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Agricultural Sciences

Interpretations of Meat Consumption

– A Critical Analysis of Interpretative Repertoires of
Individuals Working in an Environmental NGO

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Department of Urban and Rural Development
Master's Thesis • 30 HEC
Environmental Communication and Management - Master's Programme
Uppsala 2014

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Credits: 30 HEC

Level: Second cycle (A2E)

Course title: Independent Project in Environmental Sciences - Master's thesis

Course code: EX0431

Programme/Education: Environmental Communication and Management – Master's Programme

Place of publication: Uppsala

Year of publication: 2014

Online publication: <http://stud.epsilon.slu.se>

Keywords: Meat consumption, interpretative repertoire, ideological dilemma, subject position, identity, masculine, feminine

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Abstract

This article presents a discursive analysis with data from interviews conducted with women working in an environmental organisation who were asked to explain their views of meat consumption and the need of reduction thereof. The interviews were semi-structured and analysed with focus on interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions to identify patterns of meaning making around meat consumption. In the data seven broader repertoires emerged, suggesting that the participants make sense out of meat consumption with help of repertoires that at times are contradictory. The repertoires used ultimately uphold a positive view of meat consumption, resulting in the maintenance thereof.

1 Introduction

With increasing meat consumption worldwide, reports have stated the negative effects of animal agriculture on the environment (FAO, 2006; 2013), and environmental NGO's urge for a reduction in consumer meat consumption (Fältbiologerna, 2014; Greenpeace, Jordbruk; Jordens Vänner, 2014; SNF; WWF, 2014). Furthermore, according to Gough, McFadden and McDonald (2013, p. 150) identities are "*fundamentally influenced by the social and ideological contexts in which they are situated.*" With this in mind, it can be assumed that the notions of meat reduction influence individuals active in these environmental spheres. In this study a norm is seen as "*a 'guide for action' which is upheld by social sanctions of either a negative or positive nature*" (Nath, 2010, p. 266). In connection, as will be developed further in the following chapter, norms concerning meat consumption are gendered and predominately masculine (Adams, 2010, p. 303), whereas abstention of meat is considered feminine (Nath, 2010, p. 276). Consequently, to study women who work in environmental organisations therefore offers a unique setting for studies in construction of reality, since women should be affected less by masculine norms pressuring to eat meat. This study aims to explore how the phenomena of meat consumption and the perceived need of reduction thereof is constructed in social situations where obstacles to defy the masculine meat norm can be assumed to be less prevalent.

In this study, a social constructionist perspective is deployed as I explore the reflexive project of reality construction through language, the formation of a self-identity (subject positions) that takes place in that use of language and how this manifests itself in contradictions of interpretations. A methodological approach developed in critical discursive social psychology was used to analyse the material from the interviews conducted (Edley, 2001, pp. 189-224). This methodological approach enables exploration of interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas around meat consumption and the subject positions that subsequently are offered. Consequently, investigation of the concepts individuals use to display

meaning, contradictory common sensical notions, and the identity locations available to them (*see Analytical Approach*).

1.1 *Meat consumption in the West*

Meat consumption has undergone a change in representation in western societies during the last decade. According to the *Food and Agriculture organisation* (FAO), (2006, p. xx), administered by the *United Nations* (UN), animal agriculture is one of the most environmentally problematic sectors with only the energy sector as more damaging. Despite this the Swedes eat more meat than ever. According to statistics from the *Swedish Board of Agriculture* the Swedish people consumed approximately 85.6kg of meat per person during 2012, which stands for an increase of 34% since 1980. During 2013 that amount increased to 88,5kg per person (Jordbruksverket, 2014). The prediction is that the global total meat consumption will double from 2006-2050. (FAO, 2006, p. iii) The anticipated increase in meat consumption in combination with environmental degradation has lead to urgent calls for action within environmentalist communities.

There are different views on how to remedy the problem. For example, the two most recent reports on animal agriculture and its environmental impacts, *Livestocks Long Shadow* (FAO, 2006) and *Tackling Climate Change Through Livestock* (FAO, 2013), focuses on the industry and not the eating habits of the consumers as a way forward. Consequently, the industry has to change through development and implementation of technical solutions. In agreement with this perspective, Mark Sutton at the *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe* (UNECE) writes that it is too extreme to urge people to stop eating meat completely. Sutton claims that the reasons why people tend to want to keep on consuming meat are based on, among others, “*ethical and religious considerations*” (Sutton, 2013). Nevertheless, the FAO does state that “*the impact is so significant that it needs to be addressed with urgency*” (FAO, 2006, p. xx) and that “*the production of animal protein, particularly when fed on dedicated crops, is typically less efficient than the production of equivalent amounts of plant*

protein” (FAO, 2013, p. 1). Thus conflicting viewpoints exist even within the same environmental body.

Conversely, the largest environmental organisations in Sweden stress the need for complementary reduction of meat consumption (Fältbiologerna, 2014; Greenpeace, Jordbruk; Jordens Vänner, 2014; SNF; WWF, 2014). One of these organisations is the *Swedish Society for Nature Conservation* (Naturskyddsföreningen, in short the Swedish abbreviation is SNF), which in their *”Green Guide”* writes about five ways to eat environmentally smart. The first way states *”enjoy loads of vegetarian food – that’s the most important thing you can do to eat environmentally smart”* (SNF). Similarly, WWF (2014) states in their debate article *”To eat less meat is everyone’s responsibility”* that food businesses like supermarkets and restaurants together with the consumers have to make changes. Similarly, consumers should according to WWF (2014) aim for eating less meat, and chose the meat with caution: *”less but better”*. Examples of the possible changes for businesses are: guidance for customers to eat more vegetarian food, support for customers to vary protein sources (and not exchange meat for fish, since fish is also seen as environmentally problematic), promotion of organic animal farming, branding of meat origin et cetera. (WWF, 2014). In addition, vegetarianism (lacto-ovo) and veganism are becoming more accepted and adopted as lifestyle choices. A survey issued by the Swedish animal rights organisation *Djurens Rätt* (2014) estimated that during the last five years the amount of vegetarians in Sweden has increased from 4% to 6%, and the number of vegans increased from 2% to 4%. This means that 1 out of 10 Swedes are now deliberately avoiding consuming meat. Consequently, the focus on reduced meat consumption reflects an alternative stream within public society and environmentally minded communities.

1.2 Previous Research

Studies show that eating meat is gendered and furthermore predominantly masculine oriented. This is regulated through constraints on individuals’ perceived ability to perform lifestyle changes through social norms (Nath,

2010, p. 266); which is in accordance with the work of the feminist scholar Carol J. Adams (2010) who studies correlations between masculinity and meat consumption. Adams argues that meat consumption is connected to traditionally masculine constructed behaviour in Western industrialized societies; therefore men might feel an increased pressure to eat meat compared to women (Adams, 2010, p. 303). This idea is corroborated in the study “*Meat, morals and masculinity*” by Ruby and Heine (2011), which concluded that vegetarians were perceived as less masculine than their meat-eating counterparts, but at the same time more virtuous. Another example is “*Real men don’t diet*” by Gough (2007, p. 335), who argues that “*media texts on men, diet and health*” tend to “*privilege hegemonic masculinities*” and at the same time they construe diets as “*women-centred*”. Therefore media and public discourse “*deny men ‘healthy’ positions within the world of diet*” (Gough, 2007, p. 336). In the study by Gough (2007), diet is defined as the normative eating patterns condoned by society to allow disease prevention. However, it is important to note the gendered nature of different definitions of the word diet; this paper focuses on *diet* in the sense of socially condoned behaviour, yet diet is also commonly used in contexts regarding women’s restrictions on eating habits (Bordo, 2003). Vegetarianism and veganism are, however, lifestyles and not diets; in addition, these lifestyles are frequently viewed as feminine due to their abstention from meat (Nath, 2010, p. 276). Seeing that 90% of Swedes eat meat (Nilsson, 2014) and that meat is considered masculine; the normative Swedish diet can be interpreted as having masculine traits through its meat focus.

