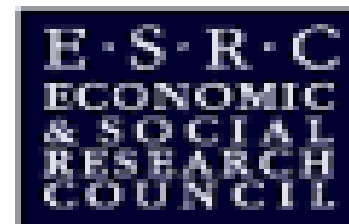




# Studying new trends in food consumption

Alan Warde, University of  
Manchester



# Programme

- Introductory remarks on sociology of food and eating
- A comparative study of trust in food
- A comparative study of the practice of eating.
- The pursuit of quality
- Omnivorousness: a master trend?

# Introductory remarks

The importance of food

The neglect of consumption

Food and social science theories

# Food and theories of eating

- A parlous state of theory?
- Limited ambition?
- Comparative investigation as a source of theory?
- Borrowing theories?
  - Institutionalism
  - Theory of practice
  - Conventions theory
  - Cultural omnivore

**Consumer Trust in Food**  
**A European Study of the Social and Institutional**  
**Conditions for the Production of Trust**  
**2002-2004**

**TRUSTINFOOD**

Supported by the European Commission, Quality of Life programme, Key Action 1

# The aims of the TRUSTINFOOD project



Focus  
on  
beef  
and  
tomatoes



1. Identify and analyse factors which determine and influence trust in the food supply and information sources: (market actors, authorities, experts, NGOs, media, etc.)
2. Link these factors to consumer responses, individually and collectively

Countries included: **Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Norway, Portugal**

Survey and institutional studies in six countries and at the EU level

## Can difference and change be explained by varying social, political and institutional conditions?

Country and EU studies: Secondary data, statistics, key informant interviews, media debates

- To chart changes in the organisation of public regulatory policies and food provisioning systems
- To identify concerns and priorities among selected strategic actors in the food system and their perceptions of each other - roles, responsibilities, conflicts
- To identify the role of distrust in the production of trust - potential positive achievements of critical consumers

# The TRUSTINFOOD survey

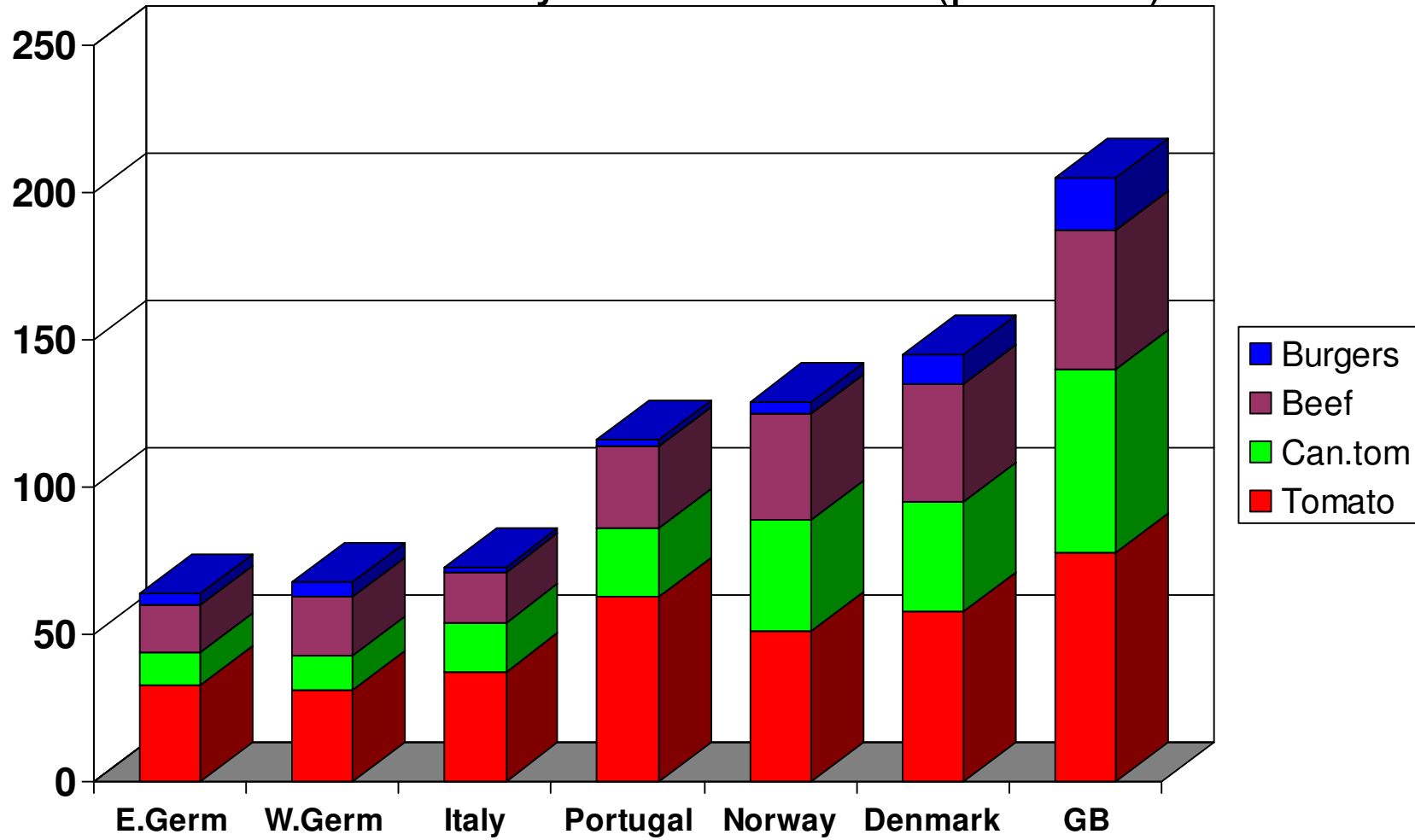
- CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews), random sampling
- Samples: 1000 in Denmark, Norway and Portugal; 1500 in GB; and 2000 in Italy and Germany

