

Giving Peas a Chance

*Norwegian Media Texts on the
'Vegetarian' from 1990 to 2014*

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Sustainability

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Giving Peas a Chance: Norwegian Media Texts on the 'Vegetarian' from 1990 to 2014

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Abstract

In spite of the realization that Norway and other rich, industrialized countries need to move towards a less meat-heavy diet, and in spite of a blossoming general interest in vegetarian practices, not much research has aimed to enhance our understandings of vegetarianism and vegetarian practices in Norway. This thesis sets out to explore this topic, by studying how Norwegian media representations of the concept ‘vegetarian’ have changed over the past decades. It also looks at some possible explanations to why these changes have come about.

The main research question asked is: In what ways has the framing of the ‘vegetarian’ in Norwegian newspapers changed since 1990, and how can changes in the framing of the concept be explained? This question is explored through the sub-questions: What have been the dominant discourses within the general newspaper discourse on the concept ‘vegetarian’ throughout this period, and what has characterized the way the concept, and the people who are engaged with it, have been framed within each discourse? And finally, how can changes in the Norwegian newspaper discourse on the ‘vegetarian’ be understood in the light of broader sociocultural changes in Western societies?

The thesis makes use of qualitative textual analysis of articles published in the four Norwegian national newspapers *Aftenposten*, *VG*, *Klassekampen* and *Nationen* in the period between 1990 and 2014. The data have been chosen through ‘typification selection’, and have been analyzed through a particular focus on textual subject positions created through use of specific textual voices, as well as genre use.

It is argued that this period has seen three dominant newspaper discourses on the ‘vegetarian’: the ‘alternative health treatment’ discourse which was dominant until 1995, the ‘animal ethics’ discourse, which was dominant until year 2000, and the ‘sustainable consumption’ discourse, which is the contemporary dominant discourse on the ‘vegetarian’. The latter discourse is described as being more ‘open’ than the two previous ones, and it is argued that it is marked by an increased demystification and mainstreaming of the concept.

The remarkable changes in the discourse on the ‘vegetarian’ that have taken place since the turn of the millennium are discussed in the light of late-modernity theory. The findings

are connected to broader tendencies of individualization of responsibility, coupled with a weakened position of the anthropocentric world-view. Finally, it is argued that contemporary interest in vegetarian practices can be understood as an expression of what Giddens refers to as 'utopian realism'.

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1 Introduction

Since I stopped eating meat 16 years ago, I have been noticing an increasing interest and acceptance of my food choices. When I made this decision, in spite of a strong love for the taste of meat, it was based in an ethical concern for animals and a perception that it is wrong to take the life of another living being in order to fill my own stomach. At the time, this was not a very popular decision among my class mates. Particularly not among those of the opposite sex, who tended to make fun of me by calling me a rabbit and laughing at my “different” food in the lunch breaks. Today, I am glad to say that my food habits rarely get made fun of. Instead, when realizing that I am a vegetarian, many people respond by telling me that they, too, do not eat much meat, and quite frequently, I meet people who tell me that they have considered becoming vegetarian. These much more positive and open-minded reactions to my dietary choices can obviously be partly explained by the fact that I am no longer a 12-year old surrounded by other 12-year olds. Still, I have long had the impression that, although vegetarianism in Norway is still quite rare, there has been an increased acceptance of, and interest in, vegetarian practices over the past few years.

The impression that we are currently witnessing an increased interest in vegetarian diets has been strengthened throughout the year I have worked with this thesis. Not only has it been suggested by several recent media reports such as the Aftenposten-article from this February named “Eight trends that suggest increased vegetarian interest” (Ruud and Valvik 2016, my translation; see also Alvsing 2016; Jacobsen 2015; Lund 2016; Rønnevik Andersen 2016). It was also implied in a 2015 report from The Norwegian Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO), which found that a growing amount of Norwegians reported to be concerned with lowering their meat-intake, and that one in ten reported an interest in vegetarian food (Bugge 2015, 172). Yet, as pointed out in the SIFO-report, “despite growing interest in vegetarian eating patterns, (...) meat consumption has never been higher” (Bugge 2015, 168, my translation). The paradox of this situation has sparked my interest in understanding more about the shifting cultural meanings of meat and the ‘vegetarian’ in Norwegian society. It is exactly these issues that will be explored in this thesis.