In addition, Nath’s study ‘*Gendered fare?*’ (2010, p. 276) points to a recurring phenomenon in Australian advertising campaigns of animal products that appeal to the idea of what we as humans are ‘meant to eat’ and what is ‘natural’. His vegetarian male participants perceived a socially recognised pressure from other men that “*meat and animal products are the superior food for a ‘real’ man*”. Furthermore, Cole and Morgan (2011, p. 134) argue in the article ‘Vegaphobia’, that derogatory discourse on veganism “*empirically misrepresents the experience of veganism*”. They

conclude that the three most common anti-vegan discourses used in UK newspapers tend to “*ridicul[e] veganism*”, “*characteri[se] veganism as asceticism*” and “*describ[e] veganism as difficult or impossible to sustain*” (Cole & Morgan, 2011, p. 139). Out of almost 400 articles examined ca. 74% were found to use negative discourses on veganism (Cole & Morgan, 2011, p. 138). Consequently, western discourses are suggested to portray meat consumption in terms of natural and normal, and veganism as deviant to the norm.

2 Analytical Approach

This study employs a discourse analysis approach developed within critical social psychology by Potter and Wetherell (Edley, 2001, p. 198). The approach contains three linked tools: interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. As Nigel Edley (2001, pp. 189-228) in *Discourse as Data* (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001) explains, this approach focuses on how identities are negotiated and produced in everyday speech; reproduce and transform historical repertoires; and consequently alter culture (Edley, 2001, p. 191).

The Foucauldian way of using *discourses* can be explained as “*systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak*” (Lessa, 2006, p. 285). Furthermore, discourse entails that as individuals learn language, they become encultured into specific thought-patterns about the world. Subsequently, they become “*committed or tied to the concept of ideology*” (Edley, 2001, p. 202) (See more on *ideology* in 2.2 *Ideological Dilemmas*). Foucault meant that these discourses are intertwined with power and institutions in society, and dictate the thoughts of people; institutions like medicine, prisons, insane asylums (Edley, 2001, p. 202). An example of a discourse in contemporary Western society is the metanarrative around ‘feminism’; where words like man-hater, emancipation, equality, lesbian, et cetera are cognitively linked to this term and thus determine the way actors perceive situations related to feminism

(Edley, 2001, p. 203). In discursive psychology there is no separation between talk and practice since “*language is itself a form of practice*” (Edley, 2001, p. 192), i.e. the action of discussion determines the way a subject is perceived in society. Edley (2001, p. 192)

2.1 *Interpretative repertoires*

According to Edley (2001, p. 198), *interpretative repertoires* are the “*building blocks of conversation*”, and are seen to be “*relatively coherent ways of talking*” (Edley, 2001, p. 198). This means that when individuals talk (or think) about objects or events in the world, they draw upon a number of pre-existing selections of ways of talking about the subject in question. These are used in daily conversations with others and the self, in a form of “*patchwork of quotations*”. For example, talk about feminists were found in the study by Edley (2001, p. 201) to occur in two distinct ways; either simply as women who want equality, or a more complex view of feminists, which included their “*physical appearance (invariably ugly and/or manly), sexual orientation (nearly always lesbian) and general demeanour (often aggressive man-haters)*” (Edley, 2001, p. 201). These repertoires were drawn upon in different ways by the participants, but had the same content. Defining what interpretative repertoires an individual employs is useful since it enables exploration of what “*limitations that exist for the construction of self and other*” (Edley, 2001, p. 201). This is accomplished through looking at what is “*possible to say about [a topic] and what, by implication, is not*” (Edley, 2001, p. 201).

When selecting theory for this study the Foucauldian way of using discourses was considered, however, the concept of interpretative repertoires was preferred due to the small differences occurring between discourses and interpretative repertoires (Edley, 2001, p. 202). The Foucauldian definition of discourses have been criticized for having a deterministic position; tending to construct people as subjectified and therefore, without agency (Edley, 2001, p. 202). Agency is defined by Giddens (1979, p. 55) as the “*continuous flow of conduct*” which is considered to constitute the available choices an actor has and/or perceives

to have within a social structure; where the structure is constituted by systems of norms both producing and produced by agency (Giddens, 1979, p. 55). Consequently, the reason that I have chosen interpretative repertoires instead of discourses as an analytical tool is that it allows for problematizing agency to a greater extent, something that Foucault's work on has been criticized for lacking (Edley, 2001, p. 202). Agency allows for the subject to have different repertoires to choose from, but also to recognize that there is an element of choice among and within the repertoires; which is of interest since flexibility in the deployment of language is studied.

2.1.1 The Absent Referent

In this study interpretative repertoires around the word meat are used in the context of meat consumption and refer to the consumed meat that has its origin in body parts from an animal. Adams (2013, p. 66) has noted that for meat to exist the animal cannot be alive, thus the animals are absent since they literally have been transformed to food. The animals are also transformed through language: meat is no longer parts of dead animals in speech acts, but cuisine; such as veal, pork chops, hamburger, sirloins, chicken (not a chicken), turkey (not a turkey), and so on (Adams, 2013, p. 97). Adams (2013, p. 66) argues that “[t]he absent referent permits us to forget about the animal as an independent entity; it also enables us to resist efforts to make animals present”; hence making the animal into an object rather than a subject individual. The process of making an animal the absent referent in conversation does not always work flawlessly, which can result in contradictions within the speech act. These contradictions manifest themselves in the form of ideological dilemmas, a concept that is explained below.

2.2 Ideological dilemmas

Within critical discourse psychology ideologies are seen as ‘lived ideologies’ that are “composed of the beliefs, values and practices of a given society or culture” (Edley, 2001, p. 190). This means that lived ideologies make up what is referred to as ‘common sense’ in a society in the form of interpretative repertoires. Billig et al. (1988 as cited in Edley, 2001,

p. 203) state that these are “*characterised by inconsistency, fragmentation and contradiction*”. Moreover, the contradictions are what make these ideologies ‘dilemmatic’, since there is a constant negotiation between contrasting ideologies in conversation (Edley, 2001, p. 203). Ideological dilemmas can be identified when oscillations between conflicting stances are expressed in speech (Edley, 2001, p. 223). When two or more conflicting ideologies are present, individuals will position themselves in the ideological field that emerges; a positioning in where they consequently conduct their lives in specific directions (Edley, 2001, p. 209).

Interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas are both reservoirs of language “*circulating in society, providing the raw materials for social interaction and ‘private’ contemplation*” (Edley, 2001, p. 204). They overlap in the sense of both being components of a “*culture’s common sense*” (Edley, 2001, p. 204). The distinction between the two is the focus; interpretative repertoires focuses on the entirety of expressions, whereas, ideological dilemmas focus on the contradictions between common sensical notions on how things are supposed to be in the world and how that affects positioning of identities (Edley, 2001, p. 204), or as the next section will describe; subject positions.