## Questionnaire:

- Measures of trust
- Practices and strategies (as shoppers, eaters, citizens)
- Distribution of responsibilities
- Socio-demographic background

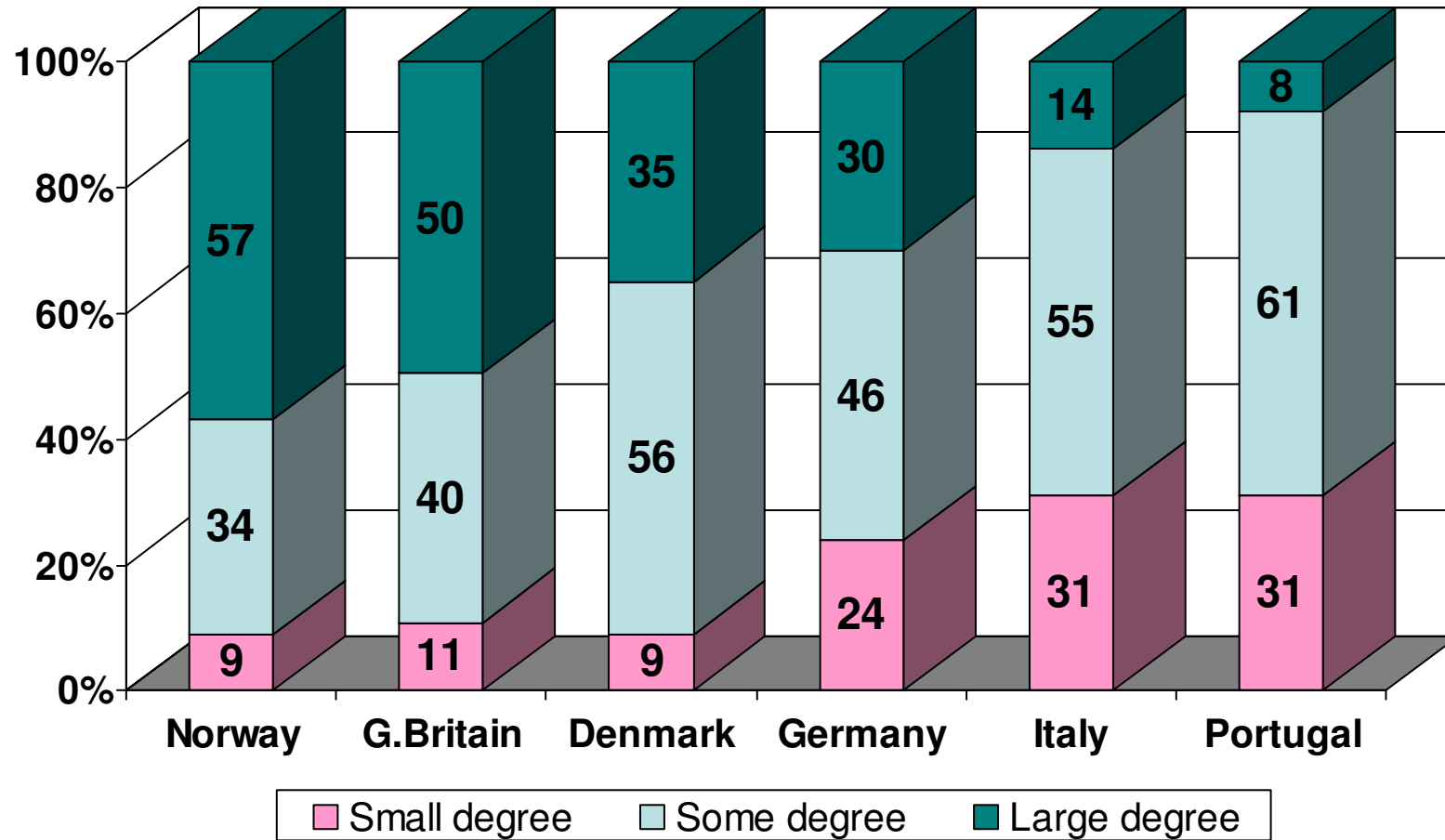


# It is very safe to eat .... (per cent)

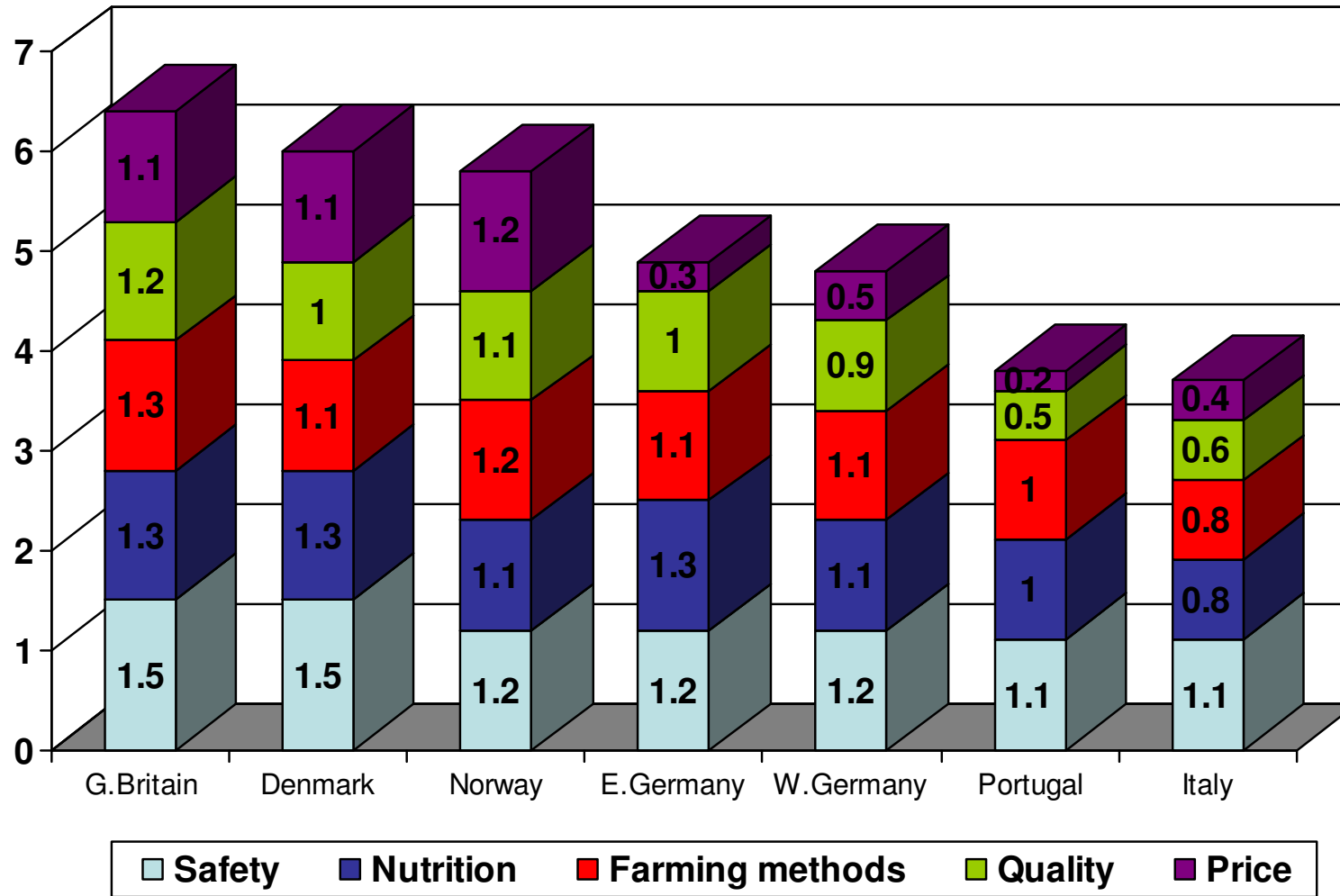


Index 12 foods	20,7	18,8	19,4	31,5	31,2	35,8	50,8
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*To what degree are you confident that the foods bought for your household are unharmed?*



Do you think that the conditions for (prices, quality, farming methods, health, safety) have improved, are more or less the same or have rather deteriorated over the last twenty years?  
 (>1 - net improvement, <1 - net deterioration)



# Summary of findings from the survey

1. Systematic differences between countries on most trust dimensions
  - High trust - Scandinavia + GB
  - Low trust - Portugal and Italy
  - Low/medium trust - East and West Germany
2. Modest impact of socio-demographic variables (gender +)
3. Rank orders (food items, key food issues, actors) are quite or very similar
4. Trust in food safety probably improved, other food issues cause more worry

# Problems of comparative institutional analysis

- Variable versus case analysis
- Ragin and the role of 'truth tables'
  - 1987 The Comparative Method
  - 2000 Fuzzy-set Social Science
- The problem of small N
- Alternative methodical procedures