1.1 Research questions

My aim is to explore how public representations and understandings of the concept ‘vegetarian’ in Norway have changed over the past decades, and look at some possible explanations to why these changes have come about. The main research question guiding this thesis is:

- In what ways has the framing of the ‘vegetarian’ in Norwegian newspapers changed since 1990, and how can changes in the framing of the concept be explained?

As this question is two-fold, I will seek to answer it through the use of the following two sub-questions:

- What have been the dominant discourses within the general newspaper discourse on the concept ‘vegetarian’ throughout this period, and what has characterized the way the concept, and the people who are engaged with it, have been framed within each discourse?
- How can changes in the Norwegian newspaper discourse on the ‘vegetarian’ be understood in the light of broader sociocultural changes in Western societies?

The formulation of these questions must be seen in the light of the broader social constructivist approach of this thesis. The constructivist approach argues that instead of there being one Truth with a capital T, truth is something which is constantly being negotiated, produced and reproduced by various social groups in different social and historical contexts. An important understanding for constructivists is that, rather than experiencing the world from a neutral and objective viewpoint, we are all situated in various social, historical and cultural contexts which determine our perceptions of the world, and thus what we find to be true (Moses and Knutsen 2007). Further, as we all learn to understand and conceptualize about the world through language, the latter plays a key role in – and can perhaps even be argued to be inseparable from – our perception of the world.

One way of grasping the connection between language and ‘truth’ is suggested by James Paul Gee, who argues that truth “is a matter of taking, negotiating, and contesting

perspectives created in and through language within social activities” (Gee 1999, 4). In other words, language is not only the means through which we may access truth, it is also in itself creating that truth through negotiation and contesting. If we agree with this statement, we must further agree that language is inherently political (Gee 1999, 1). This does not mean that every time a person uses language they are consciously seeking to gain something, or that there is a conspiratory grand plan behind all text and speech utterances. It just means that the use of language always takes place through certain perspectives, which inevitably leave out other possible perspectives (Gee 1999, 3).

Two concepts, both used in the formulation of the above research questions, require a short clarification. The first of these is the concept of ‘framing’, which again points to the powerful and political nature of language. As explained by Bøås and McNeill, the exercise of ‘framing’ has to do both with drawing attention to a certain topic, as well as determining how such a topic is viewed (Bøås and McNeill 2004, 1). A second relevant concept, which will be used throughout this thesis, is ‘discourse’. This is a concept which has been used in a myriad of ways. Yet, here, it will simply be understood as “a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 66-67; Fairclough 1993, 138). By engaging with the above concepts, I take a classical constructivist approach to language, exploring how, at different times in recent Norwegian history, specific views on the ‘vegetarian’ are rendered ‘true’ leaving other perspectives out (Moses and Knutsen 2007, 12).

1.2 Rationale for topic

Just like my research question, my rationale for exploring this topic is twofold. Firstly, the production and consumption of meat and animal products has come to be cause for several sustainability-related concerns, and the need to reduce the global intake of such products is increasingly acknowledged. In this context, it is necessary to understand more about what meat, on the one hand, and vegetarian practices, on the other, mean to us. Secondly, doing qualitative research on vegetarian practices concept in Norway is also valuable in itself, as this is a little explored field where a lot has happened in recent years. Below, I will elaborate on these two points.

1.2.1 Why be concerned with meat reduction

The reasons for researchers within the field of development and the environment to take interest in questions that relate to the reduction of meat consumption, such as the understanding of vegetarian practices, are plenty. The types of food we eat and the way it is produced has a crucial impact both on the environment and on the wellbeing of both humans and animals. Although livestock production is not the only unsustainable sector within the contemporary global food industry, its many negative side-effects make it a particularly prominent cause for environmental and social concerns.