2.3 *Subject positions*

Edley (2001, p. 210) states, that subject positions are the “*identities made relevant by specific ways of talking*”. In other words, as conversations develop through drawing upon interpretative repertoires in a kind of negotiation, subject positions are made available and negotiated as well; resulting in identities being fluid. Consequently, identity is made up out of all the kinds of persons (subject positions) one positions oneself as during speech acts (Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007, p. 336). What subject positions are available is determined and limited by what interpretative repertoires a language has made available as a result of history (Edley, 2001, p. 210), but can also describe the “*broader ideological context in which such talk is done*” (Edley, 2001, p. 217). Subject positions are what Edley claims to “[connect] the wider notions of discourses and

interpretative repertoires to the social construction of particular selves” (Edley, 2001, p. 210); hence, identities are limited to what discourses and repertoires are available in a specific societal context.

3 Method

In this study, I interviewed female officials working for one of the largest Swedish environmental organisations. The interviews were conducted in spring 2014. The reason this single organisation was chosen was to limit the width of the sampling and also because the organisation was anticipated to provide a sufficient number of participants.

3.1 Questionnaire

To identify participants for the interviews, a questionnaire was sent to all female employees working with environmental issues within the chosen organisation. The questionnaire contained questions of eating habits as well as demographic questions. Early on a contact was established within the organisation, and this person helped in spreading the questionnaire to prompt a better response frequency.

All participants that answered the questionnaire, stated that they eat meat and that they were willing to participate in the study were then contacted and interviews were scheduled. Five interviews were conducted in person, and the remaining two were done over the Internet through the calling-program Skype. When comparing online with face-to-face interviews no systematic differences or tendencies were detected.

3.2 Participants

Due to wishes of confidentiality from participants, the study is held completely anonymous, both in terms of interviewees and organisation. This is not believed to directly affect reliability, but may impact the depth of the result since specific campaigns of the organisation cannot be analysed together with the data.

To protect the identity of the interviewee's their names has been replaced with names ranking as most popular female names in Sweden (SCB, 2014). The name of the researcher, Anna, ranked on number 3, but was excluded and replaced with name number 8: Karin, to avoid confusion in the analysis. The names used are: Maria, Elisabeth, Karin, Kristina, Margareta, Eva and Birgitta. The names were assigned in the order of the interviews taking place, i.e. the first interview got the highest ranked name and so forth.

3.2.1 Consent

When conducting the interviews information about the study was partly sent out with the questionnaire and partly dealt with on site of the interviews. This information contained: information about the researcher, reason for being there, the aim of the study, what is going to happen with the material, the right of leaving the study at any time if desired and withdraw gathered information, what can and can't be promised and what kind of feedback will be given to the participant post-study together with how the study will be published (Dalen, 2007, p. 42).

3.3 Interviews

Interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions, where prompting such as "Please, explain that further" or "What do you mean by..." was used to encourage participants to explain their opinions, experiences and thoughts concerning reasoning when talking about meat eating in more detail. The interviews were conducted in Sweden, in Swedish, analysed in Swedish and then translated for this study. The questions were built around themes; there was a general theme on personal meat eating, environment, health, animal welfare and ethics, and gender roles. (*See interview guide in Appendix 1*) The interviews were recorded (with the participants consent), and notes were also taken. The notes were immediately transcribed after the interviews were held to avoid any risk of information being lost and then used in the transcription process of the recorded interview as support.

A test interview was held to test out the flexibility and range of answers from the interview guide. The test interview also served as an opportunity for the interviewer to practice beforehand, and also to test out the recording technology to limit operational mistakes. The transcriptions were double-checked with the recordings of the interviews in order to ensure the quality of the transcriptions. The method consumes more time, but is thought to ensure the quality of the transcriptions and furthermore the material making up the basis for analysis.

3.4 Analysis

In accordance with the chosen approach, the data is viewed as a unified body, which enables for exploration of patterns in single interviews but also across all of the interviews. The analysis was done by searching the transcripts looking for shared repertoires and dilemmas, not focusing on expressions of individual identity (Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007, p. 337). To interpret the collected data the criteria listed below were used:

1. What interpretative repertoires do the interviewees use to describe:
 - a. Their own meat consumption?
 - b. Meat consumption at large?
 - c. The animals and their role in society?
2. Do they express these repertoires as natural/normal?
 - a. Are they critical towards the interpretative repertoires drawn?
3. What patterns in repertoires can be identified?
4. Are the repertoires they draw upon in coherence with each other?
5. Who is implied by a particular interpretative repertoire i.e. what subject positions can be identified?
 - a. How do they describe themselves in relation to their own meat consumption?

3.5 Limitations

Due to confidentiality measures, cross-analysis with campaigns held by the organisation is not included in the analysis. This limits the analysis to the conversations of the participant's and excludes the possibility of connecting these to the work done by the organisation. In addition, animal agriculture includes fish and the production of dairy products and eggs, which are products not thoroughly handled in this study partly due to the time constraints, but also due to the perceived notion that these products are not

promoted in the media as problematic in the same way as meat is, even though they still are very much included in the calculations of environmental impact in the reports mentioned. I also recognise that to speak about one's food practices might not be the same food practices that actually occur. Discrepancies may be inherent in self-image of what one is doing, and therefore might values on what should be done inflict change in perception. This is recognised, but this possible discrepancy is not handled by this study.

4 Findings

Working through the empirical data interpretative repertoires emerged displaying a tension between theory and empirical data; these are displayed below through seven broader repertoires. First the participants perceived agency in their living arrangements will be accounted for, succeeded by six repertoires that are displayed as opposing notions in three chapters: Industry as Dysfunctional versus Animals as Functional, Animals as Subjects versus Objects and Diverse Food Intake versus Vegetarianism. The speakers used these repertoires to make sense out of meat consumption, but also to deal with ideological dilemmas concerning meat consumption, and/or to position themselves as specific kinds of people. In the following section these interpretative repertoires will be accounted for and discussed, together with the ideological dilemmas and subject positions that were identified.

4.1.1 Agency & the Family

The participants perceive different amounts of agency pertaining to their own living arrangements and subsequently their food patterns. Both Maria and Elisabeth draw upon an interpretative repertoire that suggests them being affected by the preferences of their children. Maria states after talking about frequently eating vegetarian food at restaurants: *“at home I absolutely eat meat, since the kids eat meat.”* When asked about how she is affected by somebody else's food preferences she continues with: *“Well, but they love hamburgers and such... Meaty. So then I look to it that they at least eat good meat. But I affect them as well, we eat a lot of vegetarian food at home too.”* In addition, she implies that her own meat consumption is connected

to that of her children through maintaining: *“But, of course, if they had not been so fond of meat I might have been eating less, I think, at home.”* Similarly, Elisabeth stated to prefer eating and trying out new vegetarian dishes out of the home since her children prefer specific kinds of familiar foods; *“Because otherwise there is still this obstacle that one has to break a habit at home with what you buy, you have to find recipes, and you have to get everyone else in the family to like what you cook. Because now I have kids, and before I had kids it was easy to just wok some vegetables together, and it was a lot easier then. Now it’s not as accepted to cook a bit different food, it should rather be the same. The same kind of dishes, or that you recognise, like. That’s what the kids want.”*

Contrastingly, everyone but Kristina is vegetarian in her family. Since her children have moved out, she lives alone with her husband, affecting her to mostly eat vegetarian at home. She claims to eat meat once per week, and then always out of the home among friends. Margareta is also more affected by her husband since she states that he most regularly cooks dinner, resulting in that he decides what to cook. According to Margareta he cooks a lot of vegetarian food, and has no problem with eating vegetarian. She explains that he can be the one saying that they have to eat vegetarian food more frequently.