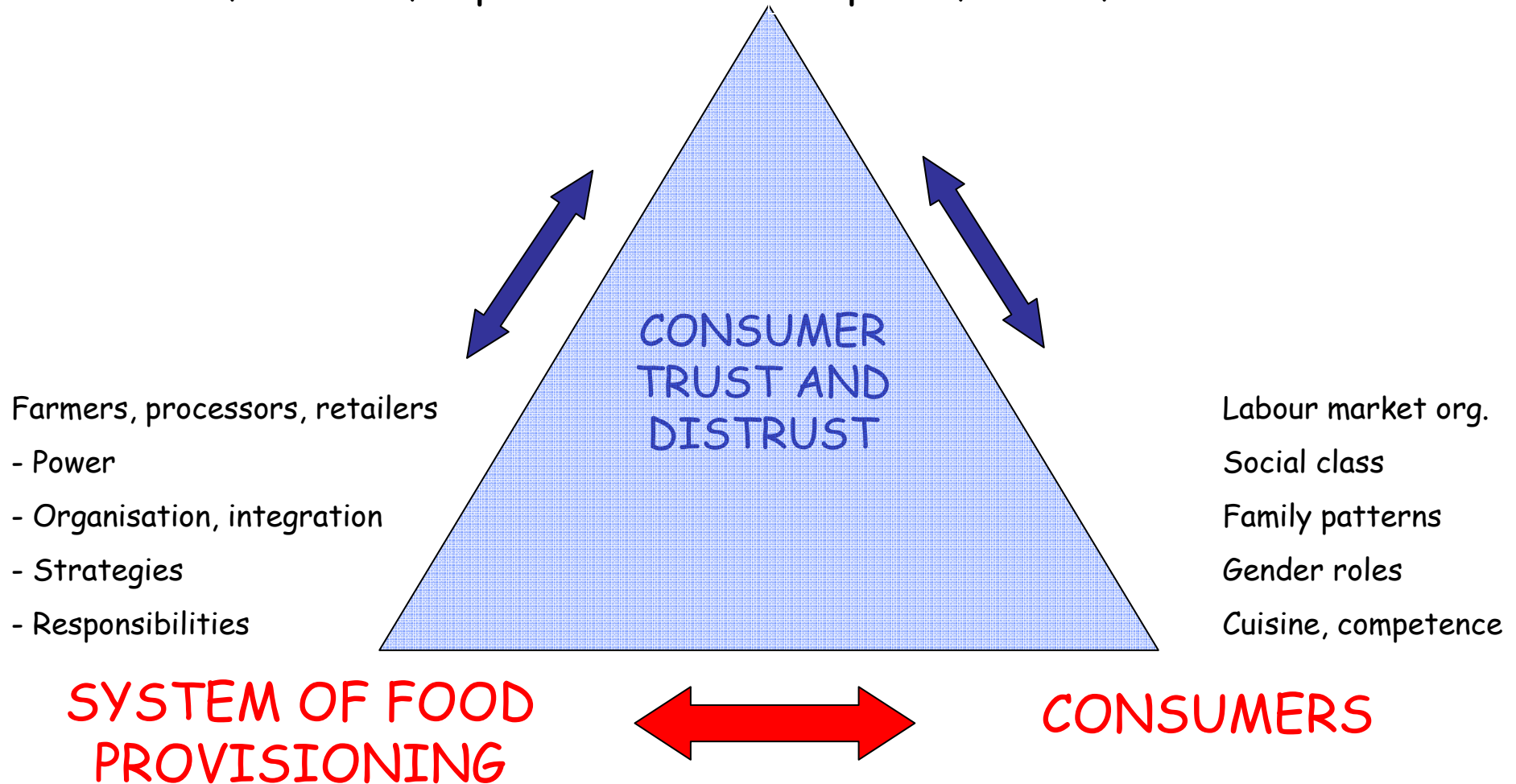
# Comparative qualitative methods

- Systematic data collection
- Reflective characterisation of country differences
- Systematic compilation of comparative similarities and differences
- Procedure iterated several times
- Application to explanation of levels of trust, case by case and across cases