Firstly, it is now clear that the levels of greenhouse gas emissions derived from production of meat and dairy products generally are higher than those derived from production of plant-based foods (Carlsson-Kanyama and Gonzalez 2009, 1706S; UNEP 2010, 79). In the much-cited research report *Livestock's long shadow* issued by FAO in 2006, the industry was found to stand for 18 % of total global greenhouse gas emissions, among these 37% of anthropogenic methane emissions and 9% of CO² emissions (Steinfeld 2006, 21). Although estimates of the total emissions from this sector varies according to whether or not effects such as deforestation and other land use changes are included or not, a 2012 report from UNEP estimates these to be between 10 and 25 % (Schwartzter 2012).

The production of meat and dairy is also currently putting a large pressure on natural resources such as land, forests and water. According to the above mentioned study by FAO, the livestock industry, taking up 70% of the world's agricultural land and 30% of global land surface, is a major contributor to land degradation and deforestation globally (Steinfeld 2006, 21). Further, although all food production requires some use of water, the overall tendency is that production of animal products usually requires much more water than that of plant based foods. For example, while production of one kilogram of lentils requires 50 liters of water, production of the same amount of chicken requires 4325 liters, while the same amount of beef would need 13 000 liters (FAO 2016). As is shown by FAO, the livestock industry uses water in all parts of the production chain, and the production of feed for the animals is particularly water intensive (Steinfeld 2006, 130-133). However, the livestock industry does not only contribute to water depletion by using water, but also by polluting it through toxic emissions caused by use of fertilizers and pesticides as well as through deposition of faecal material (Steinfeld 2006, 145).

A move away from the current high levels of meat consumption in rich countries, such as Norway, can also be argued to be a more efficient way to feed the world's growing population. According to a 2013 study, 36% of the calories produced by the world's crops are currently used to feed livestock, and only 12% of those feed calories are actually consumed by humans (Cassidy et al. 2013). The researchers behind the study argue that "growing food exclusively for direct human consumption could, in principle, increase available food calories by as much as 70%, which could feed an additional 4 billion people" (Cassidy et al. 2013).

An argument which is often used to explain the high levels of meat consumption in Norway is that most Norwegian farmland is unsuitable for growing anything else than grass and animal feed. Yet, in contemporary Norway, natural circumstances alone do not decide what we eat and how agricultural lands are being used. Since the year 2000, Norway's production of plant foods, such as various grains and potatoes, has decreased, and there has been a growth in livestock production. This production is today largely dependent on soy imported from Brazil (Statens landbruksforvaltning 2013). According to a 2014 study, if all available farmland is used Norway has a potential to produce 40 times the amount of legumes that we do today (Arnoldussen et al. 2014, 59). Particularly, there is a potential to grow more peas and beans, which are both suitable for direct human consumption (see also Günther 2015).

Alongside putting an increased pressure on the environment and contributing to an unfair allocation of resources, many people also view contemporary livestock production as a cause of serious concerns in terms of animal ethics. The sector which has raised the most ethical debate in Norway is the poultry industry. The industry, where over 70 million chicken are slaughtered every year (SSB 2014), is described by the Norwegian Council for Animal Ethics, an independent advisory organ appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, as being marked by several health and animal welfare problems due to intensive breeding. Among the problems pointed to by the council is excessive growth which leads to difficulty of walking and blood circulation problems, as well as a constant sense of hunger in the animals used for breeding, as a result of restrictive feeding practices (Rådet for Dyreetikk 2009, 14). In addition to concerns for welfare problems, moral concerns with regards to the ethics of using animals for food in general have also become increasingly visible in recent times. This will be discussed later in the thesis.

Lastly, there are the health arguments for cutting down on meat consumption. Research presented by the World Cancer Research Fund has suggested that high intake of red and processed meats is associated with cancer, and the Fund encourages people to keep their meat intake below 500 grams per week, and to largely avoid processed meats (WCRF 2016). The connection between meat and cancer has also been acknowledged by The World Health Organization, which in 2015 classified processed meats as “carcinogenic to humans” and red meats as “probably carcinogenic to humans” (WHO 2015). Several studies have also suggested that low or no meat intake might be associated with increased longevity as well as decreased levels of heart disease (Singh et al. 2003; Orlich et al. 2013; Key et al. 1999)