Out of the participants Karin is the only one to state having been be vegetarian, which she was for several years. Since she met her husband she explains to have started eating meat again. She clarifies that she currently only eats carefully chosen meat, and that there are several dishes the family does not eat since she does not. She does however draw on the repertoire of being affected by her kids by stating to have a desire of letting her kids decide for themselves what to eat. She says that her family is an active family and that they therefore eat similar food, referring to them eating together.

The only one stating to partially eat a vegan diet is Birgitta, who due to medical issues go on a raw food diet for weeks at a time. She describes this

to vary according what works for her socially and how much energy she perceives herself to have. She usually prepares her own food next to what her family is having, and then does eat some of what they are having as well. Among the participants, Eva is the only one living by herself. She claims to live “*very spartanly during the week*” not having to adapt her eating habits to anyone.

I interpret these statements as repertoires about limited agency in where the interviewees indicate their own behaviour, to some extent, being restricted by the coordination with other people. On the next page a table on living arrangements and food habits derived from the questionnaire data on the participants is presented.

Table 1 Questionnaire Data for Interviewees

	Assigned name	Age	Living arrangements	Number of kids	Kids at home	Meat consumption
1.	Maria	40-49	Cohabitation	2	Yes	Every other day
2.	Elisabeth	30-39	Cohabitation	2	Yes	5 times/w, small amounts
3.	Karin	40-49	Cohabitation	2	Yes	4-5 times/w
4.	Kristina	-	Cohabitation	2	No	1 time/w
5.	Margareta	40-49	Cohabitation	2	Yes	4 times/w
6.	Eva	60-69	Single person home	2	No	Every other week
7.	Birgitta	40-49	Cohabitation	3	Yes	2-3times/w and weeks without

4.1.2 *Industry as Dysfunctional versus Animals as Functional*

The participant’s draw on several different interpretative repertoires pertaining to the environmental problems of animal agriculture, this is counter-acted with interpretative repertoires on the how the use of animals is important since they provide functions to society.

Animal Agriculture as Ineffective

A common conception among the participants is that meat production and consumption is ineffective and constitutes a waste of resources. Three of the participants state the same percentage (70%) of agricultural areal used in Sweden for animal fodder, and Maria connects meat eating to starvation in the world. Other portrayals of problems are chemicals and climate change,

together with statements of deforestation and high pesticide use connected to soy plantations being big problems.

The participants draw upon an interpretative repertoire on animal fodder and how the crops (or other crops grown on the same land) could sustain humans directly instead of being fed to the animals. Discussing energy waste and animal use Kristina states: *“Well, ten times more energy is used when the food goes through a cow first, or a pig first...”* Similarly Margareta holds that we could eat crops instead of the animals eating crops: *“besides the emissions and all that, we’re also eating an animal which has been eating crops that just as well could have been our food, rather than if one had grown crops that we could eat directly.”* Another version of this same notion Elisabeth expresses when talking about chickens. She argues that there is no point in raising chickens specifically for food: *“If one looks at it from an environmental perspective then there is no point in eating chicken, in that way that is just a negative transformation of grain products. [...] That you let someone else eat it [referring to the chickens eating the grains] and then...”* In accordance with Margareta’s statement Elisabeth is referring to grain products edible for humans. Additionally Birgitta deployed another way of using the same repertoire when speaking of the matter: *“because it is possible to grow a lot more vegetable food in the same space than what it is possible to grow animal fodder [...]”*

Consequently, the participants draw upon this construction in different ways: as food going through an animal, as the animal’s food being able to be our food, and as usable space for vegetable human food occupied by fodder production. They all amount to the same construction; animal fodder production is wasteful and eating the animal instead of the crops creates energy loss. This is drawn upon with a high degree of consistency.

Animals as Functional

Even though animal agriculture is seen as wasteful and ineffective, the functionality of animals is drawn upon in different ways during the interviews. One of the repertoires around functionality is the one on ‘open

landscapes', in where grazing animals keep the landscape open. For most of the participants open landscapes are portrayed to be a prerequisite for a healthy environment. What this notion means to the participants is not developed further in the interviews other than that it is connected to biodiversity, which is depicted to be very important. Maria connected the positive sides of meat eating and an open landscape: *"There are large points with eating meat. Well, cows that keeps the landscape open, and that kind of thing. [...] That's not something one should be ashamed of really, but one shouldn't eat too much either."* Birgitta did not mention open landscapes, but she mentioned biodiversity as something important, and Elisabeth where talking about biodiversity and grazing lands [hagmark] which essentially entails the same meaning as open landscapes. Two of the participants (Elisabeth and Kristina) claim that the importance of biodiversity is due to the resilience it can bring when the climate changes, and Kristina continued with stating that it increases the chances of at least some species to survive.

One of the participants (Karin) did not express open landscapes through grazing as a definite answer when asked about the future of meat and to explain her vision. She expressed this through saying *"I think it is really hard, because on the one hand it is a question if we want an open landscape, do we want like a grazed landscape?"* Asking if we want this or not suggest that there is a possibility of not having open landscapes, which the other participants did not seem to consider. She also claimed that milk cows do not provide the best kind of grazing but that we need to mix species in having for example horses as well.

Conversely, a repertoire on putting animals into a machinery-like industry just to produce meat as inappropriate was expressed by some of the participants, and this being something we as humans in our society should not take part in. Elisabeth explains it like this: *"There is no, well, really no role for animal production [animalieproduktion] that doesn't fill any other societal purpose. There is no justification for a chicken industry where one buys cheap fodder from the other side of the world [...] We should utilise*

the meat we can produce in a good way, but there is no... There is no legitimacy in that we have a right to eat meat.” Similarly, Kristina argued: “if one raises animals to eat them, they have to be well when they are alive. Everything else is unmoral, I think. It’s completely unjustifiable to have pig factories and chicken factories, I think. That is unworthy of us as humans to treat other living beings in that way.” They therefore state that they make conscious consumption choices to avoid supporting agriculture of for example chickens and pigs. However, even though Elisabeth claims to avoid eating chicken she stated that her children like eating chicken wings, and that they get to do so from time to time. She explains that she eats something else when that occurs.

In a sequence of the interview with Karin she discussed the moral issues of having chickens solely to acquire eggs from them, implying that the morally sound thing would be to have the animals in connection with animal husbandry, with eggs as a by-product: *“Well, it’s not something that is unique in any way to not eat anything coming from the animal kingdom, rather it is like a give and take. To have chickens who are free range and also produce eggs. That I think is totally OK. But that requires that they are doing OK. So it’s all the time like, back to the context, but to keep them in cages to produce as many eggs as possible for that price, then the focus is on the eggs and not the animal husbandry. That is... In that case one should not eat eggs.”* Similarly, Maria argued that meat with good quality is organically produced, without antibiotics and pesticides and added that the animals have to be well as well. When asked about what it means for the animals to be well, Maria answered: *“I’m not that well read on how the animals are today. But to me it is nevertheless important for them to have some kind of possibility to express their natural needs. And somehow lead as free of a life as possible. Some kind of quality in their lives too, even if they are in captivity.”*

Consequently, several of the participants argue that the ideal role of animals in agriculture is to fulfil a function, i.e. eating scraps or, as accounted for in the beginning of this section, keeping the landscapes open. Unless there is

such a function for the animals, what is implied when drawing on this repertoire is that the only meat consumption acceptable would be consuming meat from the animals as a by-product of functionality. When Karin explains her opinions on egg production as a by-product she refers to animal husbandry as a give and take-situation. This implies that the chickens have an intrinsic value through not being there only to serve the function of giving eggs, in line with the statement by Elisabeth. At the same time it does not provide clear information on what Karin means that the chickens get from the deal; although, she puts being free range against giving eggs, implying that the end of the bargain for the chickens is the being in the nature or even getting to exist, which then is what humans give to them. Furthermore, referring to the animal kingdom implies the normality of using animals, and therefore also the abnormality of not using them. The statement made by Maria on what it means for the animals to lead a good life in spite of captivity also implies the view of animals with intrinsic value, allowing them to have qualitative lives. It also implies that she view them as beings with wishes that are of importance.