# An overview of structures, actors and relations

**AUTHORITIES:**  
local, national, supranational

**CIVIL SOCIETY:**  
experts, NGOs, media

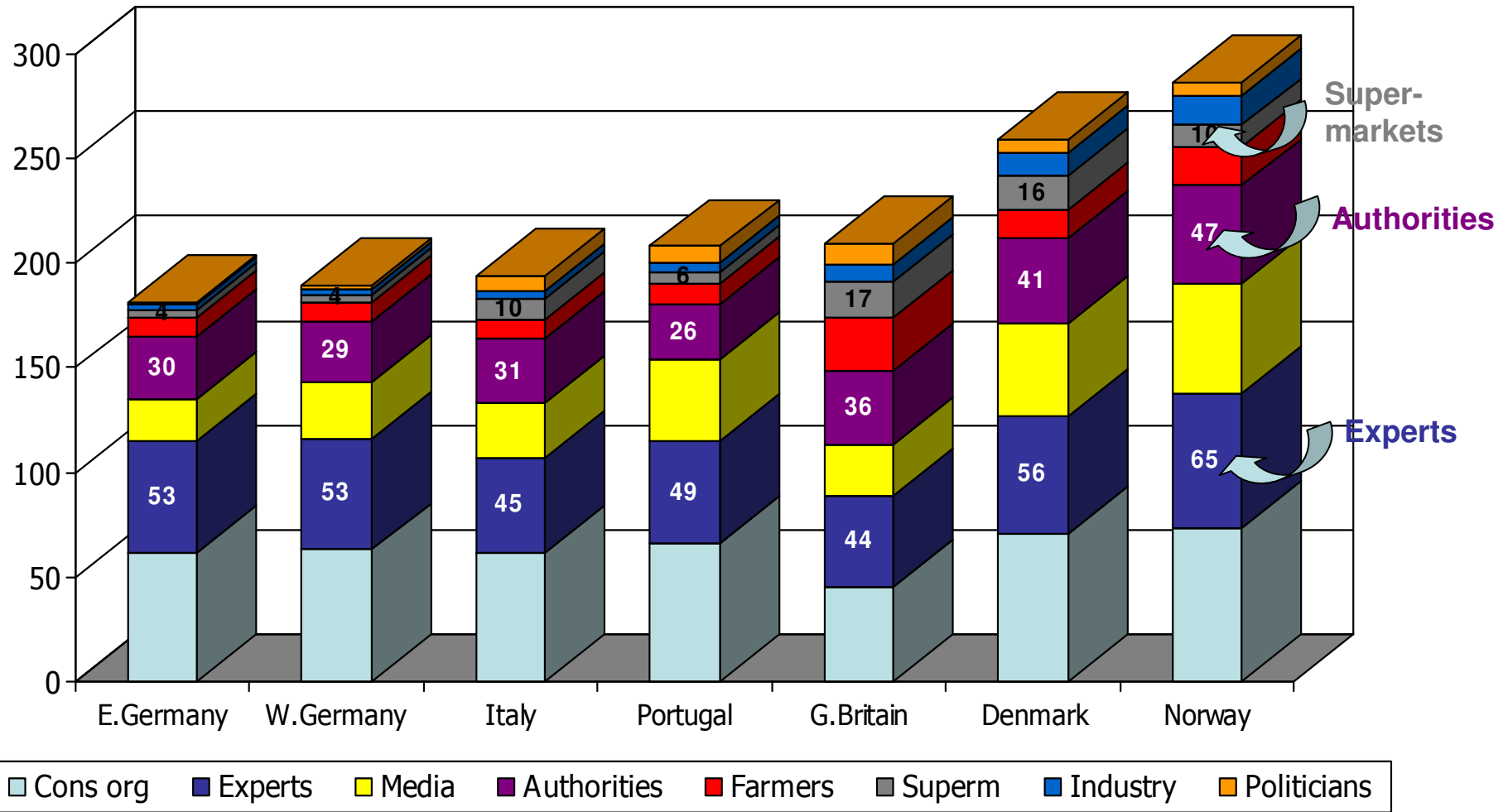


# Whom to trust?

- Roles, powers and responsibilities of actors vary
- Key actors: processors, farmers, retailers, food authorities, consumer organisations, food experts, mass media
- Systemic arrangements vary as a function of relative power of actors



Imagine a scandal with salmonella in chicken, would the following actors ... **tell the whole truth?** (per cent)



# Power and truth-telling

	UK	Norway	Italy	Germany	Denmark	Portugal
Processing industry	4	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	4	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Supermarket chains	1	4	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	2	<b>3</b>
Farmers	2	1	<b>3</b>	4	2	2
Consumer organisations	4	1	2	2	2	2
Public authorities	1/2	1	4	4	1	<b>3</b>
Food experts	2	2	2	2	2	2
Mass media	4	2	4	<b>3</b>	1	2

1=high truth, high power; 2=high truth, low power;  
**3=high power, low truth**; 4=low power, low truth

# Concluding remarks: I

1. Consumer trust and distrust vary considerably and consistently between countries
2. European integration and globalisation have impacts, but handled very differently across Europe (national economic interests, political traditions etc)
3. Trust and distrust in food depend on the specific social and institutional context
4. Basic differences between Nordic, British and South European situations, Germany in a transitional state

# Concluding remarks II

	regulation	provision	consumers
Type 1	paternalist	closed productivist	solidary citizen
Type 2	centralised modern	retailer-led market	individual active
Type 3	fragmented	producer plural	embattled traditional
Type 4	internally divided	disjointed	unsettled transitional

# Concluding remarks: III

General mechanisms determining trust:

- general cultural and social conditions,
- institutional structures and performance,
- limited dependence on consumers' own strategies

# Final observations

Mistrust is greater where:

- a high proportion of income is spent on food,
- if it is believed that the food supply system is getting worse with respect to key food issues,
- if there is low faith in the effectiveness of the food authorities,
- if people are heavily dependent on small retail outlets,
- if there are no powerful actors who are perceived to be likely to tell the truth about controversial issues,
- and if people do not think that consumers, personally or as represented collectively, make a difference

Project website:

[www.trustinfood.org](http://www.trustinfood.org)

# TRUST IN FOOD

A Comparative and Institutional Analysis



*Unni Kjørnes, Mark Harvey  
and Alan Warde*







# Diffusion of Cultures of Consumption

*Alan Warde, Shu-Li Cheng, Wendy Olsen  
and Dale Southerton*

*The University of Manchester*



# Main objectives

- To explore patterns of change in some central and mundane activities which reveal the consumption norms of late modern, capitalist societies.
- To isolate the rhythms of the local-global dialectic – tendencies to convergence and divergence in patterns of cultural behaviour across countries
- To evaluate the merits of theories of practice in the explanation of consumption patterns
- To marshal, for those purposes, data about household expenditure and time-use which is systematically comparable across countries

# Research Questions

- 1) Are national differences in decline? (convergence)
- ‘globalization is not the story of cultural homogenization’ (Appadurai 1996: 11)
- 2) Is American culture of consumption becoming dominant? (Americanisation)
- ‘Americanisation amounted less to a wholesale imposition of American taste and objects than to a creative dialogue’ (Trentmann, 2004: 14)
- 3) Is internal social differentiation in decline, or changing markedly? (de-differentiation)

# ***Changes in the practice of eating: a comparative analysis of time-use***

Alan Warde, Shu-Li Cheng, Wendy Olsen and Dale Southerton  
School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester

## **Acknowledgement**

We are grateful for funding from the ESRC and AHRB for the  
grant RES-143-25-0002  
for a project under the research programme 'Cultures of  
Consumption'.

