

"The Reification of the Living: FleischWissen" (MeatKnowledge) Online-Symposium on February 25 and 26, 2021.

"The slaughterhouse and modern society - a problematic relationship"

In modern society, the route taken by meat from animal to plate is most likely to be via the slaughterhouse. Home slaughtering has long been an exception to this rule. The slaughterhouse, which has always been a factory, is a social institution that exemplifies the rationalization of modernity: production replaced craftsmanship, traditional rules gave way to strict and complex rules, the animal presence of the place dissolved in the sterile and quiet somewhere of the province.

In the beginning, the slaughterhouse was a central institution of rational prosperity in industrialized countries, a transformation machine of modern nutrition. Today, however, the slaughterhouse is classified and downgraded as a link in the consumer-oriented value chain dominated by retailers. Nevertheless, the slaughterhouse is an important node in the complex network of relationships between agricultural production and the mass consumption of meat products. Even the first modern slaughterhouses indicate that these were not solitary facilities. On the one hand, different social spheres intersect here, forcing the slaughterhouse into its respective current form. In the slaughterhouse, a comprehensive interrelationship between economic calculations, from the purchase of raw materials and labor relations to the range of products, as well as scientific findings, health and hygienic precautions, political regulation and ethical concerns, is constantly being realized. On the other hand, the slaughterhouse is connected in many ways with other areas of society that make its existence in its respective form possible. Last but not least, the city was for a long time the genuine place of the slaughterhouse. Connected to the technical and logistical infrastructure, animals could be transformed into meat and other products.

The view of the slaughterhouse reflects the way in which this integration into society takes place. The enthusiastic devotion to the product and its place of production was followed by the rejection and invisibilization of the latter. The paradox of the predominant acceptance of the product with a broad rejection of the place of production thus became possible. The still used terms of the slaughterhouse or -yard appear as a euphemism of the automated transformation machinery of the living to the object meat, which gives reason to reflect on the conditions of the possibility of meat consumption. Here, among other things, problems of the slaughterhouse come to light, namely the production as transformation of the living into raw material, the embedding of the slaughterhouse in trade and consumption (places of meat purchase, preparation, and eating), in cities and regions, or social debates that today reflect the observation of the slaughterhouse as a critique of the transformation work done there.

The symposium aims to stimulate discussion with other interested researchers on this topic with contributions from our own project research and presentations by decidedly distinguished researchers.

The partners of the project "The Reification of the Living: Meat as a Cultural Asset" include the Institute for Social Innovation Berlin (Dr. René John), Fulda University of Applied Sciences (Prof. Dr. Jana Rückert-John, Nils Schweers), the University of Regensburg (Prof. Dr. Gunther Hirschfelder, Dr. Lars Winterberg), the German Cookbook Museum in Dortmund (Dr. Jens Stöckler, Corinna Schirmer) and the Westerwald Landscape Museum in Hachenburg (Dr. Moritz Jungbluth, Frédéric Gesing). More info on the project and the program of the symposium at www.fleischwissen.blogspot.com/

Contact & registration:

Dr. René John (rene.john@isinova.org)

Registration until February 20, 2021 at fw-symposium@isinova.org

Program

Thursday, 25.02.2021 (Lectures and discussions in English)

18:00 - 18:15 Welcome and introduction by Dr. René John

18:15 - 19:00 Ass. Prof. Joshua Specht (University of Notre Dame, Indiana) "Pandemic in the Slaughterhouse: The Nineteenth-Century Origins of the 2020 American Meat Crisis."

19:00 - 19:45 Prof. Dr. Dorothee Brantz (TU Berlin) "The Human-Animal Dimension at the Slaughterhouse in 19th Century Paris and Berlin."

19:45 - 20:15 Discussion

20:15 End

Friday, 26.02.2021 (Lectures and discussions in German)

09:00 - 09:15 Welcome by Dr. René John

09:15 - 10:00 Dr. Veronika Settele (University Bremen) „Revolution in the Stable and Turmoil in Society: Livestock Farming in Germany, 1945-1990“

10:00 - 10:25 Dr. Lars Winterberg (University Regensburg) „Becoming Meat. An Exploration of Modern Slaughterhouses“

10:25 - 10:35 Break

10:35 - 11:00 Frédéric Gesing (Landschaftsmuseum Westerwald, Hachenburg) "Private slaughterhouses in the countryside - cultural-historical observations from the Westerwald region"

11:00 - 11:30 Discussion

11:30 - 12:30 Lunch Break

12:30 - 12:55 Corinna Schirmer (Deutsches Kochbuchmuseum, Dortmund) "From hoof to plate - how cookbooks do (not) tell us the whole story."

12:55 - 13:20 Nils Schweers (Univ. of appl. Science Fulda) "'One tears off the pigeons' heads' - changes in the semantics of slaughter in cookery books from 1850 to the present day."

13:20 - 13:30 Break

13:30 - 13:55 Dr. René John (Institut für Sozialinnovation, Berlin) "Modern Slaughterhouse and the Meat of Society: From Central Node to Peripheral Condition"

13:55 - 14:30 Concluding discussion

In advance, you will get a link for a Teams online session.