A remedy for their stance seems to be to advocate organic farming as a valid option. Implied here is that meat or eggs from animals raised on organic farms are not part of an industrial system where the animals exist solely for producing a product and that these animals do perform functionality. There are two different interpretative repertoires pertaining to the notion of avoiding eating chicken; the welfare repertoire and the waste of energy repertoire as mentioned in the previous section by Elisabeth. Both result in avoidance of eating chicken for the participants.

4.1.3 Animals as Subjects versus Objects

In speaking about animals two polar opposites emerged; either a rendering of animals as living beings with wishes or as products that are part of a system. These differences are displayed in the following sections.

Leading a Qualitative Life

As seen in the previous chapter, repertoires are drawn upon suggesting the intrinsic value of the animals. This is in accordance with viewing the animals

as subjects. An example of this can be seen as Elisabeth refers to the stressed chicken industry as a system where she finds a problem with that the chickens are not seen as individuals, but parts of an industry that get 46 days to reach a required weight. She explains: *“And I guess that is also how I feel, that it’s not ethically correct. I think that animals... I don’t think that it’s wrong to eat animals, since I do that. But I think that they have an intrinsic value in the way that it shouldn’t be that one just puts them into an industrial system and then produce food in that way. [...] And the meat that I eat is from organic animals. Which I think is ok.”* Again is implied that organic farming does not constitute putting animals into an industrial system as seen in the previous chapter, but this time the intrinsic value of the animals are overtly stated by Elisabeth suggesting their position as individuals.

Another example of a statement depicting animals as subjects is when Kristina told in the interview about an encounter with chickens leading to her ceasing her chicken consumption as a teenager. In the following sequence she displays sympathy with the chickens and their wishes for daylight, which ultimately makes her re-live the emotions she had felt upon the experience of learning the reason for covering up the roof window of the barn they were kept in:

“I stopped eating chicken when I was a teenager because we lived in [location] and I was passing by a place where they had chickens in a barn. Then I saw one day that they had, there was this roof window, and they had covered that roof window. So I started to think about it and to ask around why they had done that. And then they told me that they had done it because the chickens were so eager to get sunlight that they trampled each other to death to be able to stand in the sun. And what they didn’t do then was to say “Oh no, we must have more sunlight so that everyone can have sun,” but they covered the window so nobody got sun instead.” She continued with a tremble in her voice: *“And then I can like... I can like start crying right here. You just don’t do that!”*

Karin stated that the reason for her going vegetarian was that she lived close to farms when she was younger, and attended cattle auctions and shows: *“where you see that these are meat producing animals, you see it on the, like, muscle build. And these are milk producing, and can almost not walk because their udders are too big. So, I think that gave a pretty strong impression [...] that’s when I started to get interested [...] for me it was more an ethical question.”* In stating the ethical view of what she had seen in the auctions and shows of animal, Karin implies seeing the animals as subjects leading up to her choosing to stop eating meat and therefore also the animals.

Eating Horses & Dogs

What animals are suitable for consumption (‘edible’) and which are not (‘inedible’) are connected to interpretative repertoires in society. In western cultures it is most common to eat cows, pigs and chickens, whereas in for example the Philippines dogs are consumed and looked upon as normal. In this segment we follow how Kristina reflects the limits of what animals are OK to eat and which are not. As she investigates through drawing upon different repertoires she finds that the limits, although seemingly being clear, did not rationally make sense to her.

The conversation started out in talking about that she says that the animals should have lead a good life before they are eaten, and therefore she mentions horses as animals that fill that criteria. Kristina mentioned that she has eaten dog-meat in the Philippines and raised the question why it is not considered acceptable to eat horses in ‘our’ society: *“Furthermore, I can also feel like: why don’t we eat the horses that we have to slaughter? I don’t think that it is respectful towards the horses to just bury them. I think it is more respectful to eat them. And that is an ethical or philosophical, or like thought. I don’t really get why we are so scared to death about eating horse-meat.”* She goes on stating that there should be transparency in what meat one is eating and that no one should be misled, referring to the debate on horse meat turning up in beef lasagne that went on in Sweden during 2013 enraging a lot of people (SVT, 2013), and then continues: *“The better they*

had it when they were alive, the better it is. And if you want to eat meat, I cannot think of anyone who had it better than our horses.” She continues with saying that they lead a good life, and that most of them are well taken care of.

As she drew upon the repertoire of horses not being ‘meat animals’ I prompted further reflection through asking what differences there are between horses and other companion animals. When asked what difference there is between a horse and for example a dog she successively investigates different repertoires where she starts out reflecting over the biological properties of the animal, ending up in the differences of personal relationships between human and animal: *“[it] has to do with what bond oneself has to the animal. I don’t think you want to eat your own horse, so. Then one can reflect if that is because the dog is an omnivore; that we almost never have eaten others who have eaten meat. We don’t eat fox or wolf... Well, we eat bear. But bear is also more an omnivore, and not at all... Not like a hunter. And I have eaten dog. But not Swedish dog, rather that we have eaten dog in the Philippines where they have dogs like one has pigs. So, they are running free in... But there is no one who has a personal bond to them. It’s not a companion... A companion in that sort of way.”*

When asked where the limits are for what animals are acceptable to eat she contemplated if the reason could be the amount of meat that could come out of each animal. She then wound up in stating to have stepped over the limit of what is accepted talk in form of ‘inedible’ animals, which she displays through the usage of the word ‘distasteful’ and draws on a repertoire of not wanting to cook a companion animal: *“Yes, but I think also... On the one hand it has to do with bonds, but it also has to do with how much meat there is on a dog, and how much meat there is on a horse, like... Well, yes. It got a little distasteful there. Like cook a little poodle that one has had in ones lap... No, like...”*

Interviewer: *“That feels a bit tough, right?”*

Kristina: *“Yes, it does. It does. And that isn’t really very rational.”*

The negotiation taking place in the conversation between researcher and participant enabled a reflection on Kristina's part resulting in the realisation of limits of 'edible' animals being irrational. Kristina draws on a repertoire of logic in that humans should be able to eat all non-human animals, but comes across an ideological dilemma through the oscillation between what animals are looked upon as suitable to eat and therefore 'edible' in society and which ones are 'inedible'.

