined as one detailed section of the real world and conducted by the 'principle of openness'. It requires the researcher to be open for the experiences in the field and not to be influenced by preconceived opinions or hypothesis. To understand and make sense of the collected fieldwork data involves not only objective knowledge and facts about the social world, but also subjective meanings and interpretations through its actors (Kromrey 2009:21p).

The access to the field of observation was established by my decision to actively take part in the activity of communal kitchen and dumpster diving organized inside and outside the premises of a Viennese club, which was again facilitated by my personal contacts made at an earlier stage. In June and July 2009 I was invited to vegan events like street festivals, barbeques or picnics and other clubs and open spaces that organize communal kitchens in Vienna. The impressions and observations of these events were added to my field diary. I conducted nine open ended interviews about vegan lifestyle between June and September 2009 with five female and four male respondents. Fieldwork data was further gathered over a period from 15th of September until 30th of October 2009, mainly in the evening, which meant participating in the activity of dumpster diving and communal kitchen. Dumpster diving tours were mostly held on Sunday evenings to begin at 10.p.m until midnight and the event of communal kitchen officially started at 4 p.m. on Tuesday till open end and was combined with an open bar, so people could come for a hot meal, have drinks, listen to music, meet and talk with like-minded people. In my role as participant observant I visited the open club two times a week for several hours, participating in a variety of field work activities, including food acquisition by the practice of dumpster diving, set-up of the kitchen, cleaning and preparing food, cooking, eating and cleaning-up. The identity of my informants, interview partners remain anonymous as well as my primary fieldwork setting, where most of the

³ Important means of qualitative-interpretative research are the researchers themselves: Their skills to create intensive and intimate situations with informants and to put oneself in the position of the observed people in the field (empathy), without adopting their perspectives completely blind are essential achievements to gain data in the field. (Kromrey 2009:244).

freegan activates were planned and organized. The main club in observance is situated in the vicinity of a famous Viennese railway station, the *Westbahnhof*, which is currently under construction. My informants asked me not to name the place as well as their identities, due to the political orientation of the club's members and its general philosophy.

After the collection of my fieldwork data I put on hold for some time, because I had difficulties, to distance myself from the field and start with the analysis of my data. I was definitely going native with my choice to try out a vegan lifestyle, dumpster diving and participating in communal kitchens for some time, but I had my personal limits. In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Emerson et. al. 1996:145) the dilemma of undertaking an analytically motivated reading as if the notes had been written by someone else and the feeling of it as an act of betrayal is well described. I really had my discomfort examining the field notes with a scientific eye for some time. Eventually I had to start with the process of analysing my data with the method of roughly coding and memoing my field notes to relate to similar topics and categories (Emerson et. al. 1996:143). The categorization of persons, notes and events was partly inspired by grounded theory approach⁴ and qualitative content analysis (Mayering 2003:468p) to develop inductive and analytic categories that are related to anthropological concepts of material culture, consumption and economic anthropology.

The qualitative or empirical content analysis is a method to analyze the content of texts in search of meaningful symbols to relate it to general knowledge and information. The texts are not the prime objects of the analysis, but to give information about observed situations, intensions of the authors of documents, character of the documents recipients and political and social contexts of documented events. An important tool to analyse contents is a system of relevant categories⁵ that is created by intensive engagement of theoretical discussions that are related with a scientific question (Kromrey 2009:300p) or thesis. This method was applied for the written records of my empirical data including my field notes,

⁴ The grounded theory approach is open-ended research tool to develop concepts and categories with the process of coding to eventually enrich, contest or develop theories (Kromrey 2009:493).

⁵ The system of categories aims to give every category a certain dimension of meaning (content) (Kromrey 2009:315).

transliterated interviews and of course anthropological literature, newspaper articles and internet websites.

My participant observation was accompanied by online media and internet research to get more detailed information about definitions of freegan lifestyles, dumpster diving activities and events like communal kitchens see freegan.at (2010, online), vegan.at (2009, 2010, online) or freegan.info (2010). Austrian newspaper and international journal articles were also cited to report on recent developments concerning issues of food and waste including *Der Standard*, *Die Presse* and *Time* magazine. Literature research included anthropological works about relevant topics and theories of the material culture of waste like Michael Thompson's 'Rubbish Theory' (1979), William Rathje's 'Archaeology of Garbage' (1992, 2001) or Kevin Hetherington's contributions on 'Second-handedness' (2004), and food see Alan Warde's 'Consumption and Food' (1997), Warren Belasco's (2008) 'Culinary Triangle' and Bob Ashley's ideas on 'Food Studies' (2005). Works on economic anthropology and consumption models included Susana Narotzky (1997, 2005), Stephen Gudeman (1996, 2001), Martin Rössler (1999) and Chris Hann and Keith Hart (2011).

Theories helped to classify my empirical fieldwork data to some extent. For Kromrey (2009:47) theories are important tools of thinking that help to get access to reality. They give orientations for example to define the field of object, which is in my case the field of the material culture and consumption of waste and food. It assists in defining, describing or establishing relations to the field of object and to unite and generalize empirical facts, to make possible predictions about the future and refer to gaps of scientific knowledge.

The aim of my thesis is to describe and make sense of the more 'invisible' or problematic realities of human culture like waste and how the process of discovering its value by 'more visible' everyday food consumption habits and practices like dumpster diving and communal kitchen gives meaning and form to freegan lifestyles and identities in Vienna. For this purpose I first had to gain insider knowledge and information of freegan realities and concepts, facilitated by vegan contacts and informants at the beginning of research. The anthropological insights of waste and food provided me with general information on this topic and the biggest challenge for me was to find meaningful connections and categories between both empirical findings and theoretical positions.

3 The Material Culture, Economic Anthropology and Consumption of Waste and Food

3.1 Introduction

Let me start with a general definition of material culture within the field of anthropology. Material culture involves the analysis of a domain of things, or objects, which are endlessly diverse and its relation to human subjects, how people think through themselves, and their lives and identities through the medium of different kinds of things. Material culture studies in anthropology emphasize the dialectical and recursive relationship between persons and things (Tilley 2006a:4). Theoretical perspectives include Marxist positions that consider material culture in relation to material resources, labour, production, consumption and exchange. Structuralist and semiotic approaches stress the significance of objects and their relation to social action, their meanings and how things reproduce or transform social relations and are essential vehicles for the self-realization of the identities of individuals and groups. Both accounts have been important for anthropologists to understand material forms. Recent studies concentrate on the significance of individuals, their agency and capacity to make a difference and change the meaning of things (Tilley 2006b:8p).

Food waste is the main object of my thesis, therefore theories and histories on the material culture of waste are important to explore the meaning of waste and its relation to humans, their live and identities. In the course of my thesis it will become clear that freegans make a difference and change the meaning of waste and food. The consuming of wasted food is essential for the self-realization of freegan identities of individuals and groups. As the practice of dumpster diving requires the organization and re-distribution of food waste as a material resource I am also referring to theories of economic anthropology. In general economic anthropology and its subject matter can be distinguished from the studies of material culture (Clammer 1978). The focus is more on relationships between persons than between persons and things, although the role of things is basic in an economy. Material transactions are seen as momentary episodes in a continuous social relation (Firth 1967).

The field of economic anthropology includes research on production, trade and consumption as well as social and ideological arrangements developed around the

material lives of humans including contemporary and past societies. Recent studies have their focus on change and the ways different economic forms are mixed together. Major theories in anthropological studies include neo-classical, Marxist, institutional and cultural approaches. Neo-classical theory considers the universal presence of human rationality, calculation and optimization, whereas Marxist approaches raise important questions about the origin and use of surplus in society, control and use of labour and finally different modes of production. Perspectives on institutional economy concentrate on material life that is embedded within social relationships, such as reciprocity and redistribution and cultural economics see material life itself as a human construction with some anthropologist looking at consumption and exchange as expressive modes that human use for their own advantage (Gudeman 1996:211). Debates challenging grand theories in economic anthropology relate to the role for agency, rational choices and methodological individualism and were central to the transactional approaches in the 1960s and 1970s (Ensminger 2002).

In the course of this introduction it turns out that both disciplines, the field of economic anthropology and material culture, concentrate in theory on aspects of consumption. For the purpose of my thesis I will refer to complementing theories on this topic like cultural theories of consumption within economic anthropology as they focus on the meaning of consumer goods and how the consumption of things creates similarity and difference among and between people and forms personal identities or cultural differences. The cultural approach argues that wants and desires are products of ideology and identity and not rational choice, class and power (Wilk 2002:243).

The following chapters will be concerned with definitions, developments and theories on the material culture of waste. The term waste, which I refer to throughout my thesis, includes expressions like garbage, rubbish or trash, which are used synonymously by other authors. Then the focus will be first on relevant themes in economic anthropology and how they are challenged by the practice of dumpster diving. I will then concentrate on the historical and economic aspect of waste, how is it organized and when did waste management occurred in the west as means to separate and tidy the economic cycle of production, distribution and consumption of its negative sides, which is waste. The final part is dealing with food and consumption.

3.2 The Material Culture of Waste

3.2.1 Definition of Waste

William Rathje, the author of *Rubbish: The Archaeology of Garbage*⁶ (1992) links garbage with material culture by defining it as important physical artefact and symbol for human lifestyle. Joe Moran (2004:62) also relates rubbish to material culture with a focus on 'the mundane material of the everyday' and the 'unexamined afterlife of material things', as they do not only offer visible and durable evidence of habits and routines of the everyday, but also reveal the temporality of daily life. In Armin Thurnher's (2005:10) notes on '*Der Müll und wir*', referring to the relation of waste and ourselves, he claims that the paradox about garbage is its very existence; we create it, but our first concern is about its disposal and avoidance. What remains, after the disposal of waste is its symbolic meaning: Large quantities of waste create uncertainty, danger and discomfort. It is a symbol of order (or disorder) and governments are well advised to keep it under control.

In the German publication *Abfall⁷ zwischen Lifestyle und Verdrängung* (2005) edited by Christoph Scharff and Christian Stiglitz garbage is located between lifestyle and repression. Waste management is seen as a quantitative reflection of our production and consumer behaviour. When the authors pose the question on what waste is there are numerous answers: Waste is something we want to get rid of or which we simply deny. It is someone's means of living, economic good, raw material or obsession. Peter Payer's (2005) perspectives on the city (of Vienna) and garbage are concerned with the history of our behaviour towards garbage and questions of power and order, governance and representation, social disciplining and control. With reference to Mary Douglas (2003, 2002) and her studies on food and concepts of pollution in different cultures, Payer (2005:29p) regards the disposal of waste as a positive effort to organize the environment. Garbage is according to him in the first instance connected to disorder and the possibility to create new meanings and contexts.

⁶ The physical aspect of studying garbage is defined by its terminology. There are several words for things thrown away. 'Garbage', 'trash' and 'rubbish' are used synonymously in English, but in fact mean different things. 'Trash' refers to dry discards like newspapers, boxes, cans, and so on. When speaking of garbage it technically refers to wet discards like food remains, yard waste and offal. Rubbish is more inclusive and includes all refuse plus construction and demolition debris (Rathje and Murphy 1992:9). In German *Abfall* or *Müll* are more inclusive expressions for solid waste.

⁷ The metaphysical connotation of the German expression *Abfall* (garbage) is linked with the original sin - the 'apostasy' and turning away from god resulting in the Fall of Man (Hölzl 2002:13).

3.2.2 Development and History of Waste

The development of waste includes its history to show how the meaning of waste, the social context and its relation to humans has changed. Throughout the history of human society the disposal of garbage happened in a very convenient manner, just simply by leaving it where it fell, with the exception of maybe sleeping or activity areas that were sometimes tidied up. This disposal scheme functioned adequately with hunter and gatherers as the constant movement of people made it unnecessary to remove garbage. Modern hunter-gatherers like the aborigines of the Australian outback had been at loss when moved to permanent housing facilities, where rather refuse has to be removed than people (Rathje 1992:32p).

With the beginning and formation of human settlements humans had to face other means of garbage disposal. Familiar ways of dealing with garbage, known for thousands of years, consist of four basic methods: dumping, burning, recycling or minimizing future garbage by source reduction. The ancient Maya cultures deposited their organic waste in open dumps and recycled inorganic garbage like broken pottery or grinding stones to use it as fill in temples or other buildings. They also deployed the method of source reduction in times of economic decline when costly resources became scarce. In the city of Troy, archaeologists found that the floors of the buildings were covered periodically by fresh clean clay over noxious and old deposit to cause stratification. It seems that they favoured the most common way of garbage disposal by simply dumping it. There are calculations that the rate of elevation due to debris accumulation in Troy was about 4.7 feet per century. In the city of Jerusalem the people burned some of their garbage in the nearby Valley of *Gehenna*, which became also known as synonym for 'hell' (Rathje 1992).

One can also look at waste, especially food waste as a product of food surplus and as Stuart (2009:169p) claims it is not a recent phenomenon of late capitalism or consumer culture, but the foundation for human success for over 10,000 years. Archaeological records suggest that early humans wasted food at a great scale like modern supermarkets today. Remains of animals hunted by humans reveal that only a small proportion of bones show signs of butchering, so it seems that a great portion of hunted meat was just left to rot. This way of hunting and the ongoing climate change caused seventy-five per cent of America's large animal species like giant sloths, woolly mammoths and bear-sized rodents to be wiped out within a millennium.

A parallel scenario may have occurred in the Fertile Crescent – stretching from modern-day Jordan to Iran – where people have turned to agriculture and cultivate grains after herds of gazelle that once roamed the region had been seriously depleted, again by either hunting or climate change, or probably both (Stuart 2009).

There is also evidence that the development of agriculture sometimes led to the overexploitation of the environment and the collapse of entire civilizations like the Maya of Central America or Mediterranean people surrounding Petra in the Fertile Crescent. The constant over-reaching of the supply of food could have also been an incentive for technological and social development and with the creation and storage of agricultural surplus some members of social groups could specialize in occupations that were not directly related to food production (Stuart 2009:171p). Stuart (2009) refers to the practical advantages of over-production and over-consumption within a number of societies that are identified by Marvin Harris (1980), a cultural anthropologist. One is the ceremony of 'potlatch', observed among the Native American people, such as the Kwakiutl, in the American north-west, Canada and Alaska, where the chiefs invited guests from neighbouring villages and gave away fish, whale oil, blankets, furs and ceremonial masks. Fish oil would be poured onto the fire or entire houses burnt down in an urge to display wealth and power. Harris found comparable institutions in other cultures like Melanesia and New Guinea, where the village 'big men' encourages his friends and relatives to extend their gardens, catch extra fish, gather more pigs, and then, in one big feast to give away all the surplus goods. Harris argues that this practice in fact, also accrued the material benefits to the society as a whole and offered a margin of safety in crises such as war or crop failures (Stuart 2009).

The following example of the history of American waste is interesting to look at not only in terms of its meaning and value as important raw material, but also how it has changed during the process industrialization. Susan Strasser (1991), a historian of American consumer culture, explores the social history of trash in American society and shows how its meaning transformed at the beginning of the twentieth century. Before then trash was nearly nonexistent because every material was reused and systematically recycled by peddlers⁸, wholesalers, ragmen or ragpickers,

⁸ Peddlers travelled with huge backpacks, hand-pulled carts, beasts of burden and horse-drawn wagons to become a major institution of the nineteenth-century distribution and recycling system. They travelled through territory where cash was scarce to bring manufactured goods and take away barter.

metal scavengers and swill children. It was important to prolong the lives of daily goods like clothes, pottery, and wooden utensils as raw materials were scarce resources in preindustrial America. Her chapter 'The Stewardship of Objects' (Strasser 1991) explains how to use leftovers and food scraps as food for domestic animals or raw materials for making soap and candles. In the cities tallow chandlers bought the fat or ashes from butchers and private households. Like most other industries, commercial soap making remained a small, local enterprise before the Civil War. The value of different kinds of waste materials is obvious in the early industrial 'recycling'⁹ system, demanding a relationship between households and manufacturers. Strasser reports that:

[...] the process – the return of household wastes to manufacturers for use as raw materials – was inherent to production in some industries, central to the distribution of consumer goods, and an important habit of daily life. Indeed, the disposition of waste products is an integral, if unrecognized, part of industrialization, linked to the processes of production, distribution, purchase, and use (1991:72).

The American preindustrial household supplied the factories, who bought waste materials at a price determined by a marketing process, usually through a middleman. Trash was an article of commerce, a commodity like cotton or corn, gathered into bales and containers, graded and sorted and then traded for money. The people central for this business and distribution system were the same wholesalers, peddlers and general storekeepers, who introduced new manufactured goods to the households. They collected and processed large quantities of recyclables and transformed them into raw materials. As the industries developed during the nineteenth century numerous materials were recycled like rags for the paper industry, ash and fats for the soap industry and also bones, rubber and old metals found markets. For Strasser (1991:72p) these recyclable materials were essential for the emerging of a consumer society, which originated from the peddling and rag-picking economy.

They sold utensils like books, clocks and most typically those fashioned from tinplate. Some peddlers were employees or smiths, making tinware during the winter and peddling during spring and summer, while others used the tinsmith as wholesalers or worked for manufacturing concerns and became successful merchants, retailers or businessmen (Strasser 1991:73p).

⁹ The term *recycle* originated in the oil industry during the 1920's, describing partially refined petroleum sent through the refining cycle again to reduce waste. The use of the term broadened during the 1960's and 1970's due to environmental movements (Strasser 1991:72).

Industrialization increased the demand for scrap metals and other waste materials dramatically. With new technologies for making paper, steel and other materials rural customers began to buy more mechanically produced consumer goods. The methods of mass production generated massive quantities of by-products and waste that were used by large firms for other products. The demise of the system that recycled waste materials from American households began with the invention of mass production and distribution at the end of nineteenth century (Strasser 1991:100p).

Scavenging all sorts of trash like rags, bones, scraps, paper, fragments of metals, glass and rope did not suddenly come to end, but became more and more associated with a new class of impoverished scavengers like the urban poor, immigrant women and working class children. Street scavenging and rag-picking was a daily business of the poor living in the slums of big cities like New York, but it played less and less a role in the waste trade, which became more organized like other industries. Strasser notes that while the rising consumption produced more garbage, ashes and rubbish by affluent Americans than poor Italian, Polish, Bohemian, German and Russian immigrants 'the rhetoric of refuse was intermingled with rhetoric about human refuse'¹⁰ and with the existence of municipal trash collection another habit of disposal was encouraged and middle class people threw more and more things away (1991:136).

The new consumer culture emerging at the turn of the 20th century is not only famous for its modern products and trash, but also for promoting new values and lifestyles. A wide variety of packaged foods and cleaning products entered the American household through a national market. Electricity, household plumbing, commercial laundries and bathrooms helped the keep the bodies, clothes and houses cleaner. Throwaway packaging and paper products like sanitary napkins, toilet paper, paper towels, cups, straws and plates were praised as hygienic and convenient alternatives. A modern lifestyle included aspects of convenience, comfort and cleanliness as a synonym for freedom, luxury and emancipation. These modern products changed the relationship to the material world. Consumers were released from the responsibility to care for the life and stewardship of objects. The new consumer society was defined by fashion, style and technology, depending on ever-

¹⁰ Strasser (1991:136p) criticizes that the reformers concerns about issues of sanitation, municipal refuse and waste collection blinded them to the needs and culture of the poor, who made their livings in the swill grade by scavenging for food and other materials.

expanding needs and organizing production and consumption along principles of obsolescence, seduction and diversification. In the 1920's automobiles along with other utilitarian products like radios, alarm clocks and telephones became objects of style and new technologies. This was the time for the big business and industries like General Motors or Ford Motor Companies. With technological advances, organizational changes, new perspectives and lifestyles linked with products made for one-time use and municipal trash collection, traditional reuse and recycling became associated with poverty and backwardness (Strasser 1991:172p)

Historical events like the Depression in the 1930's and the Second World War brought temporary shortages of material resources in America and the government promoted a more economic usage of them. In 1942 the manufacturing of nearly six hundred consumer products was prohibited in order to conserve raw materials for the warfront. Rationing controlled how much individuals were allowed to buy of certain things like gasoline, shoes and meat. Different campaigns urged the population to save all kinds of materials with slogans like 'Use it up! Wear it out! Get in the Scrap!' and with promises that this would all pay off in the future. One last time the value and rhetoric of waste changed as scrap metal, wastepaper, rags, rubber and fat were regarded as important raw material and collected by innovative programs (Strasser 1991).

In the preindustrial household of the American colonies saving and reusing scraps was a matter of course, but as the United States became an urban nation these habits were abandoned and replaced by a new consumer culture (Strasser 1991:268p). Martin V. Melosi (2000) is also referring to the prosperity of the post-World War II era and how it produced a throwaway culture and increasing volumes of waste in America. Studies of refuse production demonstrated the significant relationship between affluence and waste, showing that a two person-household in New Haven earning \$ 6000 per year in the late 1960's and early 1970's generated 800 pounds of waste annually. It is interesting for Melosi (2000:340) that despite the unprecedented growth of the packaging industry, producing innumerable goods with short useful lives, yard and food waste, the major organic discards, steadily declined since World War II. Strasser 1991) concludes that despite a new recycling system emerging in the 1980's there was in no way a reinstatement of the peddler economy and its two-way relationships, were it was common to pay for rags and old rubber

with cash, because this time 'the late twentieth century household just put the stuff out on the curb, expecting nothing tangible back'. The different handling with waste materials shows how the meaning of waste varies, depending on times of scarcity or affluence¹¹. When there is a lot of surplus due to the overabundance of prey or the contemporary overproduction of food (Stuart 2009), waste materials are less valued. The opposite is true in times of scarcity as shown by Strasser (1991) and her social history on waste in preindustrial America. The value of waste and other theories on this material object will be now discussed in more detail, starting with Douglas (2002) and her classical concepts on purity and dirt.

3.2.3 Social and Cultural Theories of Waste

Mary Douglas was among the first social scientists who became interested in the social and cultural concepts of purity and pollution and issues of dirt and waste. In her anthropological study on *Purity and Danger* (2002), which was originally published in 1969, Douglas relates dirt to disorder and that it threatens social environments in their order and structure. With the act of separating, tidying and purifying the attempt is made to relate form to function and impose a system on an inherently untidy experience. According to Douglas, this is true not only for contemporary societies, but for primitive cultures as well by identifying two levels in which pollution ideas work in the life of society: One largely instrumental and one expressive. Pollution beliefs carry a symbolic load, relating to social life. She states that 'reflection on dirt involves reflection on the relation of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death'. Douglas does not place dirt as an isolated event, but concludes that:

Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt links us straight into the field of symbolism and link up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity (Douglas 2002:44).

The idea of dirt as necessary by-product of a system is also taken up by the anthropologists Michael Thompson as he defines rubbish as a universal feature of

¹¹ The definition of affluence or surplus and how it varies culturally see chapter on 'Theories on Value, Surplus and Affluence'.

socio-cultural systems. His study on *Rubbish Theory: The creation and destruction of value* (1979) is crucial for my thesis and questions on value concerning material objects like waste and food. He identifies three categories of objects: valuable, valueless and negatively valued and two ways in which they can be seen: transient or durable. A transient object decreases in value over time and has a finite life-span, whereas the durable category increases in value over time with an (ideally) infinite life-span. These overt categories mean different things to objects and form an element in our perception of the physical and social environment. The way people act towards an object relates directly to its membership. Thompson looks at the nature of the relationship between a world view and social actions and questions if the category membership of an object determines our way we act towards it, or the way we act towards an object its category membership.

Certain objects are located within a *Region of Fixed Assumptions*, where their category membership determines the way people act towards them, for example our world view on durable things that are labelled as 'antique' is different than on 'second-hand' objects like a used car, which belong to the transient category according to Thompson (1979:8p). Both world views determine social actions. Between the two categories there is a *Region of Flexibility* where action determines world view. Objects that do not fall into either of these two categories constitute a third *covert* category, which is rubbish. His hypothesis suggests that the covert category is not subject to any control mechanism (unlike the manner of imposing qualities of durability and transience upon the world of objects), but allows the transformation of an object from one category (transience - value decreasing) to another (durability – value increasing), while passing through the category of no value – rubbish.

As an example Thompson (1979:13p) takes a physical object that has only recently arrived in the durable category through a process of transformation. Stevengraphs¹² performed a quite remarkable development according to their change of category. First, in the years from 1879 they have been labelled as transient objects, in 1950 they were worth nothing, but 20 years later they made it as antique objects of high value. Similar transformations happened to the late Georgian and early Victorian residential buildings in North London. The houses as consumer

¹² The term Stevengraph refers to woven silk pictures, portraits, postcards and bookmarks and was invented by Thomas Stevens, a silk fabricant (Thompson 1979:13).

durables declined both in physical and social terms over the years; they became unfashionable and were soon inhabited by members of the lower class. In the later nineteen-sixties there was a change and a transformation of this area from formally 'slums' into a respectable 'cultural heritage'.