## ***Examining change***

Popular narratives about changing food habits:

- the decline of the family meal,
- the erosion of national culinary traditions,
- the growth of convenience and fast foods,
- the escalation of risk associated with food production and consumption,
- the social misuse of an abundant food supply which is believed to guarantee sufficiency for all.

But academic wisdom that food habits particularly resistant to change.

# Methods and data

Time-use surveys record the primary activities of respondents during time slots of specific duration (usually 10, 15 or 30 minutes duration) over 24 hours for two or more days.

Five countries at two points in time, during the first half of the 1970s and around 2000. (MTUS)

The MTUS activity categories: cooking and washing up, eating at home, and eating and drinking away from home.

Population aged between 20 and 59.

Descriptive statistics of mean minutes spent in the components of the practice.

Two types of regression analysis, multiple and logistic regressions.

Socio-demographic factors from less comprehensive datasets of the 1970s: employment status, gender, age, educational qualifications, household composition and marital status.

Table 1 Mean minutes and participation rates allocated to all activities within the 24-hour day, five countries, various dates, respondents aged 20-59.

Activity	Mean minutes for all respondents		Participation rates (% of sample)	
<b>UK</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1975</b>
Cooking & washing up	51	57	88	72
Eating at home	54	79	97	99
Eating and drinking out	25	11	43	32
<b>USA</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1975</b>
Cooking & washing up	39	48	56	62
Eating at home	42*	52	n/a	90
Eating and drinking out	30*	28	n/a	32
<b>Norway</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1971</b>
Cooking & washing up	47	79	83	67
Eating at home	50	80	93	98
Eating and drinking out	14	8	17	12
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1975</b>
Cooking & washing up	51	61	94	87
Eating at home	66	76	99	99
Eating and drinking out	5	4	39	18
<b>France</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1974</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1974</b>
Cooking & washing up	50	72	67	77
Eating at home	96	95	98	99
Eating and drinking out	30	15	27	23

\* In 1998 all eating was accounted for under the single heading 'Eating'. We therefore use an estimate.

Table 1 Mean minutes and participation rates allocated to all activities within the 24-hour day, five countries, various dates, respondents aged 20-59.

**1A: UK 1975 and 2000**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Mean minutes for all respondents</b>				<b>Participation rate</b>	
	Means for 2000	Mean for 1975			% of sample in 2000	% of sample in 1975
Cooking & washing up	51	57			88	72
Eating at home	54	79			97	99
Eating and drinking at out	25	11			43	32



# Eating at home, eating out and food preparation: national profiles

Almost everyone spent some time *eating at home*.

Everywhere except France, the amount of time spent has, on average, reduced. Time allocated to domestic food consumption is minimal in USA.

Time devoted to *cooking* reduced in all five countries.

Decline most marked in Norway and France (32 and 22 minutes).

Common sources?: supermarketization, provision of part prepared convenience foods, new kitchen technologies, etc.. Time spent in Europe at the end of the 1990s was about the same as in USA in 1975.

Everywhere *eating and drinking away from home* increased. French and Americans now spend most time on eating out, Britons not far behind.

Eating and food preparation takes up considerably less time in the USA than in Europe. In France eating and drinking, uniquely, take up more time at the end of the century than it had in 1974.

# Time spent by whom?

## *Food preparation*

France:

Almost no change between 1974 and 1998.

Women older adults, in couples and those with fewest educational qualifications cook most.

Being in employment reduces time spent.

Almost perfectly parallel to eating at home, but strength of model weaker at the later date.

Other countries very similar. Identifiable trends are weak.

Tertiary education means less time in food preparation. Might reflect tendency to eat out more (distinction?).

Children in the household increases preparation time.

USA determinants reduced in range and strength by 1998.

# Time spent by whom?

## *Eating at home*

France most intricately structured pattern:

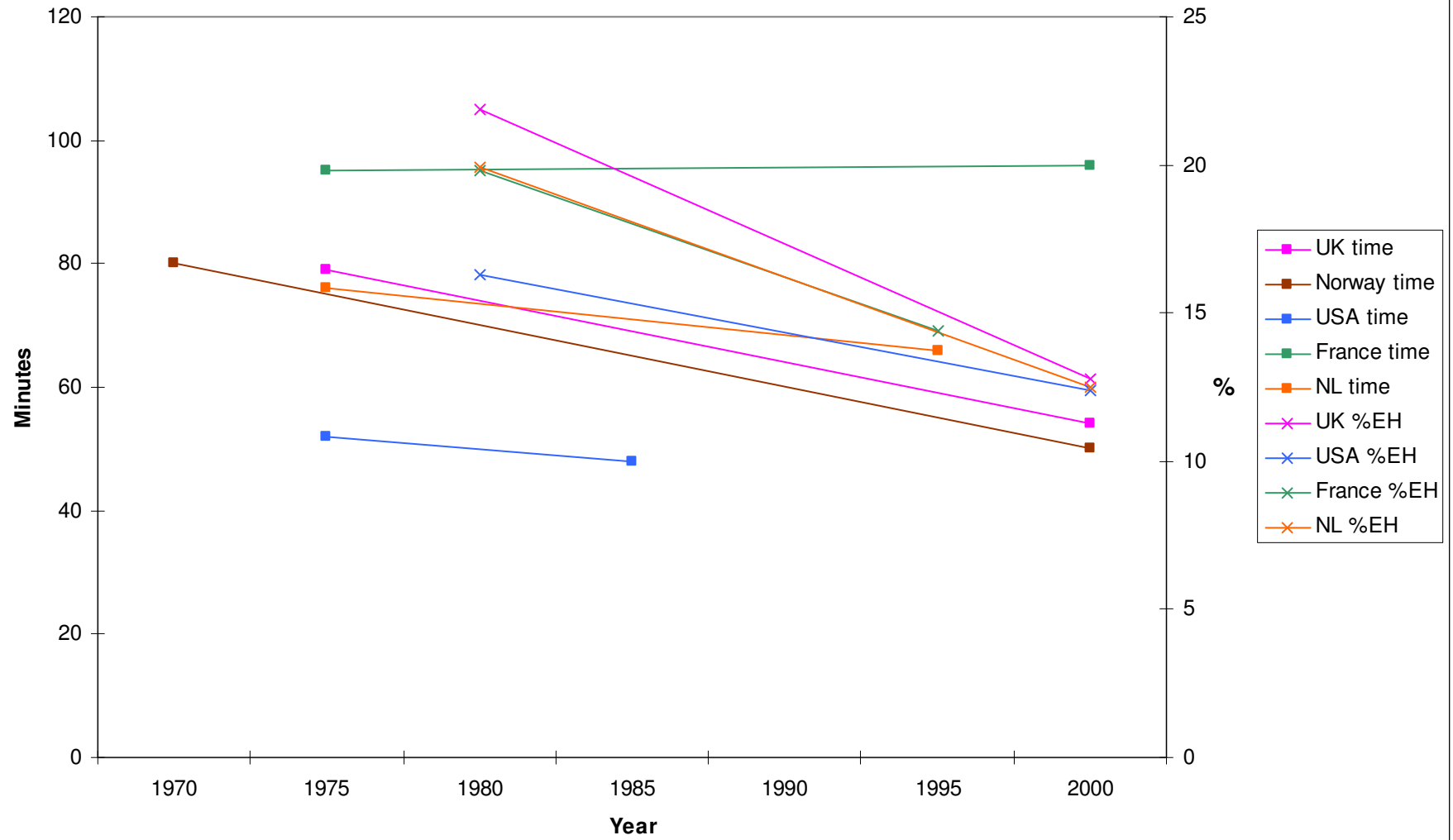
- Being in full or part-time employment, not being a member of a couple, and having had advanced education reduced time in both 1974 and 1998.
  - Being female and having secondary education also reduced time spent in 1974, but not in 1998.
  - Being older and having at least one child at home increased time devoted.
- Overall, stability in the forces behind family meals with differences between two dates not great.

Other countries similar patterns, often rather stronger: more variation explained in Britain and especially the Netherlands.

The USA also shows little change, with weak social determination.

More familial basis to domestic provisioning on mainland Europe than in UK or the USA.

Comparing time and money - eating at home



# Time spent by whom?

## *Eating out*

Growth in time spent eating and drinking away from home is uneven and less easy to interpret.

Practicalities of household organisation are not very decisive.

France most differentiated: not living as a couple, being in full-time employment and having more education increase the likelihood of eating out, while having children or being a woman reduces the likelihood. Little change since 1974.