Animal Welfare in Sweden

The interpretative repertoire on the importance of buying Swedish meat appeared among the data. The repertoire was drawn upon in saying that the animals are treated better in Sweden than in other countries, but also in expressing a perceived need of supporting the Swedish farmers. Both Maria and Eva argued that Swedes not buying Swedish meat is a problem. Maria: *"And it is dreadful, I think, that we in Sweden actually treat our animals better than in many other countries, and still don't buy Swedish meat."* Drawing on the same repertoire, but adding the word 'relatively' that implies uncertainty, Eva argued: *"Why do we have so good... Relatively good animal legislation and then don't buy Swedish meat? Then I feel like there should be some kind of coherence, that we should support our Swedish farmers [...]"* A complementing repertoire to the one on need for buying Swedish meat is the one on not buying meat from other countries. In this case not buying meat from Denmark is stated to be important. Eva draws on this repertoire when she stated that she *"would never buy pork from Denmark, since I know how they use antibiotics, salmonella problems and maltreated pigs."* Birgitta's statement was similar to that of Eva: *"I never buy Danish pork for example, that would never happen."*

Karin displays that she perceives a shift in the welfare of the animals within Swedish animal agriculture: *"There are a lot of farmers who have gone into a completely different animal husbandry, and that are really sad because we drink less milk, and less Swedish milk. They must send their cows to slaughter, and those are individuals with names and so on..."* In saying this she positions herself as someone who cares about a specific kind of animal

agriculture; namely, the kind in where there is a relationship between the farmer and the individual animals. Whether this has to do with the animal, the farmer, the agriculture or the quality of the product cannot be determined within the limits of this study. She also points to supporting Swedish farmers, since these are the ones who treat their animals in a better way.

Karin held that she avoids broiler chicken, but feels that there is a good variety of options to still be a successful omnivore. She again draws on the fact that she thinks animal welfare has changed for the better (as mentioned in the previous paragraph): *“A lot of the meat production has changed over the years, not by being good in any way [now], but it has become much better. So there are things as well that one really can avoid like broiler chicken and stuff like that, and still find alternatives now. So it feels like it is in a way easier to be a bit omnivore [lite allätare], and still be able to eat well and responsibly.”* Through noting a perceived change in the welfare of the animals and subsequently in the availability of responsible meat-products, Karin positions herself as being a conscious, responsible eater, together with eating a varied diet. This enables Karin to position herself as someone who cares about animals, and who can eat meat while doing that. Furthermore, she distinguishes between using animals for fur and cows for milk in the statement: *“Because this mink-fur only serves my own personal beauty-goal. There is nothing in that animal husbandry or in the animal’s behaviour that gains from sitting in a cage; while a cow that both can graze and live its life, can have a calf, and can be a cow. Because we don’t have wild cows, we are not like in India where their stomachs are full of plastics and rubbish. Rather we have a good cow husbandry in many respects, the organic one.”* Here she draws on the repertoire of Sweden having a good animal husbandry as long as it is organic, together with drawing on a repertoire comparing Swedish animal husbandry to that of India. Her comparison suggesting that cows within Swedish agriculture lead a better life than free roaming cows in India due to the plastics and litter they consume. She also draws on a repertoire on using fur being a selfish endeavour, implying a position of being caring, and ultimately considerate of the animal she refers to.

Animals as Products - Growing Meat

In contrast with drawing upon repertoires of the animals as a subject language can also make subjects into objects. Across the data two different repertoires on the same subject were identified; the opposing repertoires of meat as produced and animals as raised, which were oscillated between in conversation. Using these kinds of repertoires appears culturally accepted, and also preferred since food is rarely referred to as dead and dismembered animals. Words like ‘growing’ and ‘producing’ are used to describe the process of ‘meat production’, which itself makes animals absent. In line with what Adams (2013, p. 66) claim, referring to animal farming as meat production removes the animals from the picture and allows for an avoidance of their position as individuals. Data indicates that the language use of the participants is fluid both in talks about producing meat, but also in talks about the raising and breeding of animals as will be shown below.

Consequently, words like ‘grown’ or ‘produced’ are frequently used when talking about meat by the majority of the participants to talk about how meat comes to be. Implied here is that the meat is produced or grown, instead of the animals being raised or bred. Examples of using these repertoires are when Maria stated that she and her family tries to buy meat that is “*organic and locally grown*” and when Elisabeth used ‘meat’ together with the term ‘contribute’ saying “*meat that contribute to us having grazing lands*”. Implied here is that the meat is contributing, not the animals. Furthermore, this also implies that meat consumption is a given for this contribution, and that animals cannot contribute unless being eaten.

Talking about beef and the environment Eva also used the word ‘contribute’. Additionally, she used the words ‘beef’ and ‘grow’ (in the way plants grow) to talk about this: “*If one could know that it was beef that was grown to keep the landscape open and that it had been growing slowly [...]*”. Kristina stated on more than one occasion that she does not “*think it is wrong to eat animals*”, where the animal is present in the speech act. She also maintained: “*I don’t see that it is wrong to eat meat. I don’t think so. On the other hand, the cost out of an environmental perspective is higher to*

raise meat than to eat the vegetables ourselves.” This statement shows that different interpretative repertoires can be drawn upon and make the animal present and an absent referent within the same conversation.

Furthermore, Eva has a history of studying and working within the animal agriculture industry, of which she claimed to be *“shaped and maybe damaged”* from this way of thinking about animals as a result. She stated to have been taught how to maximize meat production. In describing this she used words like ‘produce’ when talking about meat, which could be seen as an indication of this type of language being common in agricultural spheres with focus on economic growth. At one point she starts a sentence with using the word ‘grown’, but then changes her mind and uses the word use to ‘raised’ instead, as if she realises that meat does not grow out of the ground: *“I need to know where it [meat] comes from, I need to know... like think of how it is grown, or how they are raised, [...]”* Her hesitation indicates the two contrasting repertoires on the same subject; but also indicating an ideological dilemma between these two repertoires. In addition, the data of this study suggest that the participants brought the subject animals into the picture at some points, as with the chicken anecdote from Kristina. There it seems like she could identify with the chickens wanting to get direct sunlight, in where removing daylight from the chickens upset her. Elisabeth displayed a similar stance through claiming the intrinsic value of the animals. These are examples of usage of different interpretative repertoires when talking about animals and the ideological dilemmas between identifying with animals but also producing and eating meat: hence raising and eating animals.

4.1.4 Diverse Food Intake versus Vegetarianism

In conversation around diet and health the women unprompted drew on repertoires on vegetarianism and veganism, both covertly and through stating the need of a balanced diet including animal products. This indicated positioning located far away from these concepts, and ultimately limits to the subject positions of the participants.

Need for balanced diet

Virtually all women stated that a balanced, diverse diet is of importance to them drawing upon the repertoire on meat consumption as a given in this diet. An example of this is when Maria argued that she does not think that eating meat is “*very healthy*” and that one should eat an all-rounded diet, which includes fish and meat: “*I believe that one can manage pretty well on vegetables, but I do think that it is good to eat fish and meat occasionally.*” Karin seems to agree with Maria’s view and stated that: “*We are originally omnivores, and still have such bodily constitution and digestive system. So I believe in a diverse diet, but to cut down on meat, definitely.*”

In talking about her diet, Karin here positions herself as believing as she does because of biological characteristics, hence being supported by science. This plays on the subject position of being rational and analytic. Two distinct interpretative repertoires are expressed when talking about the natural needs of humans. On the one hand we need meat to some extent, but not as much as we eat today, and on the other we do not need meat at all to survive. The contrasting repertoire surfaced when Elisabeth was talking about meat and portion sizes in restaurants: “*It is most often imported with a greater environmental stress and it is also entirely too much meat than one actually needs.*” She changes her mind about the formulation and says: “*Or need, you don’t need it, but it’s a bigger portion than what is reasonable.*”

Kristina stated at one point that she’s not a ‘super health freak’, but also in line with some of the others that she feels that good diverse food is the way to go for her. She does, however, express scepticism against notions of both not being able to sustain life without meat and also feeling full after eating vegetarian food: “*Mmm, that is a prejudice.*”, “*If one gets full or not is due to how much one eats. And there are those who say “that is not possible, one can not live from that” and then I will say, how is it, “20% of the population of India are complete vegetarians. That is many millions of people who have never eaten meat.” Are they not alive, or what?*” On the contrary, the opposite account of the repertoire pertaining to fullness on vegetarian food was also identified in the data. Karin who claims to have been a vegetarian

for seven years stated that she does not perceive that she feels fullness after a vegetarian meal: *“I am still stuck with that I become very hungry after I have eaten vegetarian food”*, she laughs and continues, *“if it’s my imagination or not, I don’t know. [...] They say it shouldn’t make any difference, but that is how I perceive it. After having been a vegetarian for seven years, it feels like a huge difference if we have had a vegetarian lunch.”* Referring to that it might be imagination suggests that Karin is aware of opposing interpretative repertoires such as the one Kristina drew upon; the interpretative repertoire of not being able to get full on vegetarian food as prejudice and that she takes this into consideration. At the same time her statement works as a counter-repertoire since she still claims to become hungry quicker on vegetarian food.