Thompson's dynamic rubbish theory is concerned with the transmissions and boundaries of different categories by questioning the static concepts of category theory (world view prior action) and action theory (social action prior world view) as they are not independent of one another, but they are related to the extent that these two viewpoints are either contradictory or complementary. He concludes that a clear distinction between category and action is obscured by fieldwork data, which allows the convenient answer that both points of views are valid. An understanding of the nature of rubbish is essential for a dynamic theory as Thompson (1979) states that rubbish may become visible as generated by the process of social life and as a result of a confrontation between a world view and one or more natural limits concerning the social malleability of objects. Rubbish therefore is general and dynamic in that it pictures both the boundary and the various transmissions across contradictory viewpoints that ignore the existence of transmissions or boundaries. Thompson regards rubbish as a universal feature of social-cultural systems. The cultural category of rubbish, speaking of the discarded but still visible object, provides a framework for a more comprehensible idea of rubbish that is implicit in the structural approach to pollution referring to Douglas' *Purity and Danger* (2002[1969]). Natural elements that are on the borderline between two cultural categories threaten to destroy the order established by culture. Taboo behaviour and pollution avoidances are to cluster these borderline cases in all cultures. The occurrence of the transfer of categories from rubbish to transience threatens the boundary maintenance of different concepts or the establishment of permanent cultural boundaries (Thompson 1979).

A recent portrait of today's garbage and society present Rathje and Murphy (1992). Rathje is an archaeologist and professor of anthropology, who established the Garbage Project to study America's garbage and its cultural implications. The study does not only give interesting insights into politics, economics and human behaviour, but also dispels certain myths about garbage including matters of food packaging or the average household output. Their work has come to be known as

garbology¹³ and practitioners of it as garbologists. Rathje and Murphy describe their topic of research 'as humanity's most prodigious physical legacies to those who have yet to be born' and state that 'if we can come to understand our discards, then we will better understand the world in which we live' (1992:4). Garbage is identified as a very prominent part of our material culture – a physical fact, which can give the researcher a better understanding of the social world he lives in.

Waste or garbage as a symbol of a way of life does create an unequivocal sign of human presence, not only as a key to the past, but to the present. It covers every aspect of life as for example eating or drinking habits and many other matters. The examination of fresh refuse is as old as the human species and the first systematic study of the components of America's garbage dates back to the early 1900s. Over the years it took several detours from the world of the military, celebrity watching and law enforcement. In the beginning of the Garbage Project, carried out by the University of Arizona in the city of Tucson, the focus lay in the broad patterns of garbage to make a link between artefacts and human behaviour (Rathje and Murphy 1992:15).

The Garbage Project is very much reliant on the techniques of material-culture studies as it helps not only to define humans through physical artefacts, but a changing of the definition itself (more respectively how physical artefacts help to define or change definitions of ourselves and our behaviour). There is a dynamic relationship between material objects on the one hand and attitudes and behaviours on the other as some parts of the society are in a state of flux including their relationship between the material and behavioural. In the two decades of research, interesting insights into human behaviour relating to issues of garbage, particularly food waste, were examined. From the information gathered during periods of food shortages¹⁴ 'The First Principle of Food Waste' was developed: 'the more repetitive

¹³ With reference to the neologism of 'garbology' Rathje and Murphy (1992:10) note that it is not fanciful to define archaeology as a discipline that tries to understand old garbage and to learn from that garbage something about ancient societies and ancient behaviour.

¹⁴ Due to a widely publicized beef shortage in the United States in spring 1973 the food waste examined by the garbologists revealed the following pattern: In the month after the beef shortage, the rate of beef waste amounted to about 3 percent in contrast to 9 percent during the month of the shortage, which allowed the conclusion of crisis-buying. People responded with an increasing purchase of beef, but didn't necessarily know how to cook some unfamiliar cuts or to store large amounts of meat for a longer period of time. A similar pattern emerged when in spring 1974 a sugar shortage caused an increase in prices for sugar and high-sugar products and resulting in the same behaviour observed a year earlier. The people of Tucson stocked up with Mexican sugar, which was bought from south of the U.S. border. Mexican sugar is not as highly processed as American sugar,

your diet, the more you eat the same every day and the less food you waste' (Rathje and Murphy 1992:216). For example garbage collected from Mexican-American households included less food waste as the Anglo-American census. Mexican-American border cuisine offers a diverse array of dishes, but only a few ingredients. The second methodology employed by the Garbage Project combines the first method of garbage sorting with the additional element of self-reports about personal behaviour concerning food waste in form of interviews or daily diaries with people whose garbage is being collected. In the chapter of 'What we say, what we do' Rathje and Murphy (1992:55p) conclude that what people claim in interviews to have bought and consumed, to have eaten and drunk, to have recycled and thrown away, almost never corresponds directly or even very closely to the actual data extracted from the field— Tristram Stuart in his work on *Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal* (2009) is also observing similar inconsistencies with some of his respondents in food industries, namely food retailers and shop managers.

In another article on waste '*Integrated archaeology: A garbage paradigm*' (2001) Rathje argues that a comprehensive perspective of the present is only possible by combining at least six very distinct 'realities' that are components of human behaviour. This *integrated* archaeology compares the separate realities of mental, behavioural and material nature. As the people in the Garbage Project were often misreporting on what they consumed and discarded in comparison to the material data analyzed from the field differences became apparent in mental and material realities of behaviour. In the social sciences material traces have usually been regarded as mere reflections of behaviour, but according to Rathje their role need to be revised based on the significant meaning of material culture in our lives. He argues that material traces are important components of behaviour:

To sort out roles in behavioural change, the recording and analysis of material culture must be a significant perspective in any behavioural science methodology designed to understand change – new patterns in artefacts, behaviours, and perceptions (Rathje 2001:69).

but browner and turns hard quickly. Thus before long it began appearing in the garbage (Rathje and Murphy 1992:216).

A simplified model of actions is composed of a complicated integration of perception, behaviour and artefacts and specific perspectives within each domain (Rathje 2001). According to Rathje the challenge lies in the attempt to fit these separate realities into a coherent description and understanding of behaviour as no dimension or perspective is more accurate than the other. When applying the model to the analysis of food loss behaviour based on the Garbage Project the central focus is on the amount of food discarded, which is determined by a variety of perspectives. Specific perspectives on food loss behaviour then consist of: 1) *General rules and values* about food safety 2) *Self-perception* and description of behaviour when discarding food 3) *Behaviour observations and records* of actions by self-reports of informants if not directly observed 4) *Behavioural shorthand concepts* are derived from census and other public data about age, sex, education, income and ethnicity of people 5) *Material traces*¹⁵ (material culture) are derived from household refuse and 6) *General material environments* record natural, economic, social, political and other environmental variables including inflation rates causing price rise or the general availability of food (Rathje 2001:69p). The comparing and integrating of different realities can also be related to only one perspective - material traces, creating a materialist perspective based on the examples from the studies of garbage.

The classical theorists about dirt and waste like Douglas (2002[1969]) or Thompson (1979) are referred to in a recent article on *Secondhandedness: consumption, disposal, and the absent presence* (2002) by Kevin Hetherington. He argues that disposal is not only about garbage and waste, but it implicates ways in which people manage absence within social relations. The act of disposal is never final, but involves issues of managing social relations around themes of movement, transformation, incompleteness, and return. He regards disposal as an integral part of the process of consumption and social activity; it is a 'continual practice of engaging with making and holding things in a state of absence' (2003:159). By

¹⁵ In detail Rathje (2001:71p) looks at the materialistic perspective on food waste, which is composed of 5-1 *General cognitive rules - material traces* relating to household food loss and arguments if food is wasted in exchange for more free time or if less knowledge about food safety generates more waste 5-2 *Self-perceptions of behaviour - material traces* indicated that people sensitive to food loss admit more waste they actually waste than those who are unaware of their waste patterns 5-3 *Behaviour observations and record - material traces* show that the less time invested in preparing food the more is discarded 5-4 *Behaviour shorthand - material traces* compared Mexican-American households with White neighbourhoods 5-5 *Material traces - material traces* food packaging may affect rates of food loss, like regularly used food is discarded at a lower rate than speciality foods in special packages 5-6 *General material environments - material traces* derived from waste collected during beef and sugar shortages in 1973 and 1974.

questioning the idea of disposal as a final act, Hetherington challenges traditional ideas about presence and absence:

The absent can have just as much of an effect upon relations as recognisable forms of presence can have. Social relations are performed not only around what is there but sometimes also around the presence of what is not. Absence I argue, is not just a philosophical concept, it is also a distinctly sociological one. Indeed the category of absence can have a significant presence in social relations and in material culture (Hetherington 2002:159).

The disposal of things, making something absent is implicated in the maintenance of social order and observed within anthropology like Douglas approaches on dirt through questions of order. Douglas treats the act of disposal as making something absent for all time, while Rolland Munro (1995) suggests that dirt is more an absent present and acknowledging the category of dirt as a flexible resource, an idea, which is further employed by Thompson's discussion on the dynamic role of rubbish in relation to categories of durable or transient value. With reference to Thompson (1979), Hetherington (2002:161p) likes to see rubbish as a conduit of disposal – a conduit of the disposal of value - and through the metaphor of a door. He adds that conduits of disposal often have a two stage 'holding' process through which consumer objects pass before becoming waste, be it the book case, recycle bin on a computer, the garage, the potting shed, the fridge, the wardrobe or even the bin. These examples can be considered as sites of first burial rather than of second burial like the incinerator or landfill. The gap between a first and second action is a space, where things are held in a state of remaining value - denying their wastage. Identity is therefore not just about 'what we buy' but also 'what we do not throw out' and 'what we value' according to Hetherington (2002:70-71), concluding that disposal, within consumer activities is about managing an ever-present potential absence.

3.3 Economic Anthropology and the Organization of Waste

Several themes that occur in economic anthropology are relevant for the discussion on waste and how they are challenged by the daily practice of dumpster diving.

Economy is essential to maintain and secure the material needs of individuals and groups, who work with available resources to meet their consumption needs. It is the aim of economic anthropology to look at new economic forms its cultural dimensions without neglecting the role and influence of the global market or that economy is never fully independent of other social aspects like political systems, social order and cultural value systems. Politics for example should aim to guarantee and control the production of food surplus to feed their population. As we have seen the amount of food surplus (200 -300 per cent) produced by western nations exceeds our nutritional requirements by far (Stuart 2009:174). This creates massive amounts of waste. How can this waste serve as a food resource? It is the practice of dumpster diving that still values this food waste, which is like Hetherington (2002:70-71) states, still held in a state of remaining value - denying the final wastage of food. What is it that economic theories in anthropology have to say about the value of things, surplus, affluence or scarcity?

3.3.1 Theories on Value, Surplus and Affluence

The tradition of utilitarianism from nineteenth century England privileges free markets and individual maximization of value. According to the neoclassical approach human action follows a rational choice taken under conditions of scarcity to maximize utility or (Hann and Hart 2011:7) also referred to as *homo oeconomicus*¹⁶ (Rössler 1999:28). In western economic theory the views of the origin of value changed over time and became increasingly disembodied and subjective. Mercantilists located wealth in precious metals, physiocrats argued that nature was the ultimate source of value, which is derived from agriculture, political economists claimed that value was a product of labour and for neoclassical economists it became a subjective measure of desire (Graeber 2005: 440). Economic value can refer to ones individual's utility, to the product of a productive process, or to the yield of some transaction and exchange of things. Value in particular is distinguished in terms of use value, exchange value and utility (Plattner 1989:9). For Martin Rössler (1999:137) use value, exchange

¹⁶ The term 'economizing' describes the handling of scarce resources including three aspects: conscious decision making, two or more alternatives to choose from, and efficiency as ultimate aim (Rössler 1999:82). A rational or 'economizing' actor is assumed to yield for the maximum profit of goods (Plattner 1989:8).

value and utility can be defined very flexible and are dependent on several aspects like the temporal, social and related needs. Anthropological theories about value concern moral, aesthetic and symbolic dimensions, how individuals are motivated to maintain or re-create social systems. Values can be defined as ideas, desires and wants that influence people in their choice and course of action or as a way people's actions become meaningful to them, and how they get important and incorporated into some larger system of meaning. To link value with system and individual levels made it attractive for the study of consumption, especially the value of the individual and its self-realisation (Graeber 2005). If goods and services have symbolic meaning, which is rarely captured by economics, but are essential to express one's identity then there is the aspect of identity value¹⁷ according to Alan Warde (1997:198). Another way to interpret value is by the meaning of actions, how they take on importance as part of some larger whole, unique, comparable or calculable (Graeber 2005:450).

In their recent work on *Economic Anthropology: History, Ethnography, Critique* (2011) Chris Hann and Keith Hart criticize that models of individual rationality and utility are not taking into account all the material, historical and ethnographic records of human economies, which address a wide range of human needs and their motivations and how they are shaped by community, social and political contexts. Anthropological approaches are also sceptical of neoclassical economic theory that argues resources are scarce in relation to unlimited human wants or needs, as they recognize that needs are culturally and socially defined and therefore differ in economic practice (Rössler 1999). Marshal Sahlins' substantivist view on economy challenges the formalists approach and that human needs are endless. In his essay 'Original Affluent Society' (1974) he suggests the opposite: what if human needs are limited and natural resources exist in abundance in the case of hunter and gatherer societies. The problem of scarcity or affluence is therefore dependent on the complexity of human needs (Rössler 1999:98), just like the concept of surplus. For Niccolo Caldararo (2005:105-106), the idea of surplus is that 'one has more than one needs', but as needs vary culturally so does the idea of surplus. It can be something that is not consumed and bring forth a new supply for the next season in the case of hunter-gatherers. The yield of a crop, planted and cared for can result in a surplus

¹⁷ Identity value involves aspects of style, status and group identification with commodities to distinguish oneself from other groups and individuals (Warde 1997:198).

that represents not only the labour involved and time invested, but also a change in lifestyle. Although the production of food surplus in western countries exceeds our nutritional requirements, it guarantees food security and has other practical advantages as observed among other traditional cultures like the ceremony of 'potlatch'. It displays wealth and power and offers a margin of safety in crises such as war or crop failures (Harris 1980). For Stuart (2009) it could have also been an incentive for technical and social developments.

In an anthropological essay on the economic behaviour of hunter and gatherers Elisabeth Cashdan (1989) perceives it as a highly successful and resilient way of life. She also considers the relationship of today's foragers with the world economy. Remaining hunter-gatherer groups are living in social bands, consisting of related individuals; they are organized in an egalitarian way, lacking chiefs or other formal authority structures, like political or economic institutions. The time women and men spend on 'working' for food lies between 20 to 30 hours per week. It is comparatively easy to satisfy their needs and wants. Studies refer to their excellent nutritional status like for example the !Kung San, living in the Kalahari Desert in south Africa and supplying themselves with an abundant and well-balanced diet consisting of meat and a varied assortment of vegetable food, with most of the protein and calories coming from vegetable resources. Despite of decreasing mobility due to increasing agricultural production and labour demands some hunter-gatherer groups in Canada and Australia have recently shown a strong commitment and political self-determination to secure their autonomy. It is surprising that these widely scattered groups of foragers and their lifestyle became in some ways adopted by 'urban foragers' in search for vegetable resources inside of supermarket containers. The amount of food waste seems to be as affluent as the natural resources of hunter-gatherers, but is actually the result of the production of food surplus (Cashdan 1989).

3.3.2 Economic Activities: One-way Transfers and Informal Provisioning

What is also important to note in terms of economic activities like food gathering or dumpster diving is that there is no exchange of goods taken place, but a 'one-way economic transfer' (2005) as Robert C Hunt calls it or 'informal provisioning' according to Narotzky (2005). Hunt (2005:290p) mainly considers the activity of household pooling, forager-food-sharing, inheritance, theft, charity or gifts to hosts as

one-way economic transfers, where objects that have economic value and are important to people do not necessarily involve any kind of exchange. Some of the dimensions that structure one-way economic transfers refer to the initiative for a transaction and its location, where an object is moved. Narotzky (2005) argues that the provision of goods and services can take on different forms; it can be through the market, the state, the community or domestic group. It links the consumption and the production ends of economic life to address important issues like food security, housing, health care or more generally public or collective consumption. For Narotzky (2005:78) 'provisioning is a useful way to understand social differentiation, the construction of particular meanings and identities and the reproduction of the social and economic system' and in terms of informal provisioning in its extreme, she refers to urban foraging practices such as garbage collecting, begging or theft. In the case of dumpster diving, this practice did not evolved out of a crisis or because the formal provisioning of goods failed, but as a critique of the market. The formal or informal provision of materials like waste then is made possible by the interplay of different institutions like the market or the state.

3.3.3 Informal, Community and Market Economies

The practice of dumpster diving as informal provisioning of food can be linked with informal economies. The anthropologist Estellie Smith (1989:295) defines the informal sector consisting of any production, distribution, or consumption activities that occur outside of the constraints or opportunities accepted by the members of an inclusive social unit as proper, right, publicly accountable, and legitimate. Again, the necessity to participate within informal economies is seen as the only means of the urban poor, unemployed or illegal immigrants to gain income and meet their needs outside the formal sector, but not as lifestyle freely chosen by individuals. The informal economy has been related to the growing urbanization in developing countries and high unemployment rates in cities, but ethnographic fieldwork showed that through the self-organized energies of the people grassroots economies emerged (Hann and Hart 2011:112) and therefore constituting dual economies (formal and informal), rather than traditional and modern forms (Smith 1989:300). Stephen Gudeman (2001) is also arguing for two realms of economies, the community and market. Community economies refer to real associations and

imagined solidarities that people experience locally, constituted through social relationships and contextually defined values, whereas market economies mark anonymous short term exchanges on impersonal and global levels. For Gudeman (2001) economic practices and relationships are constituted within the two realms of community and market (or the house economy at the margin and the corporate economy at the centre) and four value domains: the base, social relationships, trade and accumulation. The base consists of the community's shared interests and values, its lasting resources, produced things and ideational constructs like technology, laws, practices, skills and customs. These cultural agreements and beliefs provide a structure for the other domains and expresses identity within the community. The second domain of social relationships and associations include amongst others house economies and are expressed in corporations and clubs. They help to create and maintain the base through the transfer of materials and services. The first two domains fall within the community realm of economy, whereas the third and fourth domain that consist of goods and services that are traded on an impersonal level for the means of production or consumption and accumulated value in form of resources, relationships, goods and money capital make up the corporate economy. The accumulation domain includes institutions and actors who operate in the other domains as well. Gudeman concludes that community and market economy complement one another, conjoin, and are separated in acts, institutions and sectors and that most of us use both realms every day.

Do freegan communities then account for one of these economies or constitute an economic form of their own? Freegan lifestyles and the practice of dumpster diving is a form of informal provisioning within the realm of informal economy. Shared interests and values as well as the common practice of dumpster diving and social relationships are organized within the premises of an open space and club, which can be related to communal forms of economy but are interrelated of course with the market economy as means of production and consumption accumulating goods and services and most important tons of waste.

3.3.4 The Organization of Waste in Cities

As cities are historically and topographically one of the first places where the growing number of inhabitants lead to the regulation of dirt and refuse (Payer 2005) and

practices of dumpster diving became prominent I shall refer to examples from American cities and how they organize themselves around the material of waste as well as future approaches of waste management in Asian cities. In America the first system of public sector waste management was set up in the city of New York in 1895 and by 1910 eight cities out of ten had a municipal system of garbage disposal (Rathje 1992).

According to Strasser (1991:125p) much of the writing about municipal solid waste focused on the city of New York; because its size, New York handled more trash than any other city and faced problems years and even decades earlier compared to smaller municipalities. In general the southern cities in the USA had less ash and more organic waste than their northern counterparts, due to shorter winters and longer growing seasons. There was no consensus among professionals about a certain method of disposal. Some garbage was collected, buried or dumped into the ocean and between 1889 and 1903 the American Public Health Association simply recommended that every city choose the method 'best for itself'. Some cities employed different methods at the same time, but by far the greatest amount of American trash was dumped at sites at the edges of towns. Many of the largest cities also deposited some of their waste, especially organic garbage into water (Rivers, Lakes, Ocean) like New Orleans, St. Louis, Chicago and New York. Water dumping created also controversy as ocean dumping fouled the beaches, but some dumping into water and 'wastelands' like ravines and wetlands, was intended to create new land. It was estimated by Melosi (2000:349) that at the end of the 1960's 50 to 62 million tons of waste was dumped into the ocean. In the mid 1970's nearly 120 ocean sites of waste disposal were supervised by the U.S. Coast Guard (Strasser1991).

In 1902 a quarter of American cities fed garbage to live stock. Melosi (2000:349) notes that feeding garbage to swine continued unabated until the 1950's. Between 1953 and 1955, due to the rapid spread of a swine disease (vesicular exanthema) state health departments instituted regulations forbidding the feeding of raw garbage to hogs. The cooking of waste solved the problem, but hog feeding steadily declined in the late 1950 and 1960's, because the method became economically prohibitive. In the early 1970s only 4 percent of collected food waste was being utilized as swine feed. Other waste materials like metal, glass, rag and paper were recycled and picked out at dumps by poorer immigrants and citizens.

The method of incineration became popular at the beginning of the 20th century and lasted until the late 1930's (by 1914, approximately three hundred incinerating plants were operating in the United States and Canada) when the sanitary landfill, a British innovation became the preferred American disposal method for the rest of the century (Strasser 1991).

In terms of source reduction as future approaches to solid waste management, Rathje reports that the amount of packaging in municipal solid waste has experienced a gradual decline in the years from 1978 through 1988 according to the data from the Garbage Project. A comparative study of household solid waste from Mexico and the United States also reveals that U.S. households produce a third less garbage than their counterparts, due to the modern packaging of food products that reduces the wastage of food. In Mexico City, a higher percentage of food is bought fresh, which results in larger volume of garbage (Rathje 1992:216-217).

The search for alternative methods of managing food waste lead Stuart (2009:271p) to study amongst countries like Japan and Korea. Like most developed countries, Japan used to send its food waste to landfill, but being a small island space is limited so it started to incinerated garbage to reduce its volume, including materials like paper and plastic. Burning food uses up energy because around 80 per cent of it is water. The Food Waste Recycling Law of the Japanese government in 2001 demanded food businesses to recycle 48 per cent of all their food waste by 2006. Within four years the industry had leaped the mandatory level and was recycling 59 per cent of commercial and industrial food waste. About 37 per cent of the food recycled in Japan is converted into animal feed, which accounts for about 2.5 million tonnes and helps to address issues of food supply and food waste.

Different food waste recycling schemes are spread around the country like Alfo factory, which is part of the Tokyo Super Eco-Town Project, the Agri-Gaia System Co. Ltd. and Odakyu Food Ecology Centre in Sagamihara City. The waste recycling scheme at the Alfo factory is very capital-intensive as they work with state-of-the-art technologies and machinery, requiring huge amounts of energy to convert wet food waste into dry powder with the method of deep-frying. The method at Agri-Gaia factory is more labour intensive as they take the model of a lunch-box factory to reverse it; a production line of fifty workers is unpacking each try by hand and sorting the ingredients into separate containers. The Odakyu Food Ecology Centre follows a

model of economic and ecological interests by reducing food miles, eliminating food waste, providing sustainably produced meat and creating valuable publicity for retailers. As the Centre is owned by Odakyu, one of the most renowned department store chains in the country and the owner of several other businesses, including train services it delivers waste food directly from its supermarkets, restaurants and train lines to the factory to be turned into pig feed, and then buying back the pork to be sold as a premium quality eco-product in its own stores. The list of providers of food waste is constantly growing and includes hotels, food manufacturers and another supermarket chain, ECO's. They use the following method: Food is sterilized by pasteurizing at 90 °C for five minutes and then inoculated with Lacto-bacillus to preserve the smell. Stuart (2009:277), who has visited these different food waste recycling factories calls the Odakyu scheme as a 'organic-retail loop' that complies with the Food Waste Recycling Law, profits from the sale of premium pork and improves their social responsibility image.

In Taiwan and South Korea it is not allowed to send food waste to landfills. In 2005 laws were introduced to ban that food is being buried, but collect it separately, feeding some to pigs and composting the rest instead. There are about 250 plants in Korea that deal with the daily output of 13,000 tonnes of food waste (Stuart 2009).