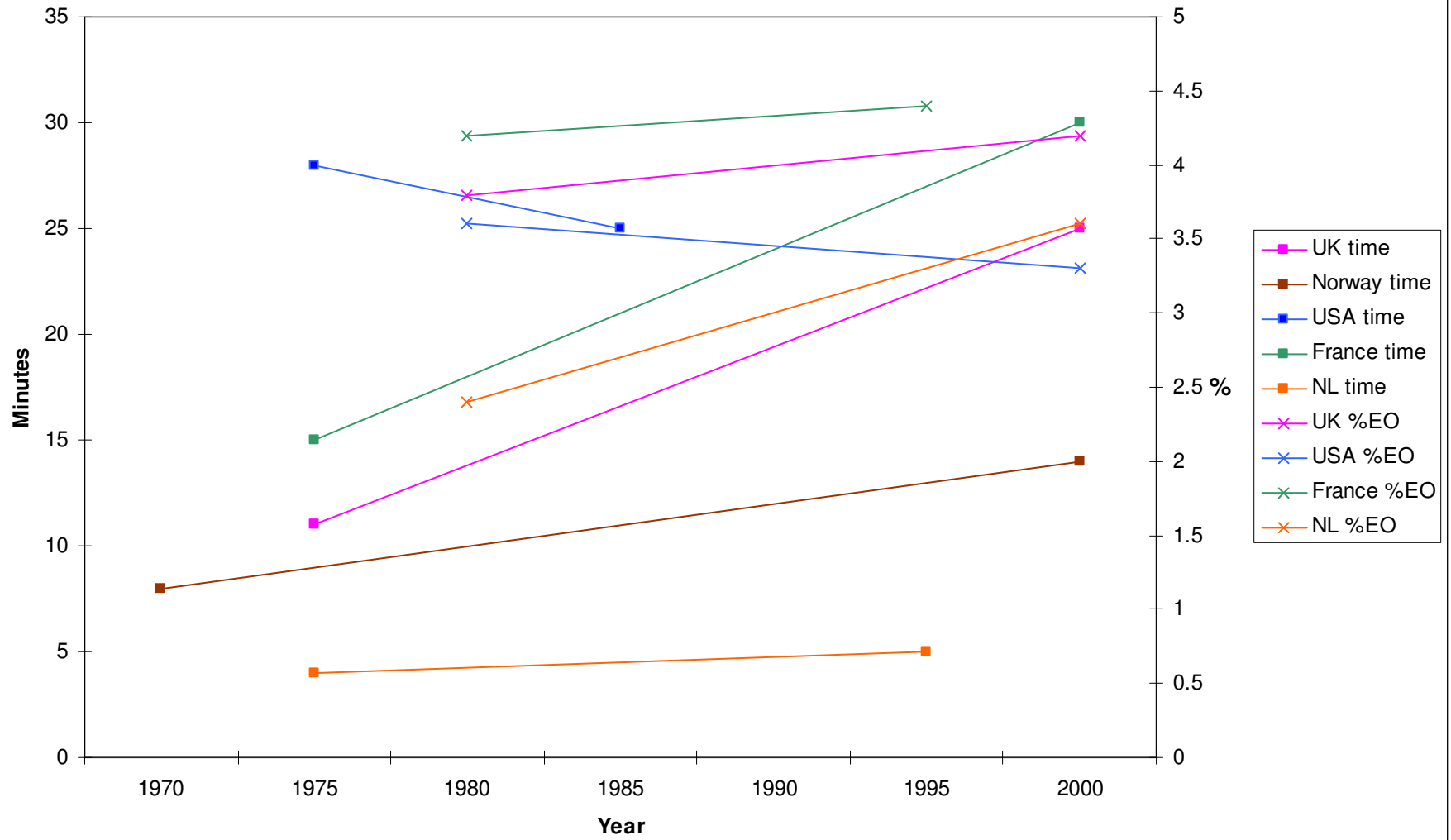
Britain similar to France in 1998. Emergent greater involvement of those with a degree and those in paid work

Eating out is a very heterogeneous activity in the USA.

In both Netherlands and Norway, eating out was not much developed in the 1970s and still lagged in 2000. Both homogeneous.

Exception of Norway, increasing importance of education in Europe

Comparing time and money - eating out



## Eating out

- becoming more normal, but national differences in rate of expansion
- a realm with growing symbolic significance, not least in contrast with the domestic and family meal
- modern differentiating feature is its association with pleasure and sociability
- participation has multiple purposes, but understandings of practice widely shared
- provision is highly varied, with a hierarchy attached to its various forms
- a socially differentiated practice; both access and taste can be source of distinction
- also a foundation for an enthusiasm with gastronomy, which in Britain developed as per theories of cultural change at end of 20th century

# Discussion

## *Social differentiation*

Social position (belonging to social categories of age, sex, gender, etc) is not equally determinant of participation and frequency across the various activities.

Temporal organization of food provisioning and consumption is generally more subject to practical constraints of life-course and employment than to symbolic aspects of life-style

Lagged adaptation accounts for trends in patterns of allocation of time-use by men and women.

Evidence of distinction persists.

Patterns of eating out are volatile.

France exemplifies countries differ in their institutional arrangements.



# Conclusions I

Need to analyze in detail how consumption is institutionalized differently by country and social group.

Social habits, routines and conventions provide a source of general resistance to rapid change.

Social and group positioning not yet defunct as a structuring principle of personal and collective experience.

Socio-demographic pattern is mostly stable with regard to domestic activity, though the strength of differences reduces for food preparation.

Internal differences are not the same from country to country; but social differentiation is being restructured.

# Conclusion II

- The trends and counter-tendencies reveal complex localised processes of development.
- Eating has more internationally similar pattern of time-use than almost any other practice.
- Yet evidence is at least as favourable to the argument that consumption is institutionalized nationally.
- Some de-differentiation, but equally re-structuring of practices.

# Temporal re-organisation of eating in UK, 1975-2000

- duration of domestic meals has not radically altered.
- more intense dependence on commodified provision.
- more shorter episodes of eating away from home but many of longer duration (short episodes are additional, not substitutes).
- weakening distinction between weekday and weekend, indicate greater temporal (and spatial) flexibility.
- people allocate a substantial amount of time to eating and drinking in public spaces, but without sign of diminished significance for eating at home.

# General conclusions

- Comparative analysis has value
- It should be means to theoretical development
- Evidence of convergence in Europe
- But not Americanization

# Methodological considerations

- Difficult to talk generally about trends because of national and group differences
- Institutional conditions matter
- Power relations between key agents as a determining force
- Few reliable generalizations across countries