In addition, when asked about perceptions of meat consumption virtually all the women interviewed drew upon the repertoire of them not being vegetarian (*“I am not a vegetarian”*); this suggests a positioning of the subject position vegetarianism as something they are not, they are something else. Suggested through this kind of statement is that when asked about meat consumption anticipated critique is handled through clarifying their position. Through saying that they are not vegetarian, they are also stating that they don’t think that there is anything wrong with eating meat; a statement we have overtly seen in the previous chapters. This view is made more explicitly in the following section.

Birgitta explained that she alternates between eating meat and eating raw food due to medical issues, furthermore, she avoids cereals such as pasta and bread. Even though she eats in line with a vegan diet for long periods of time she talks about perceiving protein deficiency as something vegans are risking: *“It takes a lot before getting a protein deficiency, unless one is completely vegan.”* She herself has been vegan when she was younger, however, she stated that deficiencies were a problem for her, and made her stop: *“Back then I was vegan during around 8-9 months, but then I was not a good vegan, so I got some deficiencies.”* Similarly, Maria expresses a worry of obtaining all the nutrients one needs through a vegetarian or vegan diet,

implying that even though one might be able to sustain a vegetarian or vegan diet, it is more difficult: *“Of course you could, if you are completely vegetarian or vegan, maybe manage, but then you might have to compensate with some beans, or at least be a little bit more conscious about how you plans your diet.”* Both these statements suggest an interpretative repertoire on difficulty to maintain a vegetarian or vegan diet, and go in line with the study by Cole and Morgan (2011) on Vegaphobia, where one of the discourses on veganism is that it is difficult to sustain.

Vegetarianism as Unnecessary

In line with the previous repertoire on vegetarianism and veganism another similar repertoire was detected in the data. This repertoire renders vegetarianism and veganism as unnecessary through comparisons of customs in other societies together with meat consumption as natural, and portraying a utopian world in where meat consumption is still conducted but in a sustainable way referring to the environment.

When talking about using products from the animal kingdom Karin goes on drawing on other societies and them consuming animal products and meat, comparing that to Western societies. She connects this to veganism again implying its redundancy: *“And vegans, I imagine, sometimes veganism is driven particularly of that one shouldn’t eat animals or anything that comes from animals, but at the same time our society is... [...] it’s not unique in any way to eat something from the animal kingdom, on the contrary it is like a giving and taking.”* She mentions veganism and vegetarianism again, but this time on the subject of diet: *“and then it probably doesn’t mean that we have to be vegans or vegetarians, like we don’t have to be one or the other, but we should have a good balance in how we eat. I believe that we need to eat a little bit of this and that as well.”* Here she draws once more on the repertoire of the need of a balanced diet including animal products.

When Karin is asked on her perception on meat eating she immediately turns the question around to what would happen if everyone went vegetarian or vegan: *“Yes, that’s a tricky question. Well, I believe... If you turn it around.*

What would happen like, if everyone was vegetarian or stopped eating meat, that is also interesting. I mean, what will we do with our... We do need grazing animals, we have a certain... We need farmers as a profession I think, but I definitely think... We do eat more... We eat more swine or pork now than we did earlier. That is interesting, why is it like that? Is it because we have, like, a production of cheaper meat so that people choose it because of that? It's like... If we make an analysis of the driving forces behind it..."

Focus is here put on what would happen if the functions performed by animals would not be available at all, together with potential jobs lost. Implicated here is that sustaining society without the functions provided by animals in animal agriculture would be impossible.

Another way Karin draws on the repertoire of vegetarianism as unnecessary is through implying that since something is natural and working in other societies, the uses of the repertoire suggest that this automatically pertains to Western societies as well, and ultimately implies that this way of living is to strive for: *"If you'll go to Africa it's very obscure to be a vegetarian, but on the other hand you have a very good balance. A lot of beans, root vegetables and such, vegetables generally, and then the meat is one part, but it is not necessary... Because you utilise the cows since you milk them, and when the day comes you can eat the meat. Because there you don't have this whole system."* She uses repertoires on living close to the animals that are eaten in other societies, and connects this with identity and culture: *"It's also something that is associated with our identity and our culture, and it's not just because we're not going to eat them, rather it's a relationship all through to the day one holds the..."*, she laughs and continues, *"like, well... And a nice killing, unlike these awful seven seconds per, like, more than a half tonne bull, that doesn't die. It's a huge difference. So I believe that the issue is to gain understanding that one can meet very many of our foods living needs"*, here she laughs again and continues, *"and get a good quality of the food but still eat less of it, but better. And we will never get everybody to go 100% vegetarian or even vegan, I think, so then we have to find a solution in between that works, that we can feel satisfied with."* The laughs she uttered were short and more uncomfortable in character than happy. This

suggests that Karin displayed a level of discomfort as she referred to the food as having ‘living needs’, but also when she talked about having a relationship to the animal and then the ‘nice killing’. In drawing on the repertoire of the opposite far worse kind of killing, it elevates the ‘nice killing’ to seem like a nicer option in comparison. Her discomfort, however, displays some kind of conflict with the notion. This might imply that the subject of death triggers seeing the animal as a subject rather than an object, in line with the previous chapter. Furthermore, Karin positions herself far from vegetarianism and veganism in stating that getting everybody to go fully vegetarian or vegan is impossible; a statement that strengthens her earlier use of repertoires on it being unnecessary.

Similarly, in declaring that her conscious colleagues are not vegans and do not take the train everywhere, Margareta implies that doing those things would be at the end of the spectrum of doing the environmentally normative right thing; vegans are even more extreme than her colleagues are: *“It feels like I have several colleagues who are incredibly, to me, clean living people [renlevnadsmänniskor]. And they might not be vegans and they might not always travel by train, but they are far more environmentally conscious than I am. Or conscious... They practice what they preach in a totally different way, that is maybe more accurate.”* Since she positions herself as a less conscious person than her colleagues, this suggests that the subject position of being vegan is not one that lies close for her to identify with. This view is strengthened through her next statement: *“And I think that in a utopia Sweden has a lot of these small scale farms and everything is fine and dandy [frid och fröjd] and one don’t have so... One maybe has animals who are... Well, more sheep or animals who doesn’t have the same kind of emissions as cows of meat animals and then maybe you would not be able... Then there may be no need to proclaim that everyone must become vegetarians but “yes, we have our meat and that works nicely as it is” somehow... Kind of.”* Here the repertoire suggests that small-scale animal agriculture is what constitutes a utopian world for Margareta, in where vegetarianism by implication is not. Hence, it can be suggested that Margareta positions herself far from the position vegetarianism.