3.3.5 The Organization of Waste in Austria

The activity of dumpster diving takes place in cities like Vienna, so knowledge about the organization of waste and the meaning of dirt in Austria and especially its capital is not only essential for freegan activists but the main focus of my empirical research. Much of the literature about waste in Austria is concerned with economical or logistical aspects like waste management. A diploma thesis about the history of waste management in Austria¹⁸ reports that the largest city to be first confronted with a waste problem was Vienna. In a municipal report of 1853, the mayor complained about the increasing pollution of the city. Pollution was mainly caused by horse dung along with kitchen and household waste, and dog excrements. The institution of waste management was not yet known, but the 'local sanitation service' was responsible for the creation and conservation of sanitary cemeteries. In the first

¹⁸ *Geschichte der Abfallwirtschaft in Österreich* (1999), Markus Ossberger.

decades of the 19th century most of the household waste was simply dumped on the streets or into extra ditches build for this purpose. Some waste was used to fill gravel pits or for the levelling of certain areas like the region around *Laaerberg* in the 10th district (Ossberger 1999).

The collection of waste was in the hands of private trash collectors or peddlers driving horse wagons (*Müllkutscher*). They were responsible to sort waste materials like glass, metal, paper and rags and sell it to manufacturers. At about 1900 the necessity for more landfills became apparent as the quantity of waste increased dramatically. A new landfill at *Wienerberg* was established and mainly used for litter, household and market waste. Vienna started to correspond with other European cities about their experiences with waste disposal and canalization. Private initiatives, like a waste sorting plant and another company promoting the gasification of waste were not very successful. In 1918 Vienna introduced the *Colonia-System* with a focus on waste collection with modern vehicles and the provision of waste containers and waste bins for private households and pedestrians. *Müllkutscher* sorting and selling waste remained until the 1950's in the suburbs of Vienna. The method of incineration was getting more and more popular around Europe but it took Vienna until the 1960's to build its first waste incinerator plant as historical events like the First and Second World War demanded every possible resource available (Ossberger 1999).

In times of war, especially during the Hitler Regime the collection of waste was a way to guarantee the autarchy of the state in terms of raw materials and food. Cities with more than 35,000 inhabitants were obligated to sort out the waste to collect every raw and waste material for immediate recycling purposes. The collection of waste was also incorporated into war propaganda and housewives were encouraged to collect and submit waste materials separately. In the first years during the war the collection of waste was also promoted in schools known as *Schulaltstoffsammlung*. Students were committed to bring along waste materials from their homes. Despite all the strict requirements and high aims the war propagandas had limited success as only 4 percent of the urban waste was recycled (Ossberger 1999).

In general, the main focus previous to and after the war, rested on the logistics and disposing of waste rather than on the reduction or recycling of it. Economic growth and reconstruction was more important than environmental issues. Nearly

100 % of the waste was dumped on the countryside, into the woods and water with the danger of fires, plague of insects and ground water contamination. In the 1960's several hundred dumping sites were scattered around Austria without authorization. Since the 1970's there was a growing awareness of environmentalism, which resulted in the establishment of a federal ministry addressing these issues. In the following decade modern landfills, compost works and incinerator plants were built and the recycling of waste became more important as the quantity of household and industry waste increased due to ongoing economic growth and new consumer patterns. The definition of waste became more and more standardized in Austria and the waste management law of 1990 offered the legal basis to deal with waste materials in an efficient and sustainable way (ibid.).

Today the city of Vienna likes to praise itself as one of the cleanliest cities, as seen for example in the Austrian publication *Sauberes Wien* (Payer 2006) commissioned by the municipal department, in German *Magistratsabteilung 48*, which is responsible for waste management. With reference to its 60th anniversary it looks at the history of the department and aspects of city cleaning and garbage disposal. The meaning of cleanliness is associated with aspects of prosperity and quality of life, safety and stability, social and political conflict management.

When the municipal department, known as *Magistratsabteilung 48* or *48er* took on responsibility for waste management in 1948 the city was far away from the image of a clean city, but first had to remove all of its rubbish and debris. The act of cleaning the city became a synonym for the restoration of order and normality (Payer 2006a:14). It took some time until the fleet was fully operational and the service of waste collection could operate again. With the emerging of a throw-away culture in the 1950's and 1960's the quantity of waste went up to 60 percent compared to the amount of waste that was produced before World War II. In the 1970's it even increased threefold, while 75 percent of household waste was incinerated and used for heat production. After the construction of Vienna's first incineration plant in 1965 two more followed one in the district of *Simmering* and *Spittelau* (Calice 2006). The image of a clean city was especially important for Vienna's tourism. Payer (2006a:14) reports that the *Magistratsabteilung 48* started in the 1950's with several campaigns to promote to keep the city clean with events like *Frühjahrsreinigung*, which is

synonymous for 'spring cleaning' and *Festwochenputz* for Vienna's annual festival or following slogans: 'Vienna stops the garbage flood' and 'Vienna cleans up! Join in!'¹⁹

Awareness-raising campaigns continued over the years till today. The contents vary between different topics like the positive image of bin men, city-cleaning events that ask the Viennese not to behave like grumpy-urchins or mud larks²⁰. At the end of the 1990's the central advertising character became a brown garbage monster symbolising a constant threat to the cleanliness of the city (Payer 2006b:65-68). In the mid 2000's the garbage monster turned green and is not only displayed on posters, but also on garbage trucks and waste baskets, which came to be known as 'Otto' baskets, referring to the garbage monster's name and aimed to animate children and young people to dispose their waste correctly. The last campaign addressed the recent problem of 'littering' as the careless dumping of small items increased over the last years. It is seen as accompanying symptom of the high standards of waste management in European cities. People care less; it is convenient to dump waste on the streets; there is no sense of ownership and the certainty that it is removed and cleaned up anyway (Payer 2006c:182-184).

Future approaches are concerned with new technologies and ways to deal with an ever increasing quantity of waste. Although the problem of food waste is hardly addressed by the authors dealing with Vienna's history of waste management they point to a new concept for recycling biodegradable waste called '*Biokreislaufwirtschaft*'. This model of 'organic recycling management' requires a composting, biogas and biomass power plant to convert the potentially 17.000 tons of annual food waste into compost and production of energy (Calice and Panzenböck 2006:200). A case study on *Food Consumption in Austria* (Payer 2001) looks also on the factor of waste management. Food waste, which is caused on the consumption level by overstocking, over preparation, cooking losses, plate waste, leftover portions, misunderstanding of quality defects in all kind of kitchens (household, restaurants, caterers, bars, food chains and hospitals) covers a huge part of the total waste. The quantity of biogenic waste has nearly doubled from 180,000 tons to 360,000 tons. A remarkable part of the biogenic waste could be re-used in pork production, but no plans have been made so far.

¹⁹ Original German Quote: *Wien stoppt die Müll-Lawine* and *Wien räumt auf! Mach mit!* (Payer 2006:14). All German quotes are translated by the author.

²⁰ Original German Quote: *Schmutzfink* or *Schmutzteufel* (Payer 2006:53).

Household waste, consisting mainly of packaging and biogenic material is expected to increase in the future due to sustained population growth, the growing trend towards single households, the growing supply of one way products and the obvious change in food consumption patterns including the increasing demand of convenience food and smaller packaged units. Great volumes of household waste are caused by food and beverage packaging. The actual share of recyclable beverage packaging has decreased from about 80 % in 1985 to about 50 % in 2000. The authors (Payer 2001:29) conclude that economic pressure and competition seems to favour a one-way-system.

3.4 The Consumption of Food

In the case of dumpster diving consumption is not only relevant as economic activity, which means the organization of freegan resources from food waste and surplus, but also as meaningful practice for freegan identities to criticize capitalism and consumerism²¹.

A prominent advocate to think of consumption as an aspect of material culture is the anthropologists Daniel Miller. In his essay on 'Consumption' (2006), the relevance is given to a material culture perspective, but also acknowledging anti-materialist approaches that see consumption as an act of destruction. To consume does indeed mean to use something up and in effect to destroy material culture itself. Economists, who assume that consumption is synonymous with modern mass consumption or environmentalists that see the destruction of the worlds resources associated with consumerism (Miller 2006:341) are somehow in line with the anti-capitalistic approaches of freegans (Edlmayr 2009). The critical act of dumpster diving is opposing consumer society, but constitutes a consumption activity of its own. Dumpster diving is not taking place within the realms of formal economies or as a romantic adaption of hunter-gatherer cultures, but as an informal way of provisioning at the end of the economic cycle to deal with its negative externalities – tons of food going to waste.

²¹ Consumerism describes the particular relationship to consumption, where consumers seek to meet their emotional and social needs through shopping to demonstrate their self-worth through objects; it is more about excess and overconsumption (Leonard 2010:145).

For Miller (2006:346) there is more to the study of consumption than just its critique, it was revolutionized by semiotic and structuralist approaches that advocate the view that consumer goods function as a symbolic system and ways of communication like in Douglas work on *The World of Goods* (1996) or Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1979) and his focus on goods as means to express and reproduce class distinctions.

A material culture approach aims to study the specificity of material objects and particular forms of consumption in order to create an understanding of humanity that is inseparable from its materiality. A theory of consumption then can be viewed as productive activity of individuals and social groups (Miller 2006:347). Narotzky (1997:113) embraces a different approach of consumption. In the tradition of economic anthropology she defines consumption as social process centred around the access, distribution and processing of resources and final consumption. The process of consumption cannot be separated from production and distribution and will therefore differ culturally.

For the activity of dumpster diving I am applying a materialists as well as an economic anthropological approach as it forms not only a particular form of consumption towards an seemingly 'invisible' material object, but includes own ways of accessing, distributing and processing freegan resources. The process of dumpster diving is a distinct way of consuming food, so particularities of food studies account for the following theoretical part.

Consumption of food as everyday practice includes issues of identity, space and places of food cultures – foodscapes (Jayne 2006). The importance of food studies lies in the definition of consumption as something pleasurable and productive within an endless circle of use and reuse including eating or shopping habits which can be related to forms of inconspicuous consumption (Ashley et al 2005). These everyday practices are perceived as more accurate representatives of the presence and modernity as well as forms of resistance (Laermans 1997) and cultural change. Food consumption is central for creating meaning, identities and belonging to places and groups.

3.4.1 Studies of Food

Studies of food show that food is essential for human life, the world's biggest industry, linked with pleasure and the core of our most intimate social relationships; it is essential to look at the consumption side and the meaning of our food behaviour, analyzing features on what, how and why we eat according to Warren Belasco in his introduction on *Why study food?* (2008), while Mark Jayne (2006) adds the perspective on food consumption in cities (or urban foodscapes), to look at the dynamic relation between urban development and consumption, the spaces and places, where and what we eat. Consumption stands not only at the 'intersection of different spheres of life – between the public and the private, the political and personal, the social and individual', but it plays a crucial role in constructing our identities (Jayne 2006:214) and lifestyles as does the freegan practice of dumpster diving and communal kitchens, which is placed amongst others in the city of Vienna as an alternative model of food consumption. In Alan Warde's *Consumption, Food & Taste* (1997), he outlines general theories of change and connects them with the actual consumer behaviour of food, but concludes that tastes are still collectively shared to a very significant extent, despite the idea of enhanced individualism and that the membership of a social group is less decisive in determining consumption as the function of lifestyle and self-identity.

With the focus on food studies Belasco (2008:7p) offers an integrated model in form of a triangle consisting of different variables, which represent all personal, social and global factors that make up a complex food system. The triangle is imagined with one point at the top covering 'Responsibility' and two on the bottom: the left point is called 'Identity' and the right 'Convenience'. The decision for people on what to eat is based for the most part on a rough negotiation between the dictates of identity and convenience. Convenience entails factors such as price, availability and ease of preparation, which are all related to the requirement of energy, labour and skills. Identity involves considerations or the context of personal preference, pleasure, creativity, and the sense of who and where you are and Belasco stresses that:

Identity includes factors such as taste, family and ethnic background, personal memories (the association between particular foods and past events, both good and bad). The cultural aspects of identity include widely shared values and ideas, extravagant notions

about the good life, as well as community's special food preferences and practices that distinguish it from other communities [...] (Belasco 2008:8).

These components reveal a fruitful ground for studies on food and although the variable of responsibility plays a less crucial role for culinary decisions according to Belasco (2008:8p), it is a decisive factor for the freegan lifestyle. Responsibility involves not only short-term consequences, but long-term effects that are based on individual decisions such as being aware of one's place in the food chain and the impact we have on nature, animals, other people and the distribution of power and resources worldwide (ibid.).

3.4.2 The Importance of Places, Spaces and Foodscapes

The rapid growth of cities around the world offers new spaces and places of consumption, but also an increasing social and spatial polarisation between those who 'have' and 'have not' notes Jayne. When he talks about the meaning of consumption, he also considers it 'to be more likely a pleasurable pursuit often involving imagination and the realisation of desires and ambitions' (2006:5) and within academics:

As such, consumption is not just about goods that are manufactured and sold, but increasingly about ideas, services and knowledge – places, shopping, eating, fashion, leisure and recreation, sights and sounds can all be 'consumed' (Jayne 2006:5).

The importance of spaces and places of food cultures is also central for Bob Ashley et al in *Food and Cultural Studies* (2005), where he relates food to questions of identity, globalization and locality, including chapters on 'Shopping for Food' or 'Eating Out'.

Jayne's focus on *Cities and Consumption* (2006) shows, that the relationship between consumption and urban everyday life has been central for the development of a consumer society, whereas Rudi Laermans (1997) stresses the role of social and commercial institutions for the emerging of mass consumption like early department stores and how they shaped modern consumer culture. For Jayne (2006:93) contemporary cities are defined by and through 'conspicuous' or 'inconspicuous' consumption as are all members of an urban consumer culture consisting of a

diverse mix of social groups that produce meaning and create belonging in the spaces and places that constitute the city²².

Spaces of inconspicuous consumption include car boot sales, charity shops, retro/second-hand clothes shops, markets, supermarkets and the home. According to Jayne (2006:93) these everyday worlds and studies of inconspicuous consumption 'have suggested that consumption is not a single act of purchase,' but 'a potentially endless circuit of use and reuse'. The focus on consumption and everyday life 'is stressing that active negotiation, subjectivity and conflict are important in fully conceptualising the discursive construction of identities, lifestyles and forms of sociability' (Jayne: 2006:94). As for Laermans (1997) further sociological interest was aimed at a heterogeneous mass of creative symbolic practices by individuals in everyday social relations the activity of shopping can serve as a way to express individual creativity, social resistance and collective pleasure.

When connecting theories of everyday life, urban landscapes and consumer culture it leads to more productive and pleasurable ways of consumption that can take place at home²³, in restaurants, street vendors, coffee houses, cafés and other urban foodscapes in the city. According to Jayne (2006:106) the practice of eating out has become a cultural barometer, 'and the proliferation of eating places in the city has been one of the most visible and interesting features of contemporary urbanity'. Ashley et al (2005:142) is also concerned with patterns of eating out and the complex meanings attached to it; the practice of eating out as widely practiced leisure activity since the 1980's is articulated as a source of pleasure for the consumer, who can choose between standardized and authentic food cultures.

Aspects of ritual and social relations surround urban foodscapes with the possibility to eat almost everywhere, but with very different rules and codes²⁴ (Jayne:2006). This concept of foodscapes, drawing on everyday activities can be

²² Jayne stresses (2006:7) that the way both individual people and social groups consume goods and services relates to a matrix of identity positions (e.g. class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age). Commodities and their symbolic content can be constructed, appropriated and (re)appropriated in many different ways. In this sense consumption can be a productive force, creating and (re)creating meaning and underpinning political, economic, social and cultural values.

²³ The kitchen can serve as an example how it offers insights into the social and symbolic role of consumption at home, which is discussed in literature. There is varying symbolic significance to kitchens and the social interactions happening around this place, according to levels of economic, cultural and social capital (Jayne 2006:105).

²⁴ It is for example not allowed to consume food not bought on premises. It would be unacceptable to eat the previous customer's leftovers or eating too quickly or slowly is also sometimes a problem as different types of restaurants with clear structured norms (Jayne:108).

related to Appadurai's theory on the role of imagination as everyday cultural practice in global cultural processes. The framework for exploring global cultural flows consists of five of its dimensions: *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes* and *ideoscapes*²⁵ (1996:31-33).

As the weekly activity of communal kitchen (and dumpster diving) as informal pendant to soup or people's kitchen was organized in an urban club in Vienna with its own rules and codes, this alternative foodscape served as a starting point for my participant observation. The urban club or clubs as voluntary organizations can be regarded as the most common type of organizations in modern civil societies, according to Walther Müller-Jentsch (2008). In his article, he elaborates the sociological concept²⁶ of the club, and its historical role in the process of emancipation of the bourgeois class as well as the first associational attempts of the working class and women's movements.

3.4.3 Identity, Lifestyle and Everyday Life

It becomes clear with a focus on consumption theories that consumer habits and practices concerning food play an important role for the construction of identities see Jayne (2006) or Belasco (2008), who includes identity as one aspect of his culinary triangle consisting of shared values and ideas that make up particular food preferences. Identity in anthropology refers to properties of uniqueness and individualities and also qualities of sameness that persons may associate themselves or be associated by others with groups (Byron 2004:441). The concept of lifestyles is defined by Anthony Giddens (1991:81) as a routinised practice, incorporated into habits of dress, eating and modes of acting. It implies choice within a plurality of possible options as a main characteristic of modern societies to give a material form

²⁵ These set of landscapes are perspectival constructs of different actors ranging from nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groupings and movements of religious, political or economic character (Appadurai 1996:33).

²⁶ Deriving on Richard Scott's (1986) five structural elements of organizations – social structure, members, technology, goals, and environment - Müller-Jentsch (2008:484p) applies them on the type of club to exercise its terminology. He distinguishes *social structure* between normative or formal and actual or informal style. Formality concerns the registration procedure of a club and its *members*, which are mostly defined by formal membership. Some clubs differ between active and passive members as it is the case with the club in observance. A club's *technology* transforms an 'input' into an 'output'. The input consists of individuals' needs to share their free time and ideals with like-minded people. Their union marks in a sense the technology of the club. To set the *goals* of an organisation is more difficult, but clubs define their goal usually at the beginning of their formation.

to a particular self-identity. The material expression of freegan identities is then practiced through their lifestyles including food consumption habits in form of dumpster diving and communal kitchens.

The concept of identity as conceived by social theorists and connected with consumption includes issues on freedom, trends and lifestyles. Within modernity and post-modernity individuals are no longer seen to be placed in society by their class, but must invent and consciously create a personal identity through the consumption of objects as signs of communication (Warde 1997:10). The changing of food habits for example to a vegetarian lifestyle can be explained by the thesis of post-fordist or neo-tribal consumption. Warde (1997:32p) claims that both ways imply a growing cultural pluralism with an increasing number of groups, each with distinct rules, norms and standards about food and in the case of vegetarianism it coincides with other lifestyle attributes like political, ethical or religious commitments. Another explanation may be the concept of generation and the sometimes innovative behaviour of young adults in contrast to their elders. With moral, health-related or ecological motives defining vegetarianism, it is an expression of alternative styles of life and can be regarded as a social movement, way of resistance and individual lifestyle choice (1997:70p, 84p).

Within 'anthropology of consumption' Maria Dabringer (2009) also looks at issues of identity. How individual or collective needs and preferences of consumer behaviour establish social status and create identity. A society can be divided into various groups according to their own preferences as for example urban consumers are confronted with a great deal of products and food restaurants offering Asian, Oriental or Vegetarian Cuisine. Collective consumer practices are complemented by individual preferences, which are again established through individual taste and influenced by family habits or within a social group. Consumption is seen as a marker of difference and commonality. Consumption as such is a social activity and symbol of lifestyle, expressing individual and collective identity. This cultural and social practice serves as a tool for individual self-expression and identification, to distinguish oneself from others and account for a person's outlook (Dabringer 2009:15p).

When connecting the social activity of consumption with the everyday, Jayne (2006:93p) shows that the most prominent writers on theories of everyday life,

Michael de Certeau (1988) and Henri Lefebvre (1972), are both concerned with the experimental dimension of urban life and the significance of the city as a site of resistance. De Certeau (1988) is for example, concerned with everyday activities or practices, utilized by the less powerful to subvert dominant social ideologies and power relations. In this context the practice of dumpster diving and communal kitchens can be regarded as a way of resistance that challenges the social ideology of respected means of food consumption and the system of capitalism in general.

Theories of everyday life are also the centre of focus in Joe Moran's article 'History, Memory and the Everyday' (2004: 51p). Moran explores theories of everyday life in relation to history and memory and referring them to Lefebvre (1972) and other French critics. She portrays the work of Lefebvre and his concept of the everyday being interrelated with modernity. Apparently universalizing processes of modernity and capitalism do not match entirely with people's ordinary lives, but create historical survivals and local differences. The everyday offers a corrective to the discourse of modernity promoting the latest fashion, design or technology. It is also a way to make sense of particular kinds of cultural change in western societies. The aspect of material culture can serve as a fertile ground for investigating 'involuntary' memories that denaturalize routine & daily practices and therefore connect it again with historical processes²⁷.

3.4.4 Agency, Politics and Ethics

The expression of one's identity through individual consumer habits and choices of lifestyle do not only refer to the level of individual or identity value (Graeber 2005, Warde 1997), but is intrinsically linked with agency, practice or action. For Farquhar (2006) forms of agency that construct subjective identities or broader material realities are seldom explored beyond questions of choice. Agency in recent anthropology has become a theme against structuralism and functionalism and is defended as a value of the particular powers of human beings to act autonomously. Farquhar aims to overcome the polarized discourse on structure and agency or freedom and domination, but to consider the agency of things-as-materials,

²⁷ For Moran the memory of rubbish as material culture offers a visible and durable evidence of certain habits and routines of everyday life, but when outlived, it also reveals the temporality of daily life (2004:61p)

embodiments of memory and desires within our habitus²⁸ (2006:154). The definition of agency as the capacity to act is then not only limited to persons, but includes things and implies our interactions with the material world (Hoskins 2006:74). As an example the material of waste may reflect our consumer behaviour, but with the act of dumpster diving and the interaction of humans with waste its value is recovered and the agency of the object continues. With regard to 'Consumption and Theories of Practice' (2005) Warde understands consumption as a process where agents engage in appropriation and appreciation of goods, services or information for utilitarian, expressive or contemplative purposes. In his view 'consumption is not itself a practice²⁹ but rather a moment in almost every practice' (2005:137) and that 'the fact of engagement in the practice, rather than any personal decision about a course of conduct' explains the nature and process of consumption. Social practices differ and change on many dimensions considering the agents roles, capacities and commitment and how they vary in their understandings, procedures and objectives. The concept of practice accounts for reproduction and innovation, the latter happens when conventions are contested perhaps by a new generation (138p).

The social activity of consumption includes also a political dimension (Dabringer 2009:22p) and the possibility to make decisions, either for or against something. The consumer can be politically active, take responsibility and shape society with their knowledge about certain developments and processes. It is also argued by Kate Soper and Frank Trentmann in *Citizenship and Consumption* (2008) that consumption today is an established part of political life that ranges from ethical consumerism to the micro-politics of everyday life. It offers individuals a way to resist and retreat from mainstream politics through the creation of subcultures and identities that challenge conventional norms and lifestyles. Consumption marks active civil life and vice versa. New cultures of consumption in the eighteenth century opened up new social spaces for women and encouraged new networks of clubs and associations. With liberal and radical politics in the nineteenth century generating a new sense of consumer rights and identities the consumer became fused with the citizen - a citizen-consumer (Soper and Trentmann 2008:6).

²⁸ Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977:117) involves the capacity to produce thoughts, actions, ideas, perceptions and emotions to give meaning to social life.

²⁹ Warde (2005:137) claims that almost all practices whether understood as coordinated entity or performance require consumption and the more complex or integrative ones that constitute particular domains of social life include for example farming, cooking or economic practices (p. 135)

Consumption as a social practice of the ordinary and mundane of everyday life remains a vital source for political agency – political and ethical consumerism. The aspect of responsibility (Belasco 2008) as one analytical tool and factor of food studies offers a political way of consuming that is concerned with the social and environmental impacts of our consumer behaviour. The concept of ethical consumerism is not defined as an isolated event, but part of the wave of environmental consciousness. The new wave of ethical consumerism that appeared at the end of 1980's uses consumer boycott as effective means of individual action and responsibility to protest against animal testing, for animal welfare, fair-trade and worker's rights, oppressive regimes, nuclear power or as part of green campaigns. There are also research and religious groups that invest in ethical and economic projects to support the growing activism among consumers. Ethical consumerism is closely connected with globalization to address its social and environmental consequences and a crucial feature is the belief of individuals to make a difference (Irving 2002).

It is within this context that the members of the freegan movement protest with the activity of dumpster diving and communal kitchen at inconspicuous places of consumption not only against institutionalized forms of food provision (capitalism), over-consumption and our throw away-mentality, but also for the rights of animals. The ethical, political and environmental commitments inform their practice of consumption, given meaning through the act of dumpster diving.

3.4.5 Ways of Food Provisioning: Shopping versus Dumpster Diving?

As for the main part of our society shopping for food is a common everyday experience and only a small group of people prefer or are dependent on the practice of dumpster diving³⁰ as means food provision, this section is aimed to look at some characteristics of both practices to compare and relate them to each other.

³⁰ In Eikenberry's and Smith (2005:187-202) study on dumpster diving - a term that is used for obtaining items, in their case food for consumption from dumpsters - they evaluate the prevalence of this practice in low income urban communities and their informants attitudes and beliefs about dumpster diving. Results showed that many of their respondents obtained food from dumpsters, especially in urban areas. Divers were more likely male and using food shelves, food kitchen or other food assistance programmes due to their high food insecurity; about half of them were homeless, they consumed more vegetable and fruit as non-divers, but also reported to eat discarded food from fast

With reference to dumpster diving *Dumpstern* is used synonymously with the expression *Containern* in German. On the website of the magazine *Zeit Online* (Reinecke, 2007), an article reports on the practice of *Containern* and that it is political motivated to criticise the consumer society using as an example a 29 year old student. The tour to several containers is described as developing from a 'safari to a treasure hunt', because of all the valuable food found in the supermarkets' waste. The term *GeObben* relates to the Austrian notion and is derived from the activity of '*Gemüse und Obst klauben*' or 'to grab some vegetables and fruit'. It developed in the area of the famous Viennese farmers market – The *Naschmarkt*³¹. People have started at the end of the 1990's to take out some vegetables and fruit dumped into the bio-waste containers after the business hours (Edlmayr 2009:38). The American counterpart known as 'dumpster diving' originated in the urban spaces of New York to grow into an international movement of local activity groups (Mautner 2007). Parallel to dumpster diving the practice of freeganism or containern is often mentioned along with consumer critical activities.

The individual experience of shopping³² can be interpreted in different ways. Going Shopping may be understood as open-ended, extravagant and excessive way of spending time and money, whereas doing the shopping accounts to the more reasonable and necessary everyday activity of buying food and not wasting time on pleasure or fashion (Bowbly 1997:102). In terms of dumpster diving the characteristics of both terms can be inclusively deployed as the experience of foraging through trash is sometimes open-ended and excessive, but in can also serve as reasonable and necessary mean to require food if chosen as a lifestyle or due to poverty. For Laermans (1997) shopping is a way to express individual creativity, social resistance and collective pleasure and according to Jayne (2006:93) inconspicuous consumption taking place at foodscapes like markets, supermarkets or at home is not a single act of purchase, but a potentially endless circuit of use and reuse. The practice of dumpster diving denies the act of buying completely and in terms of inconspicuous consumption, it is placed within the system of food recycling.

food restaurants. The authors conclude that for the majority dumpster diving is an acceptable way of obtaining food in case of hunger or for as means of survival.

³¹ *Der Naschmarkt* is Vienna's most famous and biggest farmers market with over 110 companies on 20 000 square metres and a length of 580 meters. The market dates back to 1780 (*Der Naschmarkt*, online).

³² Other terms describing the same sort of action are for example 'buying' as more active pedant to shopping according to Laermans (1997:138).

Ashley's (2005:108) focus on the practice of shopping for food is linked with aspects of space, place and time. He looks at the landscapes of food shopping to argue that 'although certain patterns may be observed, particularly the concentration of retailing and shopping in large supermarkets, these patterns do not form a uniform and predictable narrative of change', but 'continuities and interdependencies might be observed, including the return of seemingly outmoded forms of retailing and shopping' (2005:100). With regard to the dispersal of urban communities into new towns, suburbs and estates in the U.K, the dynamic process of dis-embedding of communities and subsequent material re-embedding is seen across the spectrum of food culture. Places like the kitchen, pantry or recent inventions like fridge-freezer also transformed the networks of food shopping.

Supermarkets have adapted to the needs of the dispersed population, dissolving the distinction between the local and global and creating at the same time a homogenized space. For Ashley et al (2005:108p) critics on this homogeneity usually take on two forms: Identical landscapes being insensitive to local, regional or national differences and secondly, internal homogeneity constraining and directing consumers' action in the stores. In response and as a contrast to these critiques, he suggests to see the market as something discursively constructed as for example the individual shopping basket may negotiate antinomies of food taste in a more heterogeneous way as does Daniel Miller (1998) in his ethnographic study of supermarket shoppers, where he is concerned with the act of shopping as antinomy of care and convenience.

So the act of dumpster diving that is linked with agency and individual autonomy can be received as a de-institutionalised social action (Narotzky 2005:83) if taking into account how both material needs and the production of meaning are taking place outside the realm of formal economies that is inside of supermarkets, but within informal economies or inside of supermarket containers to choose particular sorts of food – freegan food to construct their identities.

In his article 'Making Love in Supermarkets' (1998) Miller relates shopping to emotions of love, affection and care. During his fieldwork, he observed how working class women identify with their roles as housewives or mothers when expressing their responsibilities and concerns for other family members in their shopping behaviour. Shopping can therefore stand as an act of love, reflecting emotions and a

possible way by which relationships of love and care are constituted in practice. Miller also wants to redirect attention from shopping as an expression of individual subjectivity and identity to an expression of kinship and other relationships. He also calls into question the informants own views and perspectives concerning ideas of shopping which are often linked with hedonism and materialism. According to Ashley et al (2005:112p), the work of Miller (1998) shows that the dis-embedding mechanisms materialized in the supermarket as aspects of modernity like new technologies and architecture in form of the arrangement of aisles, counters, trolleys and car parks 'become re-embedded through the care and restraint that individuals bring to these mundane and fatiguing routines'.

Modern institutions like supermarkets provide new landscapes of food consumption in urban and suburban areas. As for supermarkets constitute sites of dis-embedding, involving innovations in travel, payment, quality control, packaging and self-service, urban markets can serve as alternative meaningful spaces of shopping, where the re-embedding of social factors takes place³³. (Ashley et al 2005). Ashley (2005:114) thinks of markets as places in which competing processes of localization and globalization are negotiated including meanings such as historical depth, suspended relationships of class and ethnicity, organicism and ecology, familial continuity and rugged entrepreneurialism in contrast to dis-embedding factors like technology and capitalism. Markets may offer an unpredictable experience and alternative to routine forms of shopping, but he argues although they predate supermarkets as cultural form of food provisioning they nonetheless have adapted to the modern consumer needs providing various food resources, including gourmet shops or car parks.

It is also the urban market as less industrialized counterpart that first served people in needs or alternative groups in Vienna as alternative landscape of food provisioning by grabbing some vegetable or fruit leftovers. The practice of *GeObben* is not restricted to anonymity, because by making friends with market traders one can secure the finest bits of leftovers right after closing time. The initial function of

³³ It is Anthony Giddens' work and how he explains urban change as a dynamic phenomenon that serves Ashley's argument (2005:113), as Giddens observes that the lifting out of social relations and local contexts is accompanied by the growth of *abstract systems* that mediate between people and institutions. He calls this process disembedding, where our daily business like the exchange of money for goods and services, relies on technical and bureaucratic systems, but as social institutions are always subject to reflexivity, practices of re-embedding – the humanization of businesses and bureaucracies through face to face contact takes place.

supermarkets is to offer modern ways of food consumption and they operate with capitalistic and market ideologies. Although Ashley (2005) and Miller (1998) observe re-embedding mechanisms by individual practices and social meanings involved in the act of shopping, other ways of food provisioning are not addressed. Dumpster diving is regarded by its protagonists as an attempt to deny capitalistic ways of consumption by developing means of free food provisioning, mostly without the approval of its main providers – the supermarkets. The supermarket container rooms as quantitative reflection of our production and consumer behaviour remain invisible for the main part of our society, but for others, they serve as conspicuous landscapes of free food.

3.4.6 The Making of Food Waste

As the ‘life-span’ of most food products, which are discarded and thus create a freegan food resource is predicted by their shelf-life it is time to have a short look at the mechanisms and definitions of food-labelling.

The shelf-life of food is determined by so-called ‘use-by’ or ‘best-before’³⁴ dates, required by food-labelling laws in the EU. Further categories like ‘sell-by’ or ‘display-until’ are used by many retailers, but are not mandatory. As manufacturers and supermarkets determine shelf-lives many consumers are not aware of the different meanings of labels and in fear of food poisoning and damaging headlines some products are tested at worst-case scenarios, where the food is handled improperly (for example leaving it at warm places or expose it to bacteria from air). As a result, the date is often set days earlier than when the food actually will go off if handled properly. Best-before dates are used for lower-risk food like bread, cakes and chilled food. It indicates that the food would be at its best before this date, but not unsafe if eaten after it. According to law fruit, vegetables and any bakery products designed to be eaten within a day do not have to be labelled at all, but many supermarkets routinely package and date them to prevent waste by making sure things get sold in the right order. Stuart is questioning the legitimacy of food industries applications of best-before dates, as well as the practice of putting dates on fruit and vegetable, but states that nevertheless modern film packaging also helps

³⁴ In German the equivalent of ‘use-by’ or ‘best before’ dates is *Haltbarkeitsdatum* (HD) or *Mindesthaltbarkeitsdatum* (MHD).

to extend shelf-life and reduce food waste. Use-by dates are required for pre-packed food which is highly perishable like dairy products, cooked or partly cooked products, meat or fish. Eggs are covered by separate EU-legislation and labelled with best-before dates (Stuart 2009).

In the United States there are no Federal laws requiring date labelling on food, except for some baby foods, however, dating of some food is legally required by more than twenty states. Grocers and manufacturers across the U.S. use a variety of sell by dates, 'pull dates', 'expiration dates' and 'quality dates (ibid.).

Stuart (2009:63) concludes that the European law on food labelling, and its application by manufacturers and retailers, currently causes enormous quantities of waste, because there are areas of confusions that lead to food being wasted for example when consumers treat a best-before (quality) date as if it were a use-by (food safety) date and throw away food because they believe it is unsafe to eat. According to one survey, more of a third of the population treats best-before dates as if they were about food safety. Taking the notion of shelf-life, it is set to have a certain amount of valuable life-span for food and if expired the transient category is soon converted into the 'invisible' category of waste, drawing on Thompsons' (1979) garbage theory. The practice of dumpster diving can be understood as an attempt to recover the value of food by removing it from the waste and re-embedding it once again to the category of a transient and valuable object or denying its final wastage (Hetherington 2002). It is also John Hoffman, the author of *The Art and Science of Dumpster Diving* (1993), who disregards the fear of dirt and especially expiration dates as they are only mysterious dates set by the food industry, as if perfectly good food transforms into some kind of poison over night (Edlmayr 2009:40).

4 Freegan Lifestyles and Identities

4.1 Introduction

Having introduced the concept of lifestyle as the material culture of consumer habits (Giddens 1991), as well as the concept of identity to construct meaning and value (Belasco 2008) this part will be mainly concerned with the empirical findings of my fieldwork data consisting of quotes from my field notes, informal records of conversations and interviews (2009) that are concerned with veganism and freegan movements in Vienna. The habits of eating and its rules and codes give material form to freegan lifestyles, as the activity of consuming food and the shared values and ideals involved in this process play a major role in constituting their identities.

The major characteristics of their values and ideals are derived from veganism that places great importance on the act of eating either individual or commonly practiced on events like barbecues, picnics and festivals. Ethical motives inform vegan as well as freegan styles of life (Field notes 2009, Vienna) that can be regarded as way of resistance and individual lifestyle choice developing into social movements (Warde 1997) around the western world like 'Food not Bombs' (Butler and McHenry 2000). Its activists are promoting vegetarianism, collect surplus food and prepare meals for free at public kitchens. Vegan events like picnics and barbecues do coincide with freegan lifestyles as some individuals contribute to the common practice of eating with meals prepared of informal food resources (Field notes 2009, Vienna). The freegan style of living includes a whole range of consumer activities like communal kitchens and dumpster diving as informal ways of food provisioning that will be presented as case studies at the end of this chapter starting with theoretical and empirical findings on veganism, freeganism and public kitchens.

4.2 Veganism

4.2.1 Definition and Forms of Veganism

Veganism and its definition was introduced by Donald Watson, the founder of the Vegan Society³⁵ in 1944, and derived out of the word vegetarian by combining the first three letters with the last part. It is defined as a diet or lifestyle that consists neither of meat nor meat by-products, eggs and dairy products (Smith 2005:279-280). Thomas Schwarz (2005:73p) regards veganism as the most consequent and radical form of vegetarian diet, going beyond issues of health, implying a whole lifestyle concept based on ethical motives that are expressed in their material culture and habits of dress, cosmetics and modes of acting to form vegan identities to act against the exploitation of animals³⁶.

Historically several forms of vegetarianism³⁷ or veganism occurred among others the religious practice of orphism in the ancient Greek and Hellenistic world in 600 BC with the prohibition to eat meat, eggs or wear wool or the Indian Jain monks. Since 500 BC Jainism practices a very strict form of veganism. Jains are not allowed to eat or drink in the dark, to walk without sweeping their way or breathe in without wearing a mouth protection in order to protect small animals to be killed by mistake. Even layman should live vegetarian and farmers work is restricted. Their aim is to live a pure and perfect live, without killing, to achieve Nirvana at the end. 400 BC Pythagoras, Empedocles along with followers of Orphisms believed in the transmigration of souls. They were against the killing of animals and the eating of animal meat. In the nineteenth and twentieth century 'life reform'³⁸ or social movements came into being emphasizing environmental and animal protection or vegetarianism as for example settlements like the 'Fruitlands' in Massachusetts/USA

³⁵ The Vegan Society promotes all lifestyles that are against all forms of exploitation of animals (Schwarz 2005:75p).

³⁶ Animal rights activists live vegan, which is based on their premise and that all animals have a right to live, but that does not mean that all vegan people are animal rights activists, although they derive their lifestyle out of the same like philosophies that emphasize empathy for animals and other reasons like aesthetical, ecological or economical (Schwarz 2005:76).

³⁷ The term vegetarian was first used in the United States in the 1930s and made popular by the Vegetarian Society of the United Kingdom at their first meeting in 1847 and by the American Vegetarian Society at its inaugural meeting in 1950. John Harvey Kellogg, a Seventh-Day Adventist, promoting vegetarianism, invented the cereal Kellogg's Corn Flakes, as an alternative to the traditional breakfast of eggs and bacon as well as peanut butter as an alternative to butter made from cow's milk. Vegetarianism is generally considered as the practice of not eating meat, poultry, or fish; Ovo-vegetarians do not eat dairy products and Lacto-Vegetarians do without eggs (Smith 2005:297p).

³⁸ German: *Lebensreform*.

or at the 'Monte Verita' in Italy promoting a vegan lifestyle. In Berlin/Germany the reform house retail store were established and introduced organic food and many new reform products like vegetarian meat, ham and pates. In 1952 Carl Anders Skriver formed the 'Orden der Nazoräer' of Christian Vegetarians. The animal rights movements became more prominent through the work of Peter Singers *Animal Liberation* (1975). Animal right activists got involved with many illegal actions over the years for example protests against fur farms, laying batteries and animal research laboratories to demonstrate for the right and the liberation of animals (Schwarz 2005:95p).

According to a study from the European Union in the year 2005 published on the website of vegan.at (Vegane Gesellschaft Österreich, online) 0.5 % of Austrians live vegan. As the concept of veganism is a crucial factor for freegan lifestyle and identities, I want to explore some food histories/biographies of vegan people living in Vienna. During my fieldwork period I conducted several semi-structured (leitfaden) interviews with vegans, those results I am going to present in the next part.

4.2.2 Ethical Motives and Meanings for Veganism

As the concept of vegan lifestyle is based for the most part on ethical motives and considerations that inform freegan identities as well I want to give an overview of my informants' answers on this issue: What are their reasons and what does it mean for them to live vegan? It came out that all of them lived a different amount of years as vegetarians before turning to the vegan lifestyle as the most consequent form to live. Almost all of them are students, ranging between 20 and 25 years of age with the exception of three people: A traveller, mother (academic) and freelancer (34 years old). Vegan friends or acquaintances often played a major role in their change of lifestyle. Their ethical motivations often address the exploitation and the suffering of animals and express their sympathy for animals:

[...] Respekt vor Tieren, ich war ja vorher doch Vegetarierin und da war kein Sinn mehr dahinter da leiden ja die Tiere genauso darunter wenn ich vegetarisch lebe, das macht keinen Unterschied, dann hab ich mich informiert über das Ganze und für vegan leben entschieden, weil ich die Ausbeutung von Tieren einfach nicht mehr weiter unterstützen wollt (Interview Nadine S., 02.07.2009, Vienna).

[...] respect for animals, I was a Vegetarian before and it was not making sense anymore as the animals are also suffering when I am living vegetarian, there is no difference, then I started to get informed about everything and decided to live vegan, because I didn't want to support the exploitation of animals anymore.

Ethical considerations may include environmental concerns as well. A vegan lifestyle can be directed against the pollution of the environment, mass production and intensive mass animal farming as stated by Nadine S. (Interview, 02.07.2009, Vienna).

When asking about the meaning of veganism Matthias B. (Interview, 11.09.2009, Vienna) referred to 'a more conscious way of living and eating' and for Sarah A. (Interview 23.08.2009, Vienna) it is also a 'matter of conscience and moral issue'. According to Irina R (Interview, 29.09.2009, Vienna), she looked into the issue of food more consciously when she started with veganism. The activity of eating is central for vegan people and includes different forms of food provisioning. Some vegans provide themselves with freegan food through the practice of dumpster diving. Others favour small providers of organic food and vegan products like organic (super-) markets and reform houses or aim to become self-supporters. The boycott of certain retailers is another way to express their ethical concerns for example McDonald's or retail clothing companies that sell fur.

For most of my informants the meaning of veganism is their primary value of identity, it is an attitude of life that involves a radical change of lifestyle including everyday activities like eating, cooking, and food provisioning.

4.3 Freeganism

This section aims to look at the recent social movement of freegansim as an informal and inconspicuous way of consumption, where social relations, meanings, rules and codes are negotiated to challenge conspicuous forms of consumption. The activity of dumpster diving and communal kitchen include 'invisible' features of contemporary urbanity - waste, to construct freegan identities and create belonging to spaces and places of freegan consumption.

4.3.1 Definitions of Freeganism

Writings and information on freeganism is mainly available online, on websites and in forums or newspaper articles. In an article of the Austrian Newspaper *Der Standard* for example, the ideology behind freegan is explained as deriving from the word 'free' and 'vegan' to express the activists refusal of animal products and to protest in the same instant with the activity of dumpster diving against the system of capitalism, our consumer world as well as our affluent society and throw-away mentality (Kapeller 2009, online). Expressions like 'consumer society' and 'animal rights' are key words for the movement as many freegan people are vegans that live on free food and do not want to debase animals as a consumer good (Klemun 2009, *Die Presse*, online). On the homepage of *freegan.at* its meaning is explained as follows:

Freeganismus ist die Absicht, den negativen Einfluss des Einzelnen auf die Umwelt, die Tierwelt und das menschliche Leben durch eine weitgehende Verweigerung der Teilnahme an einer kapitalistischen Volkswirtschaft zu verringern (Freegan.at, online).

Freeganism is the intention to limit the negative influence of the individual on the environment, the animal kingdom and human life with a extensively refusal to participate in a capitalistic political economy.

The statement continues with further details on its definition and philosophy, originally quoted from the online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia*: '[...] freegans see themselves as boycotters of the affluent society and throw-away mentality in a capitalistic society that values profit seeking over ethical considerations'³⁹ and 'who try to live for free without necessarily accompanying material poverty'⁴⁰ (*Freegan.at*, online). When conducting fieldwork in form of qualitative interviews and participant observations the findings varied about the definition and meaning of freegan. All of my interview partners are vegan, so their understanding of the practice of freeganism is strictly derived from the word *free* and *vegan*, but they also explain that there are various definitions and opinions as there are people, who dumpster dive and consider freegan food also consisting of meat, dairy products and bakery made of eggs as long as it is from a dumpster and removed from the capitalistic consumer cycle.

³⁹ Original German Quote: *Freegans sind Menschen, die sich als Boykotteure der Überfluss- und Wegwerfgesellschaft eines ökonomischen Systems sehen, bei dem das Gewinnstreben über ethischen Gesichtspunkten steht.*

⁴⁰ Original German Quote: *Sie versuchen, ohne zwangsläufig einhergehende eigene materielle Not möglichst weitgehend kostenlos zu leben.*

Es gibt unterschiedliche Auffassungen, für mich setzt es sich aus free und vegan zusammen, vegane Produkte aus dem Container, freie vegane Produkte heißen die wortwörtlich übersetzt, manche Leute bezeichnen sich aber auch freegan oder freeganizen und essen aber auch tierische Produkte [...] (Interview Tanja L., 28.09.2009, Vienna).

There are different conceptions, for me it is made up of free and vegan, vegan products from the container, it literally means free vegan products, but some people call themselves freegan or freeganize and eat animal products [...].

Bin selbst am containern, was Lebensmittel betrifft ziemlich viel an Kostenersparnis bringt. Freegan ist, dass du das isst was du im Müll findest. Ich würde für mich auf gar keinen Fall Fleisch aus dem Müll essen, Milchprodukte auch nicht, eigentlich nur ein Bauchgefühl, das dahinter steckt und rein in der Produktion keinen Unterschied macht, weil es sowieso entwertet ist [...] (Interview Sebastian F., 09.09.2009, Vienna).

I go to the container myself, as related to food it is quite a saving of expenses. Freegan is that you eat what you find the garbage. I would by no means eat meat out of the garbage, also no dairy products, it's just a gut feeling that's behind it and there is no difference in the production, because it is devalued anyway [...].

Ich kenn den Ausdruck, aber eher unter Container vegan, in Berlin sagt man jedenfalls so dazu, wenn man sich Milchprodukte oder anderes Zeugs aus dem Container holt, raus aus dem Kaufkreislauf und Kapitalismus, da kommt halt auch das Anarchistische dazu, aber ohne Märkte würde es auch keinen Container geben [...] man spart sich Geld, aber es ist keine Alternative zum Kapitalismus (Interview Irina R., 29.09.2009, Vienna).

I know the term, but more as *container vegan*, in Berlin they say it that way, if you get yourself dairy products and other stuff out of the container, out of the consumer cycle and capitalism, there is also an anarchistic element added [...] you save some money, but it is no alternative to capitalisms.

These interview quotes refer to the non-exclusivity of vegans to be *freegans* or reversed not all *freegans* are exclusively vegans, boundaries become blurred and flexible if 'free' animal products, which are consumed are regarded as 'freegan'. The arguments for a freegan consumption including dairy products like yogurt, cheese,

pudding or pastries and cakes are justified as follows by active dumpster divers like Ulf (Field notes, 13.10.2009, Vienna):

[...] es kommt auf den Unterschied zwischen bewusst gekauften und konsumierten Lebensmittel wie Kuchen, den man sieht und auf den man Lust hat und die dafür gequälten Tiere in Kauf nimmt oder aus dem Kontext und Prozess genommenen gedumpsterten Kuchen, der nicht unter diesem Vorwand gekauft wurde, aber man sich dennoch dessen Herkunft bewusst ist und diesen bewusst konsumiert (Records of conversations, 13.10.2009, Vienna).

[...] there is a difference between consciously bought and consumed cake, if you see it and feel like eating it and accept the cruelty against animals that has taken place for its production or if you consciously eat a dumpster dived cake that was not bought under this pretext and is taken out of this context and process of capitalism, but still being aware of its origin.

It is argued that there is a difference between the consumption of food motivated by pleasure and taken place under the premises of capitalism or being aware of its origin, but taken out of the context of western consumer behaviour by the practice of dumpster diving. Another example derived from an online article (Reinecke, 2007) is reporting that its informant is actually living vegan, but with products from the container he makes an exception, calling it container-vegan. Container vegans are according to him allowed to eat everything including animal products, because no active shopping creates no demand of milk and cheese. One of my vegan informants responded in a contrary way:

Für mich gibt keine ethische Legitimation Tiere zu konsumieren, weil selbst wenn ich es aus der Mülltonne esse und sie aus dem kapitalistischen Normalprozess rausziehe, was sie ja nicht sind, weil Müll definitiv Teil des System ist [...] (Interview Clemens P., 12.10.2009, Vienna)

In my opinion there is no ethical legitimating to consume animals, even if I eat it out of a container and remove it out of the normal capitalistic process, but it isn't, because waste is definitely part of the system [...]

4.3.2 The International Movement of Freeganism

The freegan movement is not only present in Austria, but internationally and became more visible in countries like Sweden, Brazil, South Korea, Estonia and England in the last years. Originally it dates back to the mid 1990's and grew out of anti-globalization and environmental movements and groups like 'Food not Bombs' in urban America explains Steven Kurutz in his article 'Not Buying It' (2007, online).