When asked on how Kristina wants to change her meat consumption she stated to feel pressured to further reduction (consumes meat once a week at the moment) but that she does not want to: *“Yes, I’m thinking about if I want to, or if I just think that I probably should. In reality I don’t think I want to. It’s probably good enough.”* This statement implies that vegetarianism, although her family members stance, is something Kristina positions herself away from. Eva shows a closer positioning to vegetarian food in stating: *“No but, if younger people become more active in politics and take over in municipalities and counties, then maybe there will be more decisions that there should be organic food in all schools, there should be organic and more vegetarian food in senior homes and... well, I think that the young generation will transform.”* However, when talking about her own food choices she said *“I am an omnivore and I eat I’m offered”* suggesting that any other way of eating, like vegetarianism or veganism would hinder accepting food from others, and ultimately be difficult. Eva mentions other ways she perceives vegetarianism to be difficult as she explains her perceived lack of cooking skills in the area together with fears of getting deficiencies: *“I think that if I knew more about just cooking with beans and vegetables and root vegetables and these things that weren’t available [before] and that I never really understood [...] If I knew more recipes and understood better how I could have a high... A well-combined meal with other new ingredients, then I probably would eat more of that too. [...] It’s almost like I would need to go to a study circle to learn more about how you can cook with other ingredients that I don’t really feel comfortable with or really know or... Well, so that I would love to do, because I think that is it good for health and I think it is good for the environment and the climate and as long as it also is organic and most preferably fair trade, then it would feel really good.”* As seen in the last sentence, she does however state what she sees as positive properties with eating vegetarian, which suggests that vegetarianism is not completely excluded as a possible position for her.

5 Discussion

The meat consumption of the participants in this study is substantially lower than that of the rest of the Swedish people according to the statistics. However, complete abstention from meat is neither something the environmental organisations advocate, nor the participants in their own lives enact; but both advocate a reduction of meat consumption. The results from the analysis suggest a frequent usage of repertoires stating the importance of meat consumption for a balanced diet along with the functionality of the animals within animal agriculture, implying a view of animals are beneficial to both humans and nature. These benefits outweigh the perceived negative aspects of meat consumption such as environmental degradation and the treatment of the animals, as long as the participants buy organic meat; although, reducing consumption is still seen as important. However, even though organic meat is advocated for, knowledge on whether this type of agriculture meets the participants' criteria on welfare for the animals is not made evident. Repertoires used also imply a view of organic animal agriculture as not being part of an industrial system with focus on economic gain. Another repertoire frequently drawn upon is the one concerning the importance to buy Swedish meat and to support Swedish farmers, which puts further weight on upholding their meat consumption, but also the necessity to maintain animal husbandry as a profession.

Alongside the descriptions of the participant's views on meat consumption, statements on not being vegetarian were frequently offered, implying their positive stance towards meat consumption. The participant's claims to have no problem with meat consumption and eating animals seem to lead to reduction of "bad meat" rather than complete abstention of meat. Furthermore, participants claim to envision a future where meat consumption is reduced in society but where meat then is responsibly produced along with a secured animal welfare, which also suggests a stance positive to meat consumption as long as the production meets certain criteria. When repertoires on problematic kinds of meat are drawn in connection to repertoires on specific animals as subjects and their welfare, abstention of

meat from that specific animal is suggested by the results to be likely; as with for example chicken. This indicates that the more animals are seen as subjects, the more problematic the consumption is perceived. Moreover, on the subject of functionality, language use around the raising of animals further enable an objectification of them, resulting in a focus on what is gained from them rather than the welfare. This goes in line with Adams (2013) theory on the absent referent.

Another set of repertoires emerging from the data are where societies in developing countries are drawn upon; talks about how vegetarianism would be obscure in Africa and how cows have rubbish in their stomachs as in India. Drawing on vegetarianism being obscure in Africa suggest of portraying a certain type of behaviour, here meat consumption, as natural or normal. On the other hand, drawing on repertoires on the detriment of cows' health in India suggests that Swedish cows have better welfare due to not being exposed to eating litter. The use of these repertoires are expressed differently, but ultimately have the same implication: both repertoires result in promotion of meat consumption.

As previous research has suggested, western discourses portray meat consumption in terms of natural and normal, and veganism as deviant to the norm (Cole & Morgan, 2011; Nath, 2010). Similarly, the results of this study show that most participants draw upon repertoires portraying vegetarianism and veganism as an extreme stance. These positions are portrayed to be difficult to sustain, suggesting that the participants position themselves far away from it. This is shown through for example one participant that have been vegetarian herself, but position herself away from vegetarianism in suggesting its superfluity, which seems to imply that she has made the right decision in choosing another path. Another participant positions herself as a less conscious person than her colleagues and accounts for small-scale animal agriculture to constitute a utopian world. This suggests having a position far from the position vegetarianism as well. The positioning by the participants is speculated to have two possible implications; either the view of this position causes the participants to

continue their meat consumption since they want to avoid to be seen as extreme, alternatively, their stance on meat consumption constitutes the cause of a view of vegetarianism/veganism as extreme. The limits of this study does not permit further investigation around constructions of veganism or vegetarianism and if these constructions dictate how individuals feel about reducing their own meat eating, however, it constitutes a possible venture point for further studies.

6 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how the phenomena of meat consumption and the perceived need of reduction thereof is constructed in social situations where obstacles to defy the masculine meat norm can be assumed to be less prevalent.

The results of this study suggest that even though masculine norms on meat consumption are low, the participants uphold their consumption through different repertoires. The main repertoire maintaining consumption is the one on the perceived functionality of the animals, in where the animals frequently are referred to in terms of being objects. On the other hand, the results suggest that the more animals are seen as subjects, the more problematic the consumption is perceived. The remedy to contradictive repertoires is to advocate for organic farming, since this is expressed to alleviate some of the perceived problems with the agricultural industry. Furthermore, their consumption is significantly lower than average, however, the results suggest that vegetarianism and veganism as positions are not readily available to the participants.

Consequently, the participants make sense out of meat consumption with help of repertoires that at times are contradictive. However, the repertoires ultimately uphold a positive view of meat consumption, resulting in the maintenance thereof.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Guide

The questions used in the interviews were (here translated):

General

- 1. How are your eating habits during a regular day?*
- 2. How are your eating habits at home? Are they affected by anyone else's preferences?*
- 3. When you splurge, what do you preferably eat? What is gourmet food for you? For your family?*
- 4. I see here that you see yourself as an ____ (looking at their entry in survey). Could you please describe your own stance on eating?*
- 5. How often do you eat meat?/When do you choose to eat meat?*
- 6. How have your meat eating progressed over time? How? Why?*
- 7. Do you want to change the way you eat meat? How? Why?*
- 8. What is the vision – Utopia? Will you eat meat in 20 years?*

Environment

- 9. How do you see meat eating? In what way does meat consumption affect the climate?/Can you describe in a few words what meat consumption's worst environmental impact? What is most problematic?*
- 10. What is your organisations' recommendation on meat eating?*
- 11. How is an employee at your organisation? Are there ways of being that are okay generally, but not here? (Norms, vegetarian?) Is the majority a certain way?*

Health

- 12. Do you perceive that there are any health aspects with eating meat?/How does meat affect health?*

Ethics

- 13. You have mentioned animal welfare as a reason to decrease meat eating or some types of meat. Could you describe that closer? (If animal welfare has been mentioned at all)*
- 14. What is the role of the animals in food production? What is acceptable? What is to wish for? Utopia?*

Gender normative aspects

15. Do you think that women and men have different relations to meat?

Can you see any gender patterns in meat eating?

16. How do you perceive the meat norm? How are men affected? Are women affected in the same way?