The website called freegan.info (2011, online) is operated by a New Yorker group to inform regularly about upcoming events, trips and tips for the growing subculture of anti-consumerists, it serves as guide to negotiate life and make a home according to their values. For Kurutz 'freegans are scavengers of the developed world', who live off consumer waste in an effort to minimize their support of corporations, their impact on the planet 'and to distance themselves from what they call an out-of-control consumerism'. They forage through supermarket container trash to eat slightly bruised or just expired goods and negotiate 'gifts' of surplus food from stores or restaurants.

Their lifestyle includes not only freegan food as they dress in cast off clothes and furnish their home with items found on the street, because according to Adam Weissman, the founder and de facto spokesman of freegan.info, if a person chooses to live an ethical lifestyle is not enough to be vegan, you need to absent yourself from capitalism explains. Websites like freecycle.org (2010, online) serve as platforms for free and unwanted items or so-called freemeets or flea markets without money being changed. The author of the article mentions that Weissman is not employed and living with his parents, which makes it easier for him to dedicate his life to this lifestyle. New York City is famous as the financial capital of the world's richest country, but it has also emerged as the 'hub of freegan activity' with the help of its founder, states Kurutz. The quantity and quality of New York trash (245 million tons of municipal solid waste in 2005) is mainly responsible for the success of the movement. According to Bob Torres (2005), a sociology professor the increasing visibility and popularity of freegan groups is in part a result of growing frustrations with mainstream environmentalism, but they are also faced with critiques as some people call them hypocritical, based on the contradiction that it is not possible to avoid the system completely. Freegans do also require natural resources or new manufactured products, but although they rail against the capitalist system they are making at same

time use off it by living of its waste. There is a conscious recognition that you can never live perfectly, but freegans try to reduce the impact through serious commitment and avoidance of the system, as they believe 'that the production and transport of every product contributes to economic and social injustice' (Kurutz 2007).

Kurutz' article (2007, online) depicts individual members of the movement, many of them who are young and politically left, but there are also older freegans, who have jobs and appear to lead middle-class lives, until they drop out of the capitalist system for ecological reasons. Freegan lifestyle is requiring a lot of time that is spent for the most part on dumpster diving trips at night and other work promoting or supporting the movement. The website freegan.info organizes a variety of events like trash tours as well as feasts for a group of people to gather around the city, share food and talk about politics. Many participants are also attracted for the first time and others actively participate in the communal cooking activities at the weekly feasts at some basement apartments (Kurutz, 2007, online). In 'The Freegan Establishment' by Jake Halpern (2010, online) the focus is on another aspect of the movement, the practice of squatting. The author accompanies a young freegan man, whose ideology he describes as mix of various ideologies, 'drawing on elements of communism, radical environmentalism, a zealous do-it-yourself work ethic and an old-fashioned frugality'. For Halpern (2010, online), 'freegans are not revolutionaries, but rather they aim to challenge the status quo by their lifestyle choices'. Their main goal is to live on the waste of others without the use of money, which also includes living space/properties of no value as one informant stressed 'that people even throw away houses'.

Fruitful grounds for squatting activities are abandoned structures in (American) cities like Buffalo, where a group of freegans successfully squatted a house on the West Side. Halpern (2010, online) describes the place as a turn-of-the-century mansion consisting of six fireplaces, a dining room, library, several enormous bedrooms, servant's quarters, a swimming pool and being in desperate need for repair, but it has electricity, running water and even a phone line; the outside of the building is in no better state and littered with all kinds of waste. In the past this area of Buffalo was home to working-class Italian Americans, but in recent years it became a popular side for immigrants from Burma, Somalia and Sudan.

The freegan mansion is populated by residents, who live there all year around, and visited in summers by backpackers from Europe or travelling musicians. Long-term residents are expected to help repair the place. Life is centred on a do it yourself mentality including activities like dumpster diving, gardening and working on the house. The majority of the people seem to have middle-class backgrounds, according to Halpern (2010, online), who doesn't regard freeganism as a recent phenomenon, but dates its premises back to Gerrard Winstanley, an English cloth seller in the 17th century. When the man's business failed he resettled on the countryside and decided to form a community without money. The group took over some uncultivated public lands and became known as the 'Digger colony'. It did not last long, but the writings of Winstanley inspired a group of radicals in the 1960's. They called themselves the Diggers and started to open free stores, distribute free food, set up free housing in squats, offered free medical care and organized free concerts around San Francisco. Their philosophy again influenced Keith McHenry (2000), the founder of Food not Bombs, who travelled through America in his 20's, dumpster dived, and crashed with artists and hippies. When McHenry was working at an organic-store and saw the amounts of edibles being thrown away, he asked his boss to distribute its produce to shelters, churches and soup kitchens. Today, Food not Bombs has about thousand chapters around the world, spreading the ethos of freeganism (Halpern 2010). *Food not Bombs*⁴¹ (2000) by the social activists C.T: Lawrence Butler and Keith McHenry is concerned with the fact that the world produces enough food for everyone, if distributed equally and that in America far more edible food is thrown away (about 46 billion pounds a year) than is needed to feed the hungry (estimated 4 billion pounds per year). According to the authors three key elements must be combined to recover food to feed the people⁴²:

First, the food must be collected. Second, it must be prepared in form appropriate consumption. Third, the food must be made easily accessible to those who are hungry (Butler and McHenry 2000:2).

⁴¹ Butler and Henry (2000:5) state that the movement got its name due to a spray painting slogan they used on public buildings and sidewalks to protest against nuclear power and militarism saying 'Money for food not for bombs.'

⁴² The demographics of 'The Hungry' have changed over the last decade and of 30 million people in the U.S. that are hungry on a regular basis 12.9 are million children, 12.9 million living below the poverty line, more likely to be employed and female, but less likely to overcome poverty (Butler and McHenry 2000:2)

For both the main reason that this is not already happening are hierarchical economies, maintaining an underclass that is more vulnerable to domination and violence. Butler and McHenry (2000) also promote vegetarianism along with local and organic farming practices as a way to decentralize means of food production, support smaller farms and create democratic control over the quality of food and the stewardship of land. According to them a meat-based diet demands huge agribusinesses, depending on chemical fertilizers and pesticides, exploiting natural resources and destroying the environment. They claim that a vegetarian diet is better for the environment and healthier for humans, the food prepared for Food not Bombs is therefore free of animal products like meat, dairy, eggs. In addition to vegetarianism the movement is also promoting a world without bombs. They participate in the long-term struggle against militarism by providing food for people at demonstrations and events or connecting to other progressive movements (ibid.).

To take on personal responsibility and provide basic needs as a way to support the movement is seen as way of self-empowerment. The work on *Food not Bombs* provides information for the organization of a local group as more and more people start the adventure in other U.S. cities and around the world. Practical advices include organizational aspects like *The Office*, *Decision-Making*, *Outreach*, *Food Collection*, *Food Distribution*, *The Kitchen*, *Food Preparation* and general *Food Logistics* like Equipment, Shopping and Food Handling and Storage (Butler and McHenry 2000:11p).

Food collection and distribution is 'the backbone of the Food Not Bombs operation' describe Butler and McHenry (2000:14). The process of collecting contacts in the food industry for example organic produce warehouses, bakeries and natural food stores is as important as the availability of drivers and vehicles to guarantee reliability to the businesses, who would otherwise hesitate to agree on this way of waste removal⁴³. After establishing a functioning network of collection and distribution they use some of the recovered food for preparing hot meals and promoting the political message of Food not Bombs at public places with kitchen and cooking equipment available in community centres or places of worship. It is a great challenge to prepare food at low cost for a large number of people, requiring a proper amount of food, the necessary equipment, a suitable kitchen and a cooking team,

⁴³ The authors stress that due to the unlimited quantity of discarded food to be selective and use food from the highest quality and favour organic over commercial produce (Butler and McHenry 2000:16).

who should meet a few hours before the scheduled meal time as the most time-consuming job is to wash and cut the vegetables. Food logistic sometimes requires the necessity to do some shopping, but more importantly to look at several health and safety issues related to food handling and storage.

This way of serving the poor by public or people's kitchens is not a new invention, but was also applied by social institutions in the past. What served as a model for the field kitchens of Food not Bombs and other communal kitchens of the freegan movements was first known as soup or people's kitchens.

4.4 The Public Kitchen

For the most part public kitchens like soup houses, food banks or people's kitchens address issues like food insecurity and emerged in response to hunger and poverty. Count Rumford's idea of a savoury soup and meal was taken up by the German social activist of Lina Morgenstern in 1866 (Kruppa 2008) and distributed all over Europe. Food banks and soup kitchens still play an important role for people in need in Europe as well as North America despite our rate of food surplus. Communal cooking activities that are managed by women as part of a social and political movement outside of Europe are the *comedores populares* in South America. National food insecurity led to the establishment of thousands of people's kitchen in Peru to feed more than three million people today (Neumayer 2009).

4.4.1 From Soup Kitchen to People's Kitchen and Food Banks

In *Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon* (1908) the origin of *Volksküche*, the German expression of people's kitchen is dated back to the end of the 18th century, based on the idea of Count Rumford and described as a welfare service for poor and unmated people in times of hunger and scarcity. The first major establishment on the basis of self-preservation was build 1849 in Leipzig (Germany), followed by Dresden 1851, Berlin 1866, Prague (Czech Republic), Brussels (Belgium) 1868 and Vienna (Austria) 1873. A lot of the kitchens were managed and founded by women's houses.

Lina Morgenstern⁴⁴, a social activist and feminist was among the first to use the notion of *Volksküche*. In the mid-19th century she established public food pantries for people in need within the city of Berlin. Before then, in the 18th century this practice was better known as *Suppenküchen* or soup kitchens that had their genesis in the work of Count Rumford at 1790. His philosophy of people's kitchen or food banks was also observed by Karl Marx, who discounted Rumford's idea of cheap meals provided as mere philanthropy without the intention to change the actual food situation (Lemke 2007:108). Count Rumford, born Benjamin Thomson in Massachusetts, immigrated to Europe and was commissioned by Leopold Bavaria to build an efficient and disciplined Bavarian Army. He sought to create a low-cost, nutritionally sound diet for the military and found the cheapest most savoury, and nourishing food was a soup composed of pearl barley, peas, potatoes, cuttings of fine wheaten bread, vinegar, salt and water in certain proportions (McGrath 2003:301-302). This idea was taken up by Lina Morgenstern to provide the people of Berlin with rich, substantial and tasty meals including enough potatoes, vegetable and meat that should be offered at cost price so that it was affordable for those in need. She was not only inspired by Rumford's soup, but also by a German manufacturer, who was able to serve savoury, but cheap meals for his 2000 employees (Kruppa 2008:31-32).

In the meantime Rumford's idea became famous all over the world and soon soup houses or soup kitchens were established throughout Europe, England and the United States to feed the poor. The Humane Society of New York City founded one of the earliest soup kitchens in the United States in 1802. Soup kitchens lost their popularity by the 1820s as civic leaders and charity reformers began to believe that it encouraged pauperism by destroying self-reliance. Only a small number of soup kitchens continued and it was not until the Great Depression that there was resurgence in public food pantries in America. Along with breadlines, soup kitchens became a daily part of life for millions during the 1930s. Government income support and food assistance programs improved the situation, but in the early 1980's numerous reports of increased hunger surfaced and soup kitchens once again

⁴⁴ In his essay, Reinhold Kruppa (2008) describes the life and social engagement of Lina Morgenstern and how she recalls her idea of *Volksküche* on Rumford's soup. The people's kitchen addressed the war-related scarcity and high food prices. She solicited for public support, donations and localities amongst different sponsors to establish a food pantry for people in need to be known as '*Verein der Berliner Volksküchen von 1866*'.

opened in large numbers (McGrath 2003:302). In the 1980's there were also many charitable food assistance programs established by community groups in Canada known as 'food banks' for people who needed help due to the economic recession. Valerie Tarasuk and Joan M. Eakin (2005) state that although the economy improved in the following years the demand for food assistance grew and is present at an all time high. In their ethnographic study of food bank work in southern Ontario, they examine how the structure and function of food assistance facilitate the distribution of food surplus not used in the retail system. Their findings indicate that the handling of industry donations of unsaleable products is a labour-intensive activity, made possible by the unpaid labour of volunteers, the neediness of food-bank clients and their lack of rights in this system. There is a win-win situation as the salvaging of edible food stuff from the industry helps to feed the hungry, reduces food waste that would be otherwise deposited in landfill sites, sparing corporations costs and landfill tipping fees, and helping the food-industry promoting the image of good citizenship. The food assistance programs can also be regarded as secondary food system responding to the problem of hunger and food security. It functions outside of the rules of a competitive food retail system and its aesthetic values (Tarasuk and Eakin 2005).

4.4.2 People's Kitchens as Places of Social Innovation and Change

The discussion continues with further examples on alternative ways of cooking and eating that challenge the traditional way of food consumption, people's kitchen and community kitchens as part of social innovation and a new 'Counter-Cuisine'⁴⁵.

But first let us have a more detailed look on the social institution of people's kitchen. To guarantee the economic viability of the people's kitchen, Lina Morgenstern encouraged other women, to work and help with the administration on a voluntary basis. She was also concerned about her future clients as they should not be treated as beggars, but enabled to pay for the food. This organization exceeded traditional social welfare and only people, who could not afford anything, were to be alimented by donations. So on July 9, 1866 the first kitchen was opened and the food

⁴⁵Lemke (2007:119) is referring to Warren Belasco, who describes the Counter-Cuisine in *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (2006) as a practice of the 1960's counterculture and a rejection of mass produced food to advocate improvisation, craftsmanship, regional and ethnic variety in cooking and organic food.

given out on the basis of luncheon vouchers that were bought separately. The people's kitchen was a great success and soon craftsmen, civil servants, soldiers, housemaids, students, women from shops, offices and factories, teachers and families with children came for a meal. Within two years ten more kitchen were established in Berlin with an average of 500 lunchers and a team of four to 12 staff members. The kitchens were strictly organized and supervised by voluntary workers, mostly women and men from the upper class, given that they had the right qualification, which was very important for Lina Morgenstern: A sense of order, general skills, basic knowledge and practical understanding, integrity, diligence, power and endurance. She managed the whole organization down to the last detail (Kruppa 2008).

At the turn of the century some women from Missouri in the United States invented another social innovative way of cooking and eating – community kitchens. Dolores Hayden reports in *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1995) about this neighbourhood cooperation and how the project of community kitchens started in Carthage, Missouri in 1907 by a local women's group. They responded to the complaints of an impatient husband and ex-senator about his wife and how much time she spends on cooking. A large white clapboard house was rented, arranged with tablecloth and silverware from the women's homes and a manager, two cooks and waitresses were hired to prepare and serve three meals per day for \$ 3.00 per adult and week. The community kitchen was big enough for sixty people of all the member families and after a month of successful operation, a reading room was furnished to make a comfortable indoor sitting area. The cooperative Kitchen flourished for over four years and became very popular for neighbourly dinners, sociable birthday celebrations and dances for teenage children. When a long drought threatened the town's prosperity and caused not only a rise in food prices, but higher weekly subscriptions for the member families, it resulted in a dropout of members, who chose to cook at home instead (Hayden 1995).

Hayden (1995:208fp) states that many pragmatic middle-class women, housewives and a few professional cooks organized various types of community kitchens to provide food for their families in small towns, suburban communities and big cities. They established cooperative and commercial ventures such as neighbourhood dining clubs and food delivery services. Many of these experiments

flourished between 1884 and 1925. The neighbourhood dining clubs combined cooperative purchasing of food with collective preparation and dining; they emphasized social innovation. Every club required some labour from their female members, and many required male members' participation as well, so the tasks might be shared between members and workers, but they never sat down at the same table. Many dining clubs had rules that suggested a friendly common sense to sustain such a neighbourly endeavour. It was emphasised to create an atmosphere of home and remember the voluntary character of the association, whose members give their time and energy to work without any recompense, but for the profit and successful working of the club; it was necessary to be reasonable and economic in requirements to make the income equal to the expenditure. A plain, well balanced meal for the pleasure and profit of each member.

Social movements and political interactions to address the problem of food insecurity were observed in the 1970 in Latin America. In the slums and immigrant neighbourhoods of Lima, the capital of Peru, women and mothers founded people's kitchens and other institutions to secure their families livelihood (Dabringer 2009:24). Within the years the social institution of people's kitchen became successfully established in the whole country of Peru. For 40 years it has been contributing to the distribution of food, welfare services, empowerment of women, and as a tool to fight poverty in the urban slums of Peru. In Lima there are approximately half a million people alimented by a people's kitchen and in the whole country there are about 10.000 kitchens providing food for three million Peruvians. The people's kitchen or Spanish *comedores populares*, emerged during a food crisis in the 1970's. As Peru is largely dependent on imports of food products, some women joined to commonly purchase and cook food to save money. Today these *comedores populares* are more than kitchens, but a regional and national organization to secure social welfare, promoting health and alimentation. They also function as a prevention of violence and address other themes (Neumayer 2009:10-11).

What started as a practice of counterculture in the 1960's was the beginning of an active 'Counter-Cuisine' like *Volxküchen*, counter kitchens or field kitchens. For Harald Lemke (2007) the genealogy of counter kitchens is not complete without Frances Lappé's (1971) philosophy on food and her efforts for a politically correct kitchen. As a 'Social Change and Democracy' activist and founder of the 'Institute for

Food and Development' and 'Small Planet Institute', she was among the first to comment on the problems of world hunger as the result of unequal distribution in an injustice world and interrelates it to the preceding destruction of the environment and industrial livestock farming. In her popular book *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971) Lappé advocates an environmentally and animal conscious way of food consumption, namely a vegetarian diet in order to save the future of the planet. In the following years she continued her work as a social activist and changed her initial view and political ethics based on ascetic ideals and abdication or a 'raw vegetable diet' to a culinary and ethical practice of hedonism and pleasure or an 'aesthetic art of food'.

Another example of contemporary counter kitchens is the project 'growth' of Alexander Lebe, a German architect and urban development activist and his field kitchen in Leipzig. He planted borecole and organic vegetables in the space between buildings to revive Leipzig as a 'growing' city and as a response to the social problem of shrinking cities. Residents were invited to corporate harvesting, cooking, eating and celebrating to reflect on topics like economizing, working, self-sufficiency, social and development alteration (Lemke 2007:10).

According to Lemke in *Die Kunst des Essens* (2007) or 'The Art of Eating' (2007:108) the cultural background of *Volxküche* (communal kitchen) or abbreviated *Vokü* is derived from the term *Volksküche* (people's kitchen). This way of cooking in groups that takes place in collective and self-governed venues of the political left like pubs, info shops, youth centres, autonomic centres, squatted buildings, trailer parks and clubs is regarded as a daily practice of resistance to act against capitalism and for a change of society. According to their lifestyle and philosophy the food is prepared to vegetarian and vegan meals. It is handed out for free or at cost price and consumed by hungry people living in poverty or difficult environments, people with less money and like minded people from their own scene within the political left. The slight alienation of the German notion from *Volksküche* to *Volxküche* is due to an anti-nationalistic and anti-racist self-conception within the autonomic scene, while referring at the same time to its socio-historical background.

4.4.3 Communal Kitchens in Vienna

The practice of communal kitchens takes place at different locations in Vienna. In the course of the fieldwork informal conversations reveal that the students' pub and club called *TÜWI* was among the initiators of the practice of communal kitchens in Vienna. The entry about *Volxküche* on their website



Figure 2: Online Entry about *Volxküche* (Tüwi 2011)

(TÜWI – Verein für Kommunikation, Interaktion und Integration, online) dates back to 6th of March 2006, about the same time when the activity of communal kitchen became part of Vienna's subversive food culture (Field notes, 15.09.2009, Vienna). In Figure 2 *Volxküche* is defined as political action to bring some absurdities of everyday life like the wasting of food back into everyone's conscience. It is a critique of capitalism and its handling with food and the misery of people's life. Tons of goods are thrown away every day and the activists' basic approach is to use these goods as a source for free food and offer a vegan communal kitchen. The reference to veganism is shown in the picture of '*Vegane Volxküche*' (vegan communal kitchen) right next to the posting.

Uoqbon is another club organizing communal cooking activities. This communal kitchen is organized every three weeks and takes place since 2008 (Field notes, 20.09.2009, Vienna). The information about the practice of communal kitchen on the website of the union (uqbon – Verein für Kunst, Kultur, informelle Bildung, ökologisch nachhaltige Projekte, online) refers to the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia as source, where it is described as a regular practice of collective cooking inside the left-wing-alternative society once or twice a week with food offered at cost price or less. The term *Volxküche* (communal kitchen) is derived from the older expression of *Volksküche* (soup kitchen) and takes place mostly at collective and autonomic premises. In general the dishes are at least vegetarian or exclusively vegan and the food is also sometimes dumpster dived. The communal kitchen is considered to be the product of the squatting activities in the 1980's and the spelling of *Volxküche* is explained as anti-nationalistic position against the notion and social construction of

Volk (folk, nation), but also as idiosyncratic expression of liberal and autonomic groups according to the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia.

Other public spaces like *The Vienna Bikekitchen* (The Vienna Bikekitchen, online), a non-profit organization offering workshops for cyclists on ridership and bicycle mechanics as well as encouraging local cycling, do also host events that sometimes include communal kitchens (Figure 5). The club identifies with non-hierarchical and open collective principles and other ideologies like anti capitalism, anti-sexism and anti-racism. Figure 3 shows a flyer for their street festival in September 2009 announcing amongst other things a *Vokü*.



Figure 3: Vienna Bike--kitchen (Flyer 2009)

The annual student guide of the 'Austrians Students Union' - *Österreichische Hochschülerschaft* (ÖH) is another useful source to find out about communal kitchens in Vienna and lists famous places of communal activities (Gitschtaler and Naci 2009) among them clubs like *Uoqbon* or *Tüwi*, the *Campus Vokü*, which takes place very second Thursday of a month on the University campus outside of the building of human sciences or the *Wagenplatz Vokü*, organized every Monday in *Simmering*, a district located in the outskirts of Vienna including a carriage bar and open space café. *Wagenplatz Wien*, Vienna's open space for carriages is not a trailer park in the economical sense, but can be understood as an attempt for an alternative lifestyle and was established in 2007. These places are often only tolerated by the landowners and public authorities and can be removed any time as in the case of *Wagenplatz Wien*, where the community had to leave their leasehold to live temporary on a piece of land in the 11th district, owned by the City of Vienna (Traxler 2007). In the meantime there are two 'trailer parks' in the city that are still in danger to be removed by public authorities referring to numerous legal conflicts with Vienna's City (*Wagenplatz Wien*, online).

Today, many communal kitchens use the practice of dumpster diving as their main tool for food provisioning, but in the past they also tried to recover food surplus directly from food producers and retailers (Field notes, 2009) the same way 'Food not Bombs' activists organize food donations to serve them at public kitchens in the field (Butler and McHenry 2000). The work of food banks in Canada functions in a similar

way to respond to their clients' needs and the problem of food insecurity by salvaging unsalable food that has been donated by food producers, processors and retailers (Tarasuk and Eakin 2003). People's kitchen in Europe and America served as a way to respond to economic crises, increasing food prices and food insecurity by commonly buying and preparing hot meals and sell them at cost price (Kruppa 2008, McGrath 2003). People's kitchen not only contributed to social welfare, but challenged traditional ways of cooking and eating inside the home, to transform the private sphere of kitchen into a public kitchen - just like community and communal kitchens- as part of social innovation and change.

4.5 Case Study: A Club's Communal Kitchen

As the informal provisioning and cooking of freegan food is organized on a weekly basis within the premises of a Viennese open club and space (Field notes 2009, Vienna), members of the communal kitchen are simultaneously regarded as members of the club, distinguished between more active or occasional participants. Communal cooking and eating activities like public kitchens, barbecues or picnics are important aspects of vegan as well as freegan identities and lifestyles. Individuals share their free time and ideals with like-minded people. Let me first introduce the club's ideology to understand its member's ideals and motivations, and then I will turn to stories and backgrounds of the communal kitchen, its base (Gudeman 2001) – the kitchen as the club's resource to produce vegan meals and to provide a structure to express the freegan identities and their shared interests and values.

4.5.1 The Club's Ideology

The members describe the club's main ideology 'as a free space without capitalistic or profit-oriented thinking, but identifying with liberal and anarchistic principles to create an opportunity to use these premises for workshops, reading rooms, free movie nights, parties, communal kitchens, lectures and other events'⁴⁶ (Records of conversations, 15.09.2010, Vienna).

⁴⁶ Original German Quote: *Es ist ein Freiraum ohne kapitalistisches und Profit-orientiertes Denken, wo man sich mit libertären sowie anarchistischen Prinzipien identifiziert um die Möglichkeit zu haben die*

I am also told that there is no price policy as well, which means that everyone can pay for food or a drink as much as they think is appropriate. In particular the venue is an attempt to create a space without hierarchies, sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia or other means of suppression. As the club as open space and venue serves as an office to organize the event of communal kitchen and dumpster diving the decision-making process is dependent on its social structure, which is defined for the most part as non-hierarchical and centred upon consensus-making (Field notes, 15.09.2010, Vienna). Monthly meetings, called plenums are organized to discuss important issues concerning the communal activities like cooking and dumpster diving.

4.5.1 Stories and Backgrounds

2006, is the year when the practice of communal kitchen became more prominent as part of Vienna's alternative food culture. Informal conversations with Johannes reveal that:

[...] also die Vöku begann im Frühling 2006 oder zumindest seit Sommer oder Herbst 2006 und es gibt noch andere Orte wo Vokü's organisiert werden, z.B. im EKH, das ist ein Treffpunkt für Punks und Anarchisten jeweils donnerstags, aber eher für Bands die auftreten und manchmal fällt dann auch was für die Besucher ab. Vorreiter der Vokü war das TÜWI, jedoch mittlerweile veranstalten auch andere Vereine wöchentlich bis monatlich Vokü's (Records of conversations, 15.09.2009, Vienna).

[...] the communal started in spring or at least summer or fall 2006 and there are other venues that are organizing communal kitchens like the *EKH*, a meeting place for Punks and Anarchists at Thursdays, but rather for bands who are performing and sometimes there is a leftover for the audience. Inventor of the *Vokü* was the *TÜWI*, but in the meanwhile *Vokü*'s are also organized by other unions from weekly to monthly intervals.

Johannes mentions the *Tüwi*, which is known as a pub or social centre for and from students in the area of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna. Its philosophy is based on the production and supply of organic and regional food. Activities of this club include among festivals, radio and *Großstadtgemüse*

Räumlichkeiten für Workshops, Lesekreise, gratis Filmabende, Partys, Volxküchen, Vorträge und andere Veranstaltungen zu nutzen.

(vegetable in big cities) also political ones – communal to make a statement against the wasting of food in our society and criticize the fact that tons of food are thrown away every day, for reasons like inefficiency, greed of gain or convenience. The second place, Johannes refers to is a venue called EKH, (*Ernst-Kirchschläger-Haus*) a squatted building and anti-fascist centre for international and Austrian activists since June 1990. The squatters aim is to host migrants, refugees, community activities and political groups. It was named after Ernst Kirchschläger, a member of the anti-fascist resistance and who was killed during a demonstration in 1965 (ErnstKirchschlägerHaus, online).

Communal kitchen activists also highlight the preparation of vegan food that is offered for free donations. The same principles also determine the kitchen observed in the field. One important technology applied is the practice of dumpster diving. Their goal is to supply vegan food, at best for free according to its philosophy and principles. During a conversation with an informant I am given details about its organizational history. Before the kitchen's main source of food was organized by the activity of dumpster diving, the active members of the cooking group obtained free food from the *Großgrünmarkt* – a central market for vegetable, fruit and flowers⁴⁷. The members of the cooking group had to organize a car and someone who would have time on Thursday mornings to get there and pick up all the vegetables:

Vor ungefähr einem Jahr und drei Monaten wurde noch nicht gedumpstert, sondern die aktiven Mitglieder wie Herbert haben noch am Großgrünmarkt jeweils am Dienstagvormittag um Essensreste angefragt und dann musste jemand rüber mit dem Auto um das Gemüse abzuholen. Normalerweise haben wir kiloweise Gemüse gehabt, viel mehr als heutzutage beim Dumpstern (Records of conversations, 13.10.2009, Vienna).

About a year and three month ago we did not seek out for containers yet, but the active members like Herbert used to ask for leftovers at the *Großgrünmarkt* on Tuesday mornings and someone had to drive over in the morning to pick up the vegetables. Normally we got tons of vegetables – a lot more than we find in the tons these days.

⁴⁷ The central market lies in the southern outskirts of Vienna, in Inzersdorf (Magistrat der Stadt Wien, online).

Gerhard, another conversational partner and active participant of the *Vokü* reveals that it is important to get to know people, whom one could ask for some leftovers. He also adds that the smaller merchants are more generous to give some food away than bigger salespeople:

[...] in den goldenen Zeiten wo Kisten an Gemüse den ganzen Eingangsbereich gefüllt haben, damals hättest du da sein müssen, vom Großgrünmarkt in Inzersdorf, wo das Gemüse versteigert und von Lieferanten aus ganz Europa angeboten und an den Groß- und Einzelhandel weiterverkauft wird. Aber am Ende bleibt immer voll viel über. Man muss halt jemanden kennen...wie der kleine Türke, der immer was abgab, jedoch die größeren Händler nie (Records of conversations, 20.10.2010, Vienna).

[...] back then you should have been here, in the good old times, when the whole entrance area was stuffed with tons of fresh vegetable from the *Großgrünmarkt* in *Inzersdorf*, where the wholesale trade and distributors meet and sell the vegetable by auction. There are always a lot of left-overs and you have to know people...like the small Turk who always gave something away, but not the bigger retailers.

The knowledge of alternative sources to food stores and supermarkets provided the communal kitchen with its basic ingredient - free food. Social contacts and acquaintances played an important role to get access to alternative resources.

Means of food supply changed in the course of a turnover of active members, more precisely 'when Ulf and Janina became more active und had taken over more responsibilities the practice of dumpster diving started to play a major role'⁴⁸. Since spring 2008 the key source for free food are numerous containers of Austrian food store chains and discounter shops. Vienna's city administration is responsible for the waste management⁴⁹ including containers. New members of the cooking group began to organize and invent the practice of dumpster diving as an integral part of the *Vokü*.

⁴⁸ Original German Quote: *Dann als Ulf und Janine aktiv geworden sind und mehr Verantwortung übernommen haben* (Records of conversations, 13.10.2010, Vienna).

⁴⁹ *Abfallwirtschaft, Straßenreinigung und Fuhrpark, Magistratsabteilung 48* (Magistrat der Stadt Wien, online).

4.5.2 'The Kitchen'

The main cooking activity is organized in the informal kitchen of the club, which is equipped with sufficient cooking utensils and consist of two separate working places. The entrance leads directly into the basement vault and serves as an informal storage area. Figure 4 captures a view onto the downstairs and a range of food placed on the left hand site. It shows satsuma's, bananas, rolls, salad and other vegetables. Leftovers like this normally come from previous dumpster diving tours and were not used for the cooking. Everyone is free to take something with them at the end of the day.



Figure 4: Entrance of the club (© Eberhard 2009)

After



Figure 5: Cooking Area (© Eberhard 2009)

15.09.2009, Vienna).

entering into the basement there is one part of the 'kitchen' - the cooking area. It is made up of a table and two big gas cookers. Patters and a signboard with the symbol of Veganism – a sunflower growing out the first letter of the word vegan, are on the wall (Figure 5). Another desk, which is placed right to the stairs, is used as a depot for salad and other side dishes. The preparation of food, cooking and eating takes place in the front premises of the venue. There is a bar right next to the cooking area and vis-a-vis two more tables. –The picture on the right (Figure 6) shows how the tables look like while in use as a working surface (Field notes,



Figure 6: Working surface (© Eberhard 2009)

During the activity of a *Vokü* the front premises are used in different ways: as a workplace, meeting and dining area. The food is prepared by the helping hands of active participants. The vegetable is cleaned, cut and put into big plastic bowls and second hand boxes. The backroom of the club can be described as the second part of the 'kitchen' featuring a fridge, wooden shelves, a dishwasher and a

big sink. The area is mainly in use as a storage room for dishes, cutlery, pots, herbs and food as well as after the cooking session for cleaning purposes (Field notes, 13.09.2009).

4.5.3 Cooking of Vegan Meals

In the case of the communal kitchen in observance the active members usually started 3-4 hours before the meal was ready to be served.

The meals prepared at a communal kitchen vary to a certain extent, depending on the food available. Ulf, who is a committed cook during most of the *Vokü*'s, cares for a certain degree of variety. On the first communal kitchen after the summer break he wants 'the people to eat something proper and not always the same pulpy vegetable stew'⁵⁰ There is a vegan meal planer (Figure 7) with vegan cooking suggestions and recipes for traditional everyday



Figure 7: Vegan menu plan (© Eberhard 2009)

meals like vegan pizza, spaghetti, sweet noodles, pancakes, goulash, lentil soup, chilli con tofu and strudel hanging in one of the backrooms of the basement. Depending on the food that is dumpster dived on Sunday evenings there is mostly a

⁵⁰ Original German Quote: *Die Leute sollen was G'scheites zum Essen bekommen und nicht immer den selben 'pampigen' Eintopf* (Records of conversations, 15.09.2009).

variety of vegetable available. Spices like salt, pepper, oil or vinegar have to be bought additionally, the same goes for side dishes like rice. The expenses of a communal kitchen are covered with donations from the quests. There is not really a separate cash box for the communal kitchen (Field notes, 22.10.2009).

When newcomers arrive there is no real introduction or instruction for them, but they have to get active themselves or ask where to find certain cooking utensils and then start with their contribution in form of work and discussions like a young couple, most likely students (Field notes, 22.09.2009, Vienna). A group of Austrian and Romanian Punks, who normally live on the street with their dogs, are frequent guests of the communal kitchen (Field notes 15.09.2009. Vienna) and once also participate in the cooking. The involvement of some individuals of their group starts, after they try to inform themselves about what to do or to get instructions from someone else, but following anarchistic, liberal and autonomic principles active members rarely give a directive, but want the people to get active themselves, finding out and deciding on their own how to contribute (Field notes, 13.10.2009, Vienna).

The difference between the communal kitchen nowadays and two years ago was the attempt to organize the communal kitchen in a more hieratic way and to broaden the responsibilities of each member, according to Johannes 'one would have liked to commit the people, who came to cut the vegetable to stay till the end for the washing up as well, talking of a working time of 7 to 8 hours'⁵¹ (Field notes, 13.10.2009).

During a communal kitchen in October following scene and discussion about veganism is observed: Two girls wait in line in front of the pots to serve themselves something to eat, when they have a look at all the pastries and bread on an extra table, one girl remarks on some chocolate donuts and asks why everything isn't vegan. Her female friend answers that the food is obviously dumpster dived, so it is reasonable that there is something vegetarian (Field notes, 6.10.2009, Vienna).

⁵¹ Original German Quote: *Man wollte die Leute, die zum Gemüse schneiden kamen auch für den Abwasch am Ende bewegen, was sich über einen, 7 bzw. 8 Stundendienst hinziehen konnte.*

4.5.4 Communal Kitchen Members (and Active Dumpster Divers)

The framework for the club's ideology is interconnected with the member's identities and lifestyles. The aim of this part is to introduce some members of the club and casual participants who play a crucial role in the activity of dumpster diving and the communal kitchen. In interacting with me they revealed personal stories, experiences and backgrounds. Each member with their unique mixture of ideas and actions contributes to the communal activity of dumpster diving and cooking.

Individuals, who are organizing and participating in the activity of the communal kitchen and dumpster diving are an integral part of these events. In the case of the communal kitchen three participating groups can be distinguished: 1) active members⁵² who participate in the organization and implementation of a communal kitchen and 2) regular guests, who take part in the communal eating activities and a third category that is something in between like 3) occasional or casual guests and/or participants. Their acts, ideas and ideologies form a special way of consuming food; they are complex, interconnected and overlapping.

4.5.4.1 Active Members

Ulf – 20, student, *freegan*, *Vöku*-member and active dumpster diver

His engagement as an active member of the communal kitchen began in spring 2006, also introducing the practice of dumpster diving as an integral part and material resource of the common vegan cooking activity (Field notes, 13.10.2009, Vienna). After one semester as a student of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, he started Cultural and Social Anthropology in the academic year of 2009/10. He had his first dumpster diving experience after he finished school and went on a senior trip with some of his classmates. When Ulf moved to Vienna to start college, he first came into contact with animal rights, veganism and anarchism (Field notes, 22.09.2009, Vienna).

According to Ulf and other members the reason for the practice of dumpster diving as integral part of the communal kitchen is 'to boycott the capitalistic

⁵² During my participant observation I identified seven people being actively involved in the practice of dumpster diving and communal kitchens, with two to three active female members in comparison with four to five active male participants (Field notes, 2009, Vienna).

consumption of food and express antipathy against certain food store chains and the system of capitalism⁵³ (Records of conversations, 20.10.2010). Ulf explains 'that there is no need to enter into a supermarket and go shopping for food'⁵⁴ (Records of conversations, 20.10.2010, Vienna), because of his regular practice of dumpster diving, not only for the communal kitchen, but for his private use as well.

Dumpster diving also implies a critique of hegemony as Ulf is convinced that 'capitalism is bad for humans; to get up early in the morning and go to work is a puritan and protestant ideal'⁵⁵. He also mentions 'Jaques Rousseau, being against the capital of the ruling class and their hegemony, but that we are privileged ourselves discussing such topics while we are eating and cooking together'⁵⁶ (Records of conversations, 22.09.2009, Vienna). One time, after a successful dumpster diving tour, he looks at the many apples that were found in the container and remembers collecting apples at a friend's garden a week ago and how much work it was. He wonders how worthless container dived apples or other fruit has become after they went through the process of mass production and capitalism, although it takes so much effort to produce them only to end as garbage. He also denies eating bananas, because they are no seasonal fruit (Field notes, 4.10.2009, Vienna).

Ulf plays a key role in the activity of collective cooking and dumpster diving. His active engagement in the communal kitchen is highly acknowledged among other active members and guests of the communal kitchen as they sometimes call him by the nick name 'the chef'⁵⁷ (Field notes 6.10.2009, Vienna), referring to his cooking abilities, commitment and motivation of other participants. The responsibility for preparing and cooking vegan dishes is often taken over by Ulf for example vegan goulash with soya meat, canned beans, onions and paprika, soya vegetable patties with onion, garlic, peppers, zucchini, breadcrumbs and herbs, vegan barbeque mix with potatoes and parsley, vegetable stew made of kohlrabi, carrots and leek plus

⁵³ Original German Quote: *um den kapitalistischen Konsum von Lebensmittel zu boykottieren und damit eine Abneigung gegen gewisse Handelsketten des kapitalistische System auszudrücken.*

⁵⁴ Original German Quote: *Es besteht keine Notwendigkeit ein Geschäft zu betreten und dort einzukaufen.*

⁵⁵ Original German Quote: *Kapitalismus ist schlecht für den Menschen, früh aufstehen und arbeiten gehen, ist eine puritanische und protestantische Arbeitsmoral.*

⁵⁶ Original German Quote: *Jaques Rousseau, der gegen den herrschenden Besitz und Grundverhältnisse ist, aber wir sind eh privilegiert, dass wir hier darüber diskutieren können, während wir essen und kochen.*

⁵⁷ German: 'Chefkoch'

Italian noodles with a red pepper and tomato sauce or flavouring salad, heating bread and other side dishes like Indian rice with nuts and vegetable. There is only one exception, when Ulf did not attend the kitchen due to a squatting activity (Field notes, 22.10.2010, Vienna).

Janina - mid-20's, student, *freegan*, *Vöku* member & active dumpster diver

Janina's active participation in the communal kitchen in form of collective cooking and dumpster diving started at the same time as Ulf's engagement, in spring 2008 according to Johannes, another active member of the club (Field notes, 13.10.2009, Vienna) She is a critical intellectual and conversation partner and a student of theatre, film and media studies (Field notes 20.09.2010, Vienna), which is a unique mix in the field of human, media and social sciences offered by the University of Vienna. At the beginning of one communal kitchen during food preparation she starts a discussion 'about the meaning of reflective, critical and self-reflective thinking'⁵⁸ (Field notes 6.10.2010, Vienna).

Her interests are also directed towards certain ways of activism like anarchism which includes taking part in demonstrations. When I attended the communal kitchen for the first time, Janina is only present in the first couple of minutes, before she is on her way to a demonstration. She leaves after the decision making process, which means debating about the menu of the evening. When Ulf suggests making a goulash, Janina's first reaction is not enthusiastic. Despite her 'dislike of goulash'⁵⁹, she finally gives in and the cooking group agrees on preparing a vegan version of goulash with soya meat (Field notes, 15.09.2009, Vienna).

The contribution of active members is not always directed towards practical issues like preparing the food for the evening, but also to engage in discussions about the latest topics and activities, personal experiences and opinions (influenced by certain ideologies). During a communal kitchen the active participation of Janina lacks a little bit of motivation due to her lively engagements in conversations throughout the evening, and because she is also having a cold. When Ulf talks her

⁵⁸ Original German Quote: *über die Bedeutung von reflektierten, kritischen und selbstreflektiertes Denken.*

⁵⁹ Original German Quote: *Abneigung gegen Gulasch*

into contributing more, she starts peeling and cutting some potatoes (Field notes, 6.10.2009, Vienna).

During a plenum and in her role as active member Janina is taking the lead to talk about the topics of the evening, for example upcoming events like an 'action day against deportation'⁶⁰ at Vienna's city airport and the idea to support this event in form of a field kitchen Janina takes responsibility for the organization of the event including time and date of the communal kitchen and the menu. She suggests making a '*Auflauf gegen Abschiebung*', which translates as crowd or casserole against deportation (Field notes, 6.10.2010, Vienna).

Janina is very active in dumpster diving and has been pursuing the freegan lifestyle for one year (Field notes, 4.10.2009, Vienna). Her practice is not only limited to food, but includes other material objects for her private use. For example on the way to a 'source' of free food Janina stops on a sidewalk to take a look into a huge dumpster for domestic waste filled with boulder and scree material from a buildings renovation. She finds two old wooden drawers for her personal need (Field notes, 13.09.2009, Vienna). Once the group returns to the club with a reasonable amount of food found in the containers, she explains that dumpster diving has become an absolute philosophy in her life. Janina also wonders why not more people discover the joy of dumpster diving, as she eats everything out of the tons including dairy products and sometimes even meat. She has no interest in a solely vegan diet, but rather in dumpster diving itself and hesitates calling herself a freegan (Field notes, 27.09.2009, Vienna). Her motivation for this activity goes so far that after a successful tour, frequenting 3 different places in a row, she wants to get back to the last destination to get more food out of the container that is still full of fruit and should not be wasted. It is her aim to gain as much food as possible from rich sources (Field notes, 4.10.2009, Vienna).

Johannes – late 20's, academic, active *Vöku* member and dumpster diver

Johannes involvement in the communal kitchen began more than 2 years ago (Field notes, 20.10.2009, Vienna). Due to his ideological background of anarchism, which is also the ideology behind the communal kitchen, he describes 'the communal kitchen

⁶⁰ Original German Quote: *Aktionstag gegen Abschiebung* (Flyer, 2009)

as being an anarchistic and hegemonic free discourse and space with personal responsibilities, where not everyone had always been of the same opinion, but there also had been conflicts'⁶¹ (Records of conversations, 13.10.2009, Vienna).

His responsibilities within the communal kitchen changed over time, he states the reasons why he gave up his former leading role as follows: 'Back then; there had been quarrels and conflicts over the structures, so that I withdrew, because I didn't agree with the contents anymore'⁶², he continues that 'after the conflicts within the group concerning matters of participation and responsibility and my role as anarchy-leader, who showed responsibility for many things, some members left'⁶³ (Records of conversations, 13.10.2009, Vienna). In detail the controversies inside the group were about matters of internal structures and official ideologies:

[...] letztendlich verabschiedete man sich, stritt viel über einen herrschaftsfreien und keine totalitären Strukturen, die anscheinend schon innerhalb der Strukturen des Vereins zu tragen kommen. Die offizielle [Ideologie], die gegen Hierarchien eintritt und informelle Hierarchien, teilweise mit autoritären Strukturen [...] (Records of conversations, 13.10.2010, Vienna).

[...] eventually one said goodbye, had many arguments over hegemonic-free and no totalitarian structures that had apparently taken place within the structures of the venue, the official [ideology], which is against hierarchies and informal hierarchies, partly with authoritarian structures [...].

Although some members left the institution of the communal kitchen or gave up their active involvement like Johannes, there were soon replaced by newcomers like Ulf and Janina, who filled the gap and brought other agendas, ideas and views with them for example the practice of organized dumpster diving. Johannes, who has studied Computer Science at the Vienna University of Technology, is nowadays also active in the practice of dumpster diving, within the framework of the venue and privately

⁶¹ Original German Quote: *Die Vokü als anarchistischer, herrschaftsfreier Diskurs und Raum mit Selbstverantwortung, wo man teilweise auch nicht immer der gleichen Meinung war, sondern auch viel gestritten wurde.*

⁶² Original German Quote: *Zuvor hat es einige Streitereien und Auseinandersetzungen über die Strukturen gegeben, sodass ich mich zurückzog, da ich mit den Inhalten nicht mehr übereingestimmt hab.*

⁶³ Original German Quote: *Seit dem Streit über das Mitwirken und die Verantwortung und meine Rolle als Anarcho-Führer, der sich für vieles verantwortlich zeigte, sind einige gegangen.*

(Field notes, 6.10.2009, Vienna). He is not working full time, but only occasionally for short time projects or in the past at university laboratories.

His current role or duties inside the venue, respectively speaking of his activities for the communal kitchen concern matters of hygiene and housekeeping as well as the administration of internal mailing lists. During my first participation in the field, I meet Johannes and Janina in the kitchen at the backrooms of the venue, preparing some knives, trays and bowls to bring them to the tables in the front rooms (Field notes 15.09.2009, Vienna). Another time he enters the kitchen right after his arrival and first of all commits himself to do the cleaning like emptying the dishwasher and tidying up the fridge, at the same time mentioning his discontent 'that it is not really working out with the cleanliness'⁶⁴ and how long he tried to establish an order, without ignoring someone else (Field notes 20.10.2009, Vienna). There are also occasions when Johannes takes over the initiative to motivate people to start with the cooking, carrying potatoes and onions out of the kitchen and stating in the same moment that he actually wanted the others to take over the initiative (Field notes 13.10.2009, Vienna). During the monthly meetings, called plenums of the *Vokü* discussing matters of urgency, he additionally confirmed to assume the administration for a new internal mailing list of active members (Field notes, 6.10.2009).

Herbert – late 20's, academic, active *Vöku* member and dumpster diver

Herbert is known as an active member of the club since the beginning of its location near *Westbahnhof*. He took responsibility over matters of food supply and organized the weekly car rides to the *Großgrünmarkt* in *Inzersdorf* in order to get leftovers of vegetables and fruits for free (Field notes, 13.10.2009, Vienna).

His engagement follows certain ideologies similar to the general ideas of the members in the field like being against capitalism and commercialization and trying to boycott certain food stores by the practice of dumpster diving as alternative food resource (Field notes, 20.10.2009, Vienna). Along with Ulf, another active *Vokü* member, Herbert also established the idea of a vegan communal kitchen, before then there were sometimes vegetarian dishes.

⁶⁴ Original German Quote: *Es funktioniert nicht mit dem Sauber halten.*

In the monthly meeting that took place in October (9.10.2009, Field notes, Vienna) Herbert was also participating and announced that he was going to assume the exercise of repairing the dumpster mobile for the dumpster diving tours. Concerning his background, he is a former student at Vienna University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences; currently unemployed and trying to live as self-supporter in a house on the countryside near the woods, together with other friends and like minded people (Field notes, 20.10.2009, Vienna).

Ruth - early 40's, unemployed, active *Vöku* member

Her regular presence and active participation in the communal kitchen and the monthly meeting identifies her as another member of the collective cooking group. My personal interaction with Ruth is less intensive than with other members; therefore the knowledge about her lifestyle and personal views is rather marginal. She is currently unemployed, but worked as a call centre agent in the past (Field notes, 6.10.2009, Vienna). During a communal kitchen organized an act of solidarity for the action day against deportation and in the course of a discussion on vegetarian lifestyle and health risks Ruth talks about her childhood experiences with cod liver, in times when liver was regarded as an important source of iron.

Gerhard – late 30's, professional, active *Vöku* participant

The first meeting with Gerhard took place at another union, called *uoqbon* that hosts a communal kitchen (Field notes, 20.09.2009, Vienna). Due to the kitchens popularity and moreover sufficient food supply by the practice of dumpster diving and connections to community unions of alternative food provision like 'food coop(eration)' or *Bioparadeis*⁶⁵ the communal kitchen at this place is in the meantime organized every week on Sundays (*uoqbon* – Verein für Kunst, Kultur, informelle Bildung, ökologisch nachhaltige Projekte, online)⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ *Bioparadeis* is a food cooperation or purchasing community, to put the shopping together and purchase food directly from producers (Bioparadeis, online).

⁶⁶ The *uoqbon* identifies as a space for art, culture, informal education and ecological projects, existing for 5 years (Records of conversations, 20.09.2009, Vienna and *uoqbon* – Verein für Kunst, Kultur, informelle Bildung, ökologisch nachhaltige Projekte, online).

Gerhard's active participation with the communal kitchen at the venue that is of the fieldworkers' main interest began in mid-October (Field notes, 13.10.2009, Vienna). The reason for his involvement is amongst others personal knowledge about the cultivation of vegetable due to his way of life as a self-supporter in a house on the Romanian countryside, during spring and summer. Gerhard's profession as a computer specialist made it possible for him to form the basis of his self-supporter project in Romania.

For one communal kitchen (12.10.2009, Field notes, Vienna), Gerhard provides the club with home-grown salad from in his own garden and two habanero chillies, which he later uses to flavour the vegetable soup made of cauliflower, zucchini, carrots, and thickened with semolina. At the beginning he starts a conversation about the cultivation of potatoes, carrots, beets and parsnip. When he dedicates himself to the cooking, he works rather independently without prior consultation or collective arrangements. When the soup turns out to be very hot, it causes a slight critique by the other members working under liberal and anarchistic principles, promoting collective interaction and decision making.

During the next kitchen he is also working on the forefront and decides on making Greek cucumber salad called *Tzatziki* and as a main course cabbage and pasta. For the main dish there is not enough onions and pasta left. He suggest they might be bought from a supermarket, but other members refuse to go shopping due to their anti-capitalistic views and attempt to boycott certain food stores with their practice of dumpster diving (Field notes, 20.10.2010, Vienna). This time he also brings some Jerusalem artichoke along, which is tasted by the fieldworker. According to Gerhard he often gets fresh vegetable from his friends working at organic food markets and/or owning farms.

Sebastian F - early 20's, vegan, student, active dumpster diver

As an active dumpster diver privately and casually within the structures of the club he rarely depends on the traditional way of consuming. In fall, he will start with his studies at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (Interview, 09.09.2009, Vienna). His first question at the beginning of communal container tour is centred on my expenses of food and 'if they are have already decreased' referring to

my prior participation in dumpster diving (Field notes, 20.09.2009). His freegan lifestyle is not exclusively limited to food, but covers articles of daily use and includes searching through the household waste as well. At the supermarket place with the containers behind bars, Sebastian is looking for other things than just food and catches a paddle, shoes, some ladies sport socks and table mats in one of the numerous residential garbage bins (Field notes, 18.10.2009, Vienna).

Sebastian is also and very much interested in my personal impressions of the field. On the evening of the first communal kitchen, he talks about egg substitute; vegetal protein and vegan cheese made without milk, like in Italy in times of scarcity cheese was made of maize, butter, salt and herbs. The vegan diet is according to him not very modern, although 'veganism is regarded as a post-modern lifestyle, and the consumption of so much meat is seen as rather normal, just as if there had always been so much meat available to eat'⁶⁷ (Records of conversations, 15.09.2009, Vienna). He started to live vegan two years ago and before then he was already pursuing a vegetarian lifestyle. Dumpster diving is for him quite a saving of expenses. He would by no means eat meat out of the garbage, also no dairy products, it is just his feeling as there is no difference in the production, because the food in the garbage is devalued anyway. (Interview, 09.09.2009, Vienna).

4.5.4.2 Occasional Participants

Before turning to the second group of participants, speaking of the guests of a communal kitchen, the picture of its active members, cooks and assistants is not complete without mentioning the group of occasional participants and contributors. There are for example guests that arrive earlier and contribute at the end of the cooking activities, with exercises like washing or flavouring salad and cutting fruit for a dessert. They are sometimes newcomers or occasional guests/assistants that identify with the venue's ideology and/or are interested in the event of a communal kitchen some of them are young and liberal students in their early and mid 20's like a young man who visits the event on this evening for the first time (Field notes, 20.10.2009, Vienna) or older participants.

⁶⁷ Original German Quote: *Veganismus wird als postmoderne Erscheinung gesehen und es wird so getan als ob immer so viel Fleisch gegessen wurde und Fleisch essen einfach dazugehört.*

Fabian - early 20's, vegan, student, casual dumpster diver, Vokü-guest

He is from Germany and more involved in dumpster diving and other critical activities than in the communal kitchen. During the first dumpster diving tour Fabian talks about his mother and criticizes that 'she is only living vegetarian and eating fish nearly every day, but only until the sea is not trawled empty'⁶⁸ (Field notes, 13.09.2009, Vienna) referring thereby to his vegan lifestyle as a more consequent form of vegetarianism. On another dumpster diving tour he starts a discussion with Sebastian about being sexist, because he helps a girl carrying the dumpster mobile, because she is having troubles with it (Field notes, 18.10.2009, Vienna) defending the club's position and philosophy against any forms of sexism, hierarchies, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and other means of suppression (Field notes, 15.09.2010, Vienna).

Tim – late 40's, professional/unemployed, Vöku participant

Tim is often present in the venue, because he likes to play check and sometimes participates in the communal kitchen for example preparing the salad (Field notes, 6.10.2009, Vienna) or being responsible to decide on a main dish and start with the communal kitchen, when other members arrive later (Field notes 20.10.2009, Vienna). He is known to be currently unemployed, but could be an academic, in the field of geology (Field notes, 22.10.2009, Vienna).

Theresa - mid-20's, student, vegan, active dumpster diver & casual Vokü-guest

Theresa studies filmmaking and sometimes participates in the activities of the club like the communal kitchen or dumpster diving. During Pre-departure time she talks about her working experience at the factory of a famous Austrian confectionary called *Manner*. There are best known for 'Neapolitan wafers', which are actually vegan. Everything is produced automatically, except for the packaging process, which was one of her duties. She tells us that the leftovers of the wafers are not free, but sold in big bags of several kilos to the employees (Field notes, 27.10.2009, Vienna).

⁶⁸ Original German Quote: *Sie lebt nur vegetarisch und isst jeden Tag Fisch, jedenfalls solange die Weltmeere noch nicht leergefischt sind.*

After a container tour she talks about her baking experience with dumpster dived fruit. Once she tried out to make a peach strudel, but unfortunately it tasted a little bit strange with the peaches, which have taken on a metallic taste (ibid.).

4.5.4.3 Guests and Consumers

The quantity of guests naturally outnumbers the number of active communal kitchen members and assistants and ranges between thirty and fifty people a night with a balanced percentage of different gender either male or female. Some of the individuals are contacts from previous vegan events and meetings like *Veganmania*⁶⁹ (Field notes, 20.06 and 18.07.2009, Vienna and St. Pölten), vegan picnics (Field notes 19 and 26.07.2009, Vienna), vegan barbeque (Field notes, 24.06.2009, Vienna) other communal kitchens or from interviews.

Markus - 22 years, student and vegan

He is one of the first guests I am familiar with due to previous meetings at interviews and other encounters. In the moment he enters the venue, the participating observation is taking place in front of the cooking area, more precisely in the activity of cooking itself. As a student of history and due to his vegan lifestyle (Interview, 28.09.2009, Vienna) he is into a lot of reading and mentions some literature about topics like Anti-Catholicism and Anti-Speciesism⁷⁰ that could possibly be of interest for me. Markus is also in contact with other informants and questions certain statements from the field (Field notes, 18.06.2009, St. Pölten) that were passed on to him by an interviewee concerning the self-description of some as 'active vegans' in relation to vegans that are 'not active' anymore, for example, when individuals start to have a family and do not participate in former activities like demonstrations, manifestations, occupations and protests.

⁶⁹ Veganmania is a vegan summer feast organized by the Austrian Vegan Society since 1998 at several cities in Austria like Vienna, Graz, Salzburg or Innsbruck (veganmania – Veganer Sommerfest seit 1998, online).

⁷⁰ Speciesism is explained as an idea or bias in favour of the interests of one's own species against the members of other species (BBC, online) and anti-speciesism is understood as the counter movement that argues for equal rights for human animals and non-human animals.

What is dissonant for Markus is the distinction between ‘active’ and ‘non-active’ vegans and ‘that probably not all vegans would agree on this differentiation and labelling of activism’⁷¹ (Records of conversations, 15.09, Vienna). The discussion continues with Markus as well as another guest (female, 18 years, vegan) on matters of ‘male feminism’ and an article on behalf of the same subject that was distributed at a lecture about autonomic activism in Israel and its alternative and autonomic scene at a unions locality, attended by our discussion group (Field notes, 10.09.2009, Vienna). Another time he is helping out behind the bar during the evening of a *Vokü* (Field notes, 20.10.2009, Vienna).

Kathleen - mid 20’s, student of nutrition sciences, vegan, active VGÖ-member)

She works for the Austrian Vegan Society⁷² (*Vegane Gesellschaft Österreich – VGÖ*) and is therefore often present at vegan events. I first came into contact with her at the *Veganmania* in Vienna (Field notes, 20.06.2009) and was then invited to vegan picnics and barbeques. When Kathleen visits one communal kitchen (29.09 2009, Field notes, Vienna), she brings some leftovers like packages of vegan grill mix from the last vegan summer feast (*Veganmania*) that took place in Lower Austrian’s capital (Field notes, 26.09.2009, St. Pölten).

Tamu - , late 20’s, academic, *Vokü*-activist, dumpster diver

He is a casual guest and at the same time active in another communal kitchen organized every three weeks by a Viennese Union called *Uoqbon*. He graduated from the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences. At present he pursues no full-time job, but sometimes works as a personal assistant for disabled persons. When talking about communal kitchens and its vegan principles, he argues that ‘it constitutes the least common denominator in terms of food and that the philosophy

⁷¹ Original German Quote: *Diese Bezeichnung bzw. Unterscheidung findet sicher nicht bei jedem Veganer Zustimmung.*

⁷² The Vegan Austrian Society is a platform for vegan lifestyle. Its main function is to inform and educate about the vegan way of living. They also organize public campaigns, summer feasts, demonstrations and publish their own magazine twice a year (*Vegane Gesellschaft Österreich*, online).

behind the club's are in the majority of cases left-wing and anarchistic'⁷³. According to Tamu the idea of the communal kitchens developed out the fact of food surplus at community unions of alternative food provision like the *Bioparadeis* and their connection to the *Uoqbon*.

Tamu is not vegan himself, but active in dumpster diving for the club and privately (Field notes, 20.09.2009, Vienna). He is also interested in other means of food provision: A female participant of the communal kitchen, who is in contact with Tamu and mentions his latest attempt to get access to free food by calling on the famous Austrian *REWE*-group, specialized in food trade and drugstores (*REWE* International AG, online). The girl suggests asking Tamu to provide some food for the actual cooking session and he assures on the mobile phone to come to the union to bring some bread, pastries, cheese and yogurt. When a group of people takes a seat at the working surface to begin with the cutting of vegetables, they start a discussion about the two premises of dumpster diving: 'First, that what isn't dumped isn't purchased to protest against consumption and secondly that you do not buy something that is dumped anyway'⁷⁴. They also question Tamu's last activity to ask directly for leftovers at the *REWE* group and if he is not exposing him to control as he only receives what *REWE* wants to give away.

Tamu's contribution for the second communal kitchen he visits (Field notes, 13.10.2009, Vienna) is made of free food successfully scrounged from the *REWE* group, like fruit and yogurt drinks that are expired. The first encounter with Tamu as a guest of the communal kitchen (Field notes, 29.09.2009, Vienna) is marked by a short ironic commentary 'why he is unfaithful' (referring to the *Uoqbon-Vokü*) and his smiling answer: 'Yes, sure because it is only taking place every month'⁷⁵.

⁷³ Original German Quote: *Weil es den kleinste gemeinsame Nenner beim Essen darstellt und bei solchen Vereinslokalitäten, die zur Verfügung gestellt werden meistens linke und anarchistische Philosophien im Hintergrund stehen.*

⁷⁴ Original German Quote: *Erstens, dass man was nicht weggeworfen wird nicht kauft und sich dagegen stellt bzw. das man nicht kauft was ohnehin weggeworfen wird* (Record of conversations, 20.09.2009).

⁷⁵ Original German Quote: *Ja klar, wenn es diese nur einmal im Monat gibt.*

4.6 Case Study: The Practice of Dumpster Diving

In the view of economic anthropologists the practice of dumpster diving can be regarded as informal means of food provisioning (Narotzky 2005) or one-way economic transfers (Hunt 2005) within the realms of informal (Smith 1989) or communal economies (Gudeman 2001). The forms of economy that relate to the activity of dumpster diving like the informal sector consisting of consumption activities that occur outside the framework of what is accepted by the majority of the society as proper, right and legitimate (Smith 1989) and the community providing a structure for common resources, produced things and ideational constructs like technologies, practices, skills and customs to express identity, shared values and ideals (Gudeman 2001) are not taking into account that its primer source – food waste is a by-product of the formal economies.

Dumpster diving can also be connected to everyday consumer activities like shopping, ethical consumerism including forms of resistance and protest. The following chapters will be concerned with empirical data and descriptions of my participant observation starting with some background information concerning waste management and legal aspects to continue with a description of dumpster diving foodscapes, technologies and the process of recovering food waste and value.

4.6.1 Background Information on Dumpster Diving

4.5.6.1 Quantity of Waste

There are large amounts of waste produced every day in the western world; probably tons of faultless goods end up in containers. In Vienna 45 kilogram of food is dumped every day per supermarket (Klemun 2009) according to a study in 2003 by the department of waste management at the University of Natural Resources on behalf of the City Administration and the initiative of waste prevention in Vienna (*'Abfallvermeidung in Wien'*) including the concept of 'social transfer of potential recyclable' (*'sozialer Wertstofftransfer'*). The concept is based on the idea to transfer faultless and usable products to welfare services. Enquiries with producers, merchants, public authorities and social services as well as inspections,

supermarkets' bio-waste containers and residual waste analysis provided important data (Edlmayr 2009:25).

In addition to a daily potential of 45 kilogram of edibles supplied by one discounter, the amount of edibles supplied by 93 discounters in Vienna would result in 4.200 kilogram per day or about 1.300 tons a year. This evaluation does not include the amount of bread and bakery products which account for another approximated 38 kilogram of leftovers per store and day according to a environmental report of the Viennese bakery *Felber* or 3.600 tons per year if adding the amount of wasted bread and bakery products of 340 Viennese bakeries (Edlmayr 2009:28p).

There is an estimated amount of 166.000 tons of residual waste produced by private households according to a second survey of the department of waste management in the course of the federal waste management plan (*Bundesabfallwirtschaftsplan*) in 2006. About 6-12 percent of the residual waste is made out of partly decomposed, partially fractured or original packed foodstuff (ibid.).

4.5.6.2 Legal Basis

Another factor that constitutes the basis of dumpster diving is concerned with the legal position in Austria, respectively waste management and garbage disposal. The department for waste management, street cleaning and car fleet (*Magistratsabteilung für Abfallwirtschaft, Straßenreinigung und Fuhrwerk*) of Vienna's city administration is responsible for garbage disposal. The public prosecution authority of Vienna declares that waste doesn't belong to anybody and is ownerless, but if locks are destroyed, it is a damage of property according to the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard* (Kapeller, 2009). Another journal is not so clear about the regulations and evaluates dumpster diving in Austria as a legal grey area. However if the waste producer wants the garbage to be recycled by a waste processing facility it is not allowed to take the garbage (Klemun, 2009). In this case it belongs to the waste disposal contractor (Mautner 2009).

The waste management law – *Abfallwirtschaftsgesetz (AWG) 2002*⁷⁶ and the Viennese waste management law – *Wiener Abfallwirtschaftsgesetz* is the legal basis concerning all regulations that have to do with waste; the first one was revised in September 2008 (Lebensministerium.at, online). In accordance with this federal law ‘waste proprietor’ is a) the ‘waste producer’ or b) anyone, who has a hold on the waste⁷⁷. The ‘guideline for freegans’ includes one point about the legal discussion on the topic and comes to the conclusion ‘that legal experts are unclear who is the proprietor of waste and if waste can be stolen at all’⁷⁸ (Freegan – Konsumkritik statt Verschwendung, online).

4.6.2 Dumpster Diving Foodscapes

The first gathering places for this political practice in Vienna were the containers and bio-waste containers of the cities farmers’ markets since the end of 1990’s (Edlmayr 2009). On the website *freegan.at* there is a guideline with tips for freegans, who dumpster dive, recommending farmers’ markets, supermarkets and shops as promising places. In the case of fruit and vegetable markets there often boxes with leftovers behind the booths. It is suggested to make some contacts with people working at the market and that the best quality of vegetables and leftovers can be found in the small hours.

Usually Supermarkets that are integrated in newly build residential houses serve as easy sources for dumpster divers, as they have in most cases big container rooms that are commonly used. Supermarkets outside the city centre are also good recourses for free food, because garbage cans and bio-waste containers are located in car parks or behind the buildings and rarely locked (Freegan – Konsumkritik statt Verschwendung, online). To give the reader an impression of the frequency of food stores in Vienna, I have tracked down some numbers: The Austrian chain store *Billa* (Billa AG, online) has the highest frequency of food stores in Vienna with 254 shops, followed by 145 *Gourmet Spar* shops of another famous local chain called *Spar* (Spar

⁷⁶ The *Abfallwirtschaftsgesetz (AWG) 2002* was reviewed and includes all the changes made in September 26, 2008. The actual version is published by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management.

⁷⁷ Original German Quote: (6) *Im Sinne dieses Bundesgesetzes 1. Ist „Abfallbesitzer“ a) der Abfallerzeuger oder b) jede Person, welche die Abfälle innehat.*

⁷⁸ Original German Quote: *Rechtsexpert_innen sind sich im Unklaren wer eigentlich Eigentümer_in des Mülls ist und ob Müll überhaupt gestohlen oder entwendet werden kann.*

Österreich, online). The discounter and trading enterprise *Hofer* (Hofer – Willkommen bei Hofer, online) is represented with 20 stores inside Vienna and probably one of the potential sources for *freegan* food.

Places that are selected for the weekly dumpster diving tours under observance are naturally in the neighbourhood of the club, the *Westbahnhof* and the residential districts in this area. Popular sources are container rooms of supermarkets integrated in residential buildings as the surrounding area is located near the city centre. To get to the residential districts and potential resources one has to cross a bridge, where you have an overview of the entire railway station. In the course of the field work different container rooms are explored, which vary in size and facilities. The first container room entered by the group and accompanied by myself is located on the ground floor of a building, including the food shop of a famous and common Austrian chain store. It is apparently used by the residents and the supermarket as there are two containers standing next to each other (Field notes, 13.09.2009, Vienna). The second container room some housing blocks away is much bigger with many dustbins for private households, but also used by the same food chain store with one black dumpster and two bio-waste containers locked separately behind bars. A discounter's place, also visited for the same night, is just big enough to store four containers that are filled with dumped food in greater amounts than elsewhere (Field notes 27.09.2009, Vienna).

According to one informant, the practice of 'dumpster diving' is more established in the western parts of Vienna, it's a hot spot, whereas the eastern part is less affected by it'⁷⁹. He also informs me about dumpster divers, who exclusively frequent organic supermarkets in Vienna, where it can happen that you meet like-minded people on your way. Some of them enter the container rooms even during the day, which is apparently tolerated by the shop manager (Field notes, 13.09.2009, Vienna).

⁷⁹ Original German Quote: *Dumpstern ist im Westen von Wien ziemlich etabliert und dort viel los, wo hingegen der Osten von Wien weniger davon betroffen ist.*

4.6.3 Shared Technologies and Resources

The club in observance functions as a base to provide shared resources and technologies consisting of equipment, knowledge of places and codes of conducts that are important factors for a successful dumpster diving activity. In the case of the club as community economy there are more people involved. When taking part for the first time in the practice of searching free food, the impressions gained from the field resemble others as there is another male newcomer coming along the same evening. On the way from one container room to the next, there is rarely time to get an overview of the area, because the experienced dumpster divers take the lead, they proceed efficiently with no stops on the streets to follow their intentions and avoid unnecessary attention from some passersby. It is not possible to remember the exact route or what direction is taken (Field notes, 13.09.2009).

The basic equipment for the dumpster tour is partly provided by the club and the individual dumpster diver. Advantageous are big plastic bags, which are in stock at the club (Field notes, 13.09.2009) or a small trolley, like a shopping cart (Figure 8), which was once used for a dumpster diving tour, when found outside the shop additional to great amounts of food (Field notes, 4.10.2009).



Figure 8: Shopping cart in use
(© Eberhard 2009)



Figure 9: Dumpster mobile (© Eberhard 2009)

The club or rather the active members of the communal cooking and dumpster diving group use a so-called dumpster mobile (Figure 9) that is repaired in the middle of October (Field notes 18.10.2009, Vienna). Plastic gloves, pocket lamps and backpacks are other essentials for freegan consumers and it lies in everyone's own interest and responsibility to bring these utensils along. In Edlmayr (2009:42) the dumpster diving basics are described on the basis of a prototype wearing durable, nondescript clothes, gloves, thick-soled shoes and carrying a flashlight, pocketknife, duffel bag and a 'dive stick' with a hoeing at the end.

It depends not only on the environment, but also on the preferences of the individual dumpster diver to decide on the right equipment for the field. For example the first time I am participating in the dumpster diving tour, I forget about a pocket light, but think of other essentials like a backpack and some plastic gloves. When I enter the container room for other purposes than just waste disposal, which is to search for edibles in waste, the place makes a clean impression with a sweet smell and lights to switch on (Field notes, 13.10.2009, Vienna). Other container rooms that are entered during the fieldwork period are all equipped with electronic lights (Field notes, 13.09-21.10.2009, Vienna) and no pocket lights are ever needed. The same goes for pocketknives or dive sticks, which are not used by the dumpster divers observed in the field. Sometimes participating individuals even forget about plastic gloves and don't mind to grab into the waste with their bare hands (Field notes, 11.10.2009, Vienna).

Drawing on John Hoffman and *The Art and Science of Dumpster Diving*, Edlmayr (2009:38ff) captures several themes like 'Dumpster Diving is addictive', 'Dumpster Fingers and Diver's Eyes' and 'Dumpster Diving Technique and Etiquette'. The aspect of etiquette, which can be understood as basic rules and codes, is about suggestions on how to proceed inconspicuous, which is also mentioned by the Freegan guideline (Freegan – Konsumkritik statt Verschwendung). It is important to dumpster dive without attracting somebody's attention and to avoid any contact with passersby and employees. Plastic bags should not be left empty and tattered outside the containers, which means more work for the employees, residents or waste disposal contractors and can lead to increased observance. The actors, observed in the field generally keep to these rules, they mind leaving the container room in the original state with no visible signs of their actions, which means to close the container lid or leave it half open when found that way (Field notes, 27.09.2009, Vienna). In the process of dumpster diving the big plastic bags are often ripped apart and placed outside the bin to make it easier to get to the waste. When finished, the tattered plastic bags are placed into the container roughly the same way then before (Field notes, 11.10.2009).

Discussions are often centred on the ideology of veganism and practical experience with freeganism in the background of anti-capitalistic and consumer-critical agendas. One evening, Ulf, an active member of the club talks about his

experiments with natural aromas of meat and fish, which are available in sprays to flavour vegan cat and dog food. He even tasted the fish spray putting some flavour on his tongue and concludes that 'it tastes like water from a fishing cutter'⁸⁰ (Field notes, 27.09.2009, Vienna). Another time, the active members of the cooking and dumpster diving group like Janina and Sebastian are interested in my own diet, respectively if I am living vegan or vegetarian. The discussion continues with global aspects of veganism as Sebastian, another informant and Ulf wonder if this lifestyle is able to change or better the situation in the developing countries. A counter-argument by Ulf is that there are also profit-oriented and capitalistic vegan people like the owner of the vegan restaurant *Schillinger* in Lower Austria. The Austrian Vegan Society (VGÖ – *Vegane Gesellschaft Österreich*) is also promoting vegan capitalism according to the articles of its association. The vegan lifestyle, the launching of new alternative products and embracing this branch of business is very much capitalistic. This is also the case with the business sector of Fair-Trade and organic products states Ulf. He continues talking about the Austrian Association against Animal Factories (VGT-Verein gegen Tierfabriken) and its chairman Martin Balluch, who is very much engaged with animal rights and has working experiences as a lecturer of philosophy in the U.K and Vienna (Field notes, 4.10.2009).

4.5.4 The Process of Recovering Food Waste or Value

4.5.4.1 Time Frame

The practice of dumpster diving involves the recovering food waste out of containers. In general dumpster divers tend to seek out container rooms of supermarkets approx. 2 hours after closing time, to make sure to encounter no employees. People who like to participate in the activity of dumpster diving gather at the club. Sometimes active members arrive even earlier and often join other events that take place at the venue on the same evening like free movie nights or communal kitchens organized on Sundays every three weeks by different groups for example the ABC - Anarchistic Black Cross (Field notes, 20.09.2009, Vienna). Journals and newspapers like the *Wiener Bezirkszeitung* (Mitteregger 2009) or *Die Presse* (Klemun 2009) state that starting time for the dumpster diving tours with their informants is at 22:00 or 22:30

⁸⁰ Original German Quote: *Es schmeckt wie Wasser vom Fischkutter!*

p.m. If lucky enough, an 80 litre backpack is packed with dumped food in approximately 15 Minutes.

Starting time for the weekly dumpster tours organized by the members of the club is given a time frame between 10:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. for the same reason as mentioned above: To wait for the supermarket closing time and to avoid possible encounters with employees. The nightly tours normally last between one and two hours. It depends on the number of people attending, the quantity of dumpster dived edibles and how many different locations have to be frequented for that purpose. The aim is to find an adequate amount of food waste to recover it for the communal kitchen the next day. The first tour attended lasted about 1 ½ hour, including the route from the club to the first destination, the search for and the collection of food, the way to another container room and finally returning to the club (Field notes 13.09.2010, Vienna). On one tour I try to inform myself which days are usually the most promising during week, my respondent tells me that it depends on the supermarket. It can be different all the time (Field notes, 21.10.2009) The magazine *Zeit Online* (Reinecke 2007) reports that her informant prefers Saturday, because the supermarkets throw away a lot more than during the week.

Pre-departure time is useful for discussions or the exchange of latest news and important information about the access to new or rich sources of free food. For example container rooms that used to be frequented successfully in the past, but where suddenly impossible to enter, referring to the containers of a famous Austrian discounter. This matter was discussed once before starting to dumpster dive and the active members were told by Ravi that he has not experienced any difficulties when frequenting the place in question. The doors are not locked according to him, but probably only jammed. Ravi is a casual guest and participant of the communal kitchen and active in dumpster diving for another communal kitchen organized every three weeks by a different club called the *Uoqbon* (Field notes, 20.09.2009, Vienna).

4.5.4.2 Participants Frequency, Skills and Practices

In average there are four to eight people participating in this consumer critical practice with a balanced mix of gender relations. Between one and four locations are explored during one night. The group is divided into a smaller unit to keep a low

profile on the streets and be able to frequent more places at the same time. The experienced dumpster divers normally take on the lead concerning their knowledge of the right direction to container rooms and the access of such (Field notes 13.09-22.10.2009, Vienna).

During my first participation, there are altogether seven people attending four male and three female participants. Everyone is equipped with some blue and yellow *Ikea* bags or their own backpacks. After crossing the bridge to get to the residential districts, the group holds on to talk about the further process and where to start with the search for edibles. It takes some time until Ulf, an experienced dumpster diver and active member of the communal kitchen group, suggests splitting into smaller groups consisting of three and four people and to frequent two supermarket container rooms separately. A smaller formation attracts less attention on the streets and is able to frequent more locations simultaneously. I find myself in the group of four people, including Ulf, Fabian and a Girl called Theresa, who is also vegan and pursues a freegan lifestyle as the rest of the group (Field notes, 13.09.2009, Vienna).

Collecting edibles from the containers takes about 5 to 15 minutes, according to field observations and covered by media reports like in *Die Presse* (Klemun 2009). Experienced dumpster divers skilfully grub into the waste and find enough food to fill the big bags in no time at all. Cranberries, parsley, salad, herbs, cabbage, Chinese cabbage and tomatoes make it as recycled food on the first night attended (Field notes 13.09.2009, Vienna). With time activists gain enough routine and a sensory perception in the practice of container diving to develop the so called 'Dumpster Fingers and Diver's Eyes' (Edlmayr 2009). Nothing escapes their watchful eyes; in no time at all they are able to identify still eatables in a container full of expired products, mixed vegetables and fruit (Field notes, 13.09.2009). It is observed how fast the well-trained dumpster divers find eatables in plastic bags full of paper waste (Field notes, 27.09.2009, Vienna) or at the discounters place experienced 'divers hands' easily fill 3 big *Ikea* bags within 5 to 10 minutes with lots of bread, pastries, vegetable, salad, grapes and bananas (Field notes, 4.10.2009, Vienna).

When opening the dumpsters' lid there are different things to expect: containers full of black or pellucid garbage bags that are filled with dumped food and other waste. The dumpster divers sometimes respond with sounds of disgust, when they discover food that has gone bad and smells alike (Field notes 13.09.2009,

Vienna), or they express great joy in their 'collector's greed'⁸¹, when the content of the ton promises a huge amount of still eatable food (Field notes, 20.09.2009, Vienna). When entering a discounter's container room after a while of absence one participant enthusiastically shouts out 'Yeah, Superabundance'⁸² referring to the open dumpsters full to the brim with grapes. On closer examination the dumpster divers find red peppers, leek, blood orange juice and many packets of Italian noodles called *Gnocchi* and tortellini (Field notes 27.09.2009, Vienna).

Pellucid garbage bags are used at one common supermarket chain, which contain not only packaged or finished products that are recently expired like sweets or dairy products, but a lot of bread wraps and paper waste (Field notes, 21.10.2009, Vienna). Vegetables and fruits are recycled separately into bio-waste containers if available. Another food store and popular source of free food uses black garbage bags just as the frequented discounter.

In general container rooms vary in their size and the number of garbage cans in use. There is a greater variety of food in the containers of supermarket stores. Certain places promise certain contents just as the one container behind bars is famous for the high proportion of dairy products and pastries, whereas the container of the same food store chain in the smaller open space is expected to have more vegetable and fruits, but no extra bio-waste container (Field notes, 4.10.2009, Vienna) Bio-waste containers are not observed at the discounters place, where the tons are mostly filled with food in greater amounts than at supermarket places, for example whole containers full of bread, pastries, bananas or grapes (Figure 10).

⁸¹ Original German Quote: 'Sammlergier'.

⁸² Original German Quote: *Ja! Was für ein Überfluss!*

Certain findings like the Italian noodles called *Gnocchi* also provide topics of conversations during the tour, concerning relevant matters like veganism. It is questioned if *Gnocchi* or Tortellini are vegan and can be used for the communal kitchen. When it is clear that they contain lactic acid one participant of the group suggests to advice the food market producing fewer products with lactic acid so that they can be labelled as vegan. Just for the fun of it, one member adds that one could claim the noodles where only found on the streets to conceal the activists' practice of dumpster diving (Field notes, 27.09.2009, Vienna). The division into smaller groups of maximum four people has the advantage of more inconspicuousness, but one time it is observed how Ulf suddenly stops and rips off some posters of a circus advertisement. It takes me some seconds to understand the symbolic meaning behind his action, as veganism condemns any form of animal exploitation (Field notes, 4.10.2010).



Figure 10: Dumpster diving Impressions (© Eberhard 2009)

When a new girl called Katja is shifting the heavy Dumpster-Mobile behind her and having troubles with it on her way, Sebastian offers to help her after a while. This scene causes Fabian, another member, to call it 'sexist' and he starts a discussion with Sebastian, who does not perceive it as sexist to help someone who is apparently weaker and probably having more troubles carrying or shifting heavy things than him (Field notes, 18.10.2009, Vienna).

In the course of participating dumpster diving tours no serious real incidents occurred. There was only one scene observed, in the middle of one members dumpster diving activity when a resident of the building suddenly entered the container room. The person in action was very much unaffected by the strangers appearance; he greets him in a friendly way and continues with his search for food (Field notes, 11.10.2009, Vienna).

4.5.4.3 Recovering Food: Storage and Cleaning-Up

After successfully 'haunting and gathering' for food to recover it from waste everything gets spread out on the small stage at the back premises of the club (Figure 9). The dumpster dived food is ordered into piles of the same category. For example piles of bread and pastries, dairy products, vegetable and fruit. Every person who participates in the tour takes a share with them (Field notes, 13.09.2009, Vienna).

Although not every member pursues a purely vegan lifestyle, they are well aware of the origin and differentiation between vegan and non-vegan products, for example when I am looking at a chocolate pudding with whipped cream found scattered on the stage Ulf points to the fact that the *Dani+Sahne* pudding is not only non-vegan, but non-vegetarian, which only allows one conclusion - that he is speaking of gelatine, a solid substance made from the collagen inside



Figure 11: Food pile on the club's stage (© Eberhard 2009)

animals' skin and bones. The general awareness of the food's components or changes in their ingredients is also observed with Janina, when she opens a packet of paprika chips from *Funnychips* and indicates to the fact that these chips have become vegan only recently, with a label in form of green v for vegan (Field notes, 4.10.2009, Vienna). There is a broader understanding of the concept of freeganism by some members of the club who rather take it practically and pragmatically or justify it ideologically when consuming dumpster dived dairy products, pastries or food with animal components.

The exercise of cleaning-up is often taken over by the active members who store the food in boxes and put it into the small kitchen or the refrigerator (Field notes, 13.09.2009, Vienna). This can take between 30 minutes or an hour, depending on how many individuals decide to stay longer and help with the packing of things. A separate fridge is reserved for the dumpster dived food used in the communal kitchen with a note saying 'Please do not put any dairy products in here' referring to its vegan content. When I open the fridge to put some salad inside, I discover more salad, a week old and looking icy, probably freezer burned (Field notes, 11.10.2009, Vienna).

A discussion about informal hierarchies emerges, at the end of one dumpster diving tour and a possible second round to the supermarkets' container rooms. There is the question if the dumpster-mobile should be emptied. In this context the whole group is pointing to Janina and referring to the informal hierarchies inside the club. It takes Janina a moment to realize what has been said, but then she protests and asks for some explanation. Sebastian corrects himself and adds that there are always some people who are better informed about what is going on than others, like him for example, he can hardly remember the route to all the container rooms so he always has to ask others, who are better informed. The group eventually decides to empty the dumpster mobile and store the food inside the big *Ikea* bags (Field notes, 21.10.2009, Vienna).

These last impressions from the field dating back two years point to several important themes that were developed in my thesis like the concept of practice and role of agency, theories on value, surplus and affluence, informal or communal economies, Thompson's (1979) 'Rubbish Theory' and Hetherington's (2002) notes on rubbish, who sees it as a conduit of the disposal of value or if things are hold back they are held in state of remaining value. Janina's urge to recover even more food and its value, her engagement in this practice considering her active role, capacity and commitment and how she values not only the practice of dumpster diving itself, but as means to turn the affluent material of waste as a surplus of our production and consumer behaviour into a transient object of remaining value – food. The practice of dumpster diving and communal kitchen are part of informal or communal economies, where the freegan community's shared interests and values, their resources, vegan meals and ideational constructs like practices, skills and beliefs provide a structure to express their identity and lifestyle within the community.

5 Concluding on Inconspicuous Ways on Consuming Food

Eating and consuming food is a daily practice; we do it alone or in company. How and what we eat shapes the way who we are and what we think of the world. The embroidered Christian maxim 'Give us today our daily bread' (Figure 1), which is introduced on the first pages of my work and hanging in my parents kitchen, is an old reminder of the fact that food is something essential for life and should be appreciated every day and not taken for granted. It is a kind of silent grace that has actually never been said on our table. In this religious context the provision of food is seen as something that is given by God, the meaning and importance of bread for humans is highlighted by its divine origin, which is also a universal feature of other staple food like rice or maize with reference to Asian and Pre-Columbian cultures. As a matter of fact bread is actually consumed on a daily basis in western cultures like for example rice in Asia.

To provide enough food and distribute it equally to every person in this world has yet to be achieved and is not granted by our society or religion. For a lot of people in the world food is still a luxury and a scarce resource, for others there is an abundance of food and a lot of it is going to waste. In times of overproduction when tons of bread is thrown away the meaning of our 'daily bread' or meal is changing. Food is easily available and seems to be of less significance, its importance is declining, its value denied. This is the starting point and final conclusion of my thesis: the value of food in our society and how food waste is denied its final wastage and its value rediscovered by a group of freegan activists, when there is actually enough food available to buy. The practice of dumpster diving and communal kitchen as portrayed in this thesis is not a response of the urban poor, but of critical urban citizens to develop into social movements that promote vegetarianism or veganism. Freegan communities create means of informal food provision outside the realms of formal economies to protest against the system of formal economies: Its overproduction, distribution and consumption mechanisms.

The basis for my work was ethnographical fieldwork carried out in the month between June and October 2009. I started to attend several vegan activities like picnics, festivals and barbeques within the city of Vienna to get to know vegan people and their lifestyle. Simultaneously I conducted open-ended and guided interviews with five female and four male vegans to talk about their motivations for and their

daily experience with their choice of eating and consuming only vegetable products. Participant observation, writing field notes and recording informal conversation was my second empirical approach to gain insider knowledge into the field and practice of dumpster diving and communal kitchen in the city of Vienna.

The aim of my thesis '*Conspicuous Waste: The Practice Communal Kitchen and Dumpster Diving in the Context of Freegan Lifestyle and Identities in Vienna*' was to interpret and analyse vegan and freegan food practices in the city of Vienna and describe them in terms of material culture, consumption and economic anthropology. Chapter 1 'Introducing Food and Dumpster Diving' gives a personal background and ethnographic account of my interests and relates it to my studies of cultural and social anthropology. The chapter on 'Methodology' builds a bridge to theories about 'The Material Culture, Economic Anthropology and Consumption of Waste and Food' in chapter 3 and the empirical part about 'Freegan Lifestyles and Identities' in Chapter 4.

It was interesting to gain insight into definitions of waste, its development and theoretical interpretations about the relation of humans to waste like in Michael Thompson's 'Rubbish Theory' (1979), William Rathje's 'Archaeology of Garbage' (1992, 2001) or Kevin Hetherington's contributions on 'Second-handedness' (2004). To regard dirt or waste as a system as for example Douglas (2002) or Thompson (1979) do, to look at the organization of waste in Vienna portrayed by Peter Payer (2006) or global developments including new strategies on organizing waste in Asia (Stuart 2009). Important themes that were developed in my thesis and derived out of works on economic anthropology and consumption including Susana Narotzky (1997, 2005), Stephen Gudeman (1996, 2001) and David Graeber (2005), involves theories on value, informal and communal economic behaviour and within the studies of food consumption the concept of foodscapes and practice to connect it to issues of identity, everyday life, agency and ethical consumerism see Alan Warde's 'Consumption and Food' (1997) and 'Theories of Practice' (2005), Warren Belasco's (2008) 'Culinary Triangle' or Bob Ashley's ideas on 'Food Studies' (2005) as well as the role of community, people's kitchen (*Volksküche*, *comedores populares*) and soup kitchens to fight food insecurity and their innovative character (Kruppa 2009, Hayden 1995).

The results and findings of my thesis are manifold. 1) The value of waste and food is culturally defined and their meaning changes and differs. Waste can be regarded as something valueless, an invisible category that changes the value of things or as valuable raw material. 2) The term value remains flexible and is dependent on several aspects like the temporal, social and cultural needs that are again shaped by communal, social and political contexts. 3) There are different forms of economies and production, distribution, or consumption activities do not only occur within formal and capitalistic structures but also alongside informal, communal or traditional realms. 4) The practice of dumpster diving as informal provisioning of food takes the urban landscape as its prime resource and profits from local forms of waste management. 5) The expression of identity through individual consumer habits and choices of lifestyle is intrinsically linked with concepts of agency or practice, which differ and change on many dimensions considering the agents roles, capacities and commitment and how they vary in their understandings and goals.

The answers to my questions that had been posed at the beginning of the thesis concerning the identities of vegan people and what role food plays in constructing them, how do communal kitchens and dumpster diving practices help to promote vegan or freegan lifestyles and identities, when and where do freegan activities take place, who is participating and what is their main reason to consume vegan food and challenge traditional ways of consuming food had been provided by ethnographic fieldworks methods. The findings of my empirical research presented in the chapter on 'Freegan Lifestyles and Identities' including the case studies of communal kitchen and dumpster diving reveal the motives for vegan people and how their shared values, ethical motivations and ideals play a major role in constituting their identities. Freegan values and ideals are derived from veganism that places great importance on the act of eating vegan either individual or commonly practiced on events like barbecues, picnics and festivals. Ethical motives inform vegan as well as freegan styles that can be regarded as way of resistance and individual lifestyle choice that has developed into social movements that pursue informal ways of food provisioning like dumpster diving and communal kitchens. Students, Professionals or Academics, political active or involved in animal activism form groups of like-minded people, establish open clubs and spaces to recover the value of food within supermarket container rooms and prepare free meals during the late evening hours.

It is concluded that traditional forms of economic behaviour can be contested and challenged to look at more communal or informal economic realities. The same goes for conventional meanings about the material culture of food and waste and to consider its role and agency for freegan movements that still value it as something meaningful and are not afraid to discover the evidence and negative externalities of our consumer and production behaviour as does the work of 'Food not Bombs', food banks, soup kitchens and other food assistance programs to address the problem of food insecurity.

The contribution of anthropological methodology and theory is to look at individual and collective group behaviour and its meaning for society in general, it allows the ethnographer to have a special eye on marginalized social realities that are otherwise overlooked, denied, or ignored. My thesis may contribute to questions on waste and food and their meanings or the traditional way of handling waste and food. It aims to give new perspectives to look at relation of human and waste and food consumption practices that challenge and change society. Future studies that are concerned with issues on material culture and/or economic anthropology could be more directed towards the agency and value of things that are for the most part 'unvalued' by social scientists, economists and politicians.

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Name	Occupation	Age	Date	Place
Maria S.	Student of Agricultural Science	23	01.07.2009	Vienna
Markus L.	Student of History	22	28.08.2009	Vienna
Nadine S.	Traveller	21	02.07.2009	Vienna
Matthias B.	Freelancer	34	11.08.2009	Vienna
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Tanja L.	Student of Political Science	24	28.09.2009	Vienna
Clemens P.	Student of Philosophy	20	12.10.2009	Vienna

Field notes

Date	Occasion	Place
20.06.2009	Veganmania	Vienna
17.07.2009	Vegan Barbecue	Vienna
18.07.2009	Veganmania	St. Pölten
19.07.2009	Vegan Picnic	Vienna
24.07.2009	Vegan Barbecue	Vienna
26.07.2009	Vegan Picnic	Vienna
01.08.2009	Veganmania	Klagenfurt
13.09.2009	Dumpster diving	Vienna
15.09.2009	Communal kitchen	Vienna
20.09.2009	Dumpster diving	Vienna
22.09.2009	Communal kitchen	Vienna
27.09.2009	Dumpster diving	Vienna
29.09.2009	Communal kitchen	Vienna
04.10.2009	Dumpster diving	Vienna
06.10.2009	Communal kitchen	Vienna
11.10.2009	Dumpster diving	Vienna
13.10.2009	Communal kitchen	Vienna
18.10.2009	Dumpster diving	Vienna
20.10.2009	Communal kitchen	Vienna
21.10.2009	Dumpster diving	Vienna
22.10.2009	Communal kitchen	Vienna

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Abstract:

This thesis looks at the meaning and consumption of waste and food waste in form of communal kitchens and the activities of dumpster diving, which is practiced by freegan groups in Vienna to express their identities and lifestyle. The empirical data of my fieldwork conducted between June and October 2009 consisting of field notes, records of conversations and transliterated guided interviews was analysed with the method of qualitative content analysis to look at its categories and relate them to anthropological theories of material culture, economic anthropology of consumption and food studies. Chapter 1 'Introducing Food and Dumpster Diving' gives a personal background and ethnographic account of my interests and relates it to my studies of cultural and social anthropology. The chapter on 'Methodology' builds a bridge to theories about 'The Material Culture, Economic Anthropology and Consumption of Waste and Food' in chapter 3 and the empirical part about 'Freegan Lifestyles and Identities' in Chapter 4.

Important themes that were developed in my thesis involved theories on value, informal and communal economic behaviour and within the studies of food consumption the concept of practice and ethical consumerism to connect it to issues of identities, everyday life and forms of agency. The empirical part is concerned with definitions of veganism and freeganism and the meaning of public kitchen as innovative practice and to connect to the case studies of a club's communal kitchen and dumpster diving activities. The results my thesis deal with 1) the value of waste and how it is culturally defined and its meaning changes and differs. Waste can be regarded as something valueless, an invisible category that changes the value of things or as valuable raw material. 2) The term value remains flexible and is dependent on cultural needs that are again shaped by social and political contexts. 3) Different forms of economies like informal, communal or traditional realms exist alongside formal and capitalistic structures 4) Dumpster diving as informal provisioning of food takes the urban landscape as its prime resource and profits from local forms of waste management to express 5) freegan identities and lifestyles through individual consumer habits that are intrinsically linked with concepts of agency or practice. Question that could be answered deal with the motives of vegan people and how their values inform freegan activities that can be regarded as a way of resistance and lifestyle choice to criticize consumer society and capitalism.

Abstract (German):

Die vorliegende Arbeit setzt sich mit dem Thema und der Bedeutung von Abfall bzw. dem Konsum von 'Essen aus dem Müll' in Form von Volxküchen und dumpstern auseinander, welches beides von freeganen Gruppen in Wien praktiziert wird. Ihre Lebensweise und Werteinstellungen orientieren sich dabei am Veganismus, welcher den Konsum von veganen Essen einen hohen Stellenwert einräumt und gemeinsame Veranstaltungen wie vegane Picknicks, Grillfeste oder Festivals als Ausdruck ihrer Identitäten und Lebensstile begreift. Anhand der Methode der qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse wurden die empirischen Daten, welche ich in den Monaten Juni bis Oktober 2009 anhand von Feldnotizen sowie Aufzeichnungen informeller Gespräche aus meiner teilnehmenden Beobachtung und transkribierten Leitfadeninterviews angesammelt habe, analysiert. Die Methode diente dazu relevante Kategorien aus den Daten meiner Feldforschung abzuleiten, um sie dann mit anthropologischen Theorien der Materiellen Kultur, Wirtschaftsanthropologie sowie Konsum und Essen in Verbindungen zu setzen.

Die Einleitung befasst sich mit meinen persönlichen Erfahrungen und anthropologischen Interessen bezüglich Ernährung und Lebensmittel. Darauf folgt ein Kapitel über die Methodik und die Materielle Kultur, Wirtschaftsethnologie und Konsum von Müll und Essen. Die behandelten Themengebiete befassen sich mit der Definition, Entwicklung und Organisation von Müll, relevante Theorien über die ökonomische und anthropologische Bedeutung von Wert und Überschuss, sowie informelles wirtschaften. Das Kapitel enthält zudem Überlegungen zum Thema Konsum von Lebensmittel, und seine Bedeutung für den Ausdruck von Identität, ethischen Konsum und alltäglicher Lebens- und Handlungsweisen. Der empirische Teil befasst sich mit Definitionen von Veganismus und Freeganismus und daraus entstandenen Reformbewegungen sowie der Bedeutung von Suppen- und Volxküchen als innovative Praxis um nicht zuletzt ein Brücke zu den Fallstudien einer in einem Verein organisierten Volxküche mit der dazugehörigen Praxis des dumpstern zu schlagen.

Die Resultate meiner Arbeit umfassen folgende Punkte: 1) Der Wert von Müll und Essen wird kulturell definiert und ändert bzw. unterscheidet sich in seiner Bedeutung. 2) Der Begriff des Wertes variiert und hängt von kulturellen Bedürfnissen ab, die wiederum von gemeinschaftlichen, sozialen und politischen Aspekten

beeinflusst werden. 3) Es gibt unterschiedliche Wirtschaftsformen dessen Produktions-, Distributions- und Konsumkreislauf nicht nur innerhalb formaler und kapitalistischer Systeme funktioniert, sondern auch entlang informeller, gemeinschaftlicher oder traditioneller Ebenen. 4) Dumpstern als informelle Art der Lebensmittelbeschaffung bedient sich der städtischen Infrastruktur und Organisation von Müll als wertvolle Rohstoffquelle und 5) kann als Ausdruck freeganer Lebensweisen und Identitäten gesehen werden, die sich mit dieser Art des individuellen Konsum ausdrücken, die wiederum mit bestimmten Praktiken verbunden sind, die sich verändern können wenn man die Rolle des Akteurs, seine Fähigkeiten und Ziele mit einbezieht.

Fragen die durch die ethnologische Feldforschung beantwortet werden konnten, befassen sich mit der Bedeutung von Essen für vegane Identitäten, die Institution der Volxküche und wie das Dumpstern vegane bzw. freegane Lebensstile fördert, wann und wo solche Aktivitäten organisiert werden, wer daran teilnimmt und welche Motivation es gibt sich vegan zu ernähren und damit traditionelle Arten der Ernährung und des Lebensmittelkonsums herauszufordern. Ethische Überlegungen, gemeinsame Werte und Ziele spielen eine wichtige Rolle für den Veganismus und den freeganen Lebensstil der sich als Praxis des gemeinsamen Widerstands versteht um die kapitalistische Wirtschaft, ihre Überflussgesellschaft und Verschwendung zu kritisieren.

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