In 2010, UNEP published a report where they made a clear statement arguing for “a substantial worldwide diet change, away from animal products” (UNEP 2010, 82). A similar call for reduced meat consumption due to its environmental impacts has been made by former chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Indian economist Rajendra Pachauri (Jowitz 2008). Yet, in spite of such efforts, the amount of meat consumed in the world has close to doubled since the early 1960’s (Otte Hansen 2012, 37). Also in Norway, there has been a remarkable increase in meat consumption in this period, although the numbers appear to have stabilized since 2009 at about 75 kilograms yearly per person (Helsedirektoratet 2015a, 17). As rich countries, such as Norway, have much higher meat consumption than the global average, at the same time as the lion’s share of people have access to healthy and varied alternatives to meat, the need for these countries to shift towards less meat-heavy diets can be argued to be particularly pressing.

However, like all consumption practices, both consumption of meat foods and vegetarian foods are tied up in a web of cultural and social meanings. The realization that consuming a certain type of product is damaging to, for example, the environment, is not necessarily enough to make us stop or lower our consumption of that product. Thus, in order to better understand how a cultural shift towards meat reduction might be achieved, a broader understanding of the symbolism of meat and vegetarian foods is needed.

1.2.2 Why a historical-textual study on the ‘vegetarian’ in Norway?

In spite of the increasing awareness that Norway and other wealthy, industrialized countries need to move towards a less meat-heavy diet, not much research seems to have been done on the topic of cultural meanings of vegetarian practices in Norway. Although the concept ‘vegetarian’ has been dealt with in some Norwegian studies, most of which have been done by the Norwegian National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO), the topic is still poorly understood, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The few studies that touch upon the topic tend to be based on self-reported attitudes and food preferences (Nygaard 1996; Berg 2005; Lavik 2008; Bugge 2015). In most of these studies, with the exception of the first documentable study on vegetarianism which was conducted in 1996, the topic is not the main theme of the study, but rather is touched upon as part of broader research on consumer preferences. These studies can thus be understood as offering little in-depth insight into the broader sociocultural and aspects to the phenomenon.

To my understanding, this is both the first study of media representations of the topic of vegetarianism and vegetarian practices in Norway, as well as the first study to approach cultural meanings attached to these practices from a historical perspective. Thus, this study could be argued to be filling a gap in Norwegian food research. Looking at cultural representations such as those found in the media are important as they take part in shaping the way we perceive reality, what we perceive as viable options and thus how we act. Hence, studying the public discourses on the ‘vegetarian’ might make it easier to grasp the driving forces and obstacles for the spreading of less meat-heavy diets. Further, by taking a historical approach to the topic, this thesis does not only shed light on the little explored and documented history of vegetarian practices in Norway, it also adds new perspectives to the contemporary understandings of such practices.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is made up of six chapters. In this introductory chapter, I have presented the research questions and my rationale for doing the study. In the next chapter I will describe the methodology this thesis is built upon. Here, I will discuss the benefits of using text analysis and explain how I went about in generating and analyzing my data. In the third chapter, I will present some relevant theoretical approaches to meat and vegetarianism,

as well as provide a historical overview of the origin and current state of vegetarian lifestyles and practices in Western societies. The fourth chapter introduces my research findings, and is structured around the presentation of the three dominant discourses on the 'vegetarian' which I found in my data. In chapter five, I go on to discuss my findings, placing a particular focus on getting a better understanding of the contemporary discourse on the 'vegetarian'. This discourse is viewed in the light of theorizations of 'late modernity', and is connected to broader tendencies in contemporary society, such as processes of individualization as well as a decreased acceptance of the 'anthropocentric' world view. In the final and sixth chapter, I present some concluding remarks.

2 Methodology

As my aim is to get a better understanding of the meanings and symbolism attached to the concept 'vegetarian', it has been natural for me to approach the subject from a qualitative point of view. Further, as mentioned in the previous chapter, this thesis is based in a constructivist approach to reality, emphasizing the connection between such cultural factors as language, communication and social categorization, and our perceptions of and interactions with the world. In the following, I will discuss the benefits of using textual analysis as a means of studying historical change. I will then explain why I chose my data and how I collected them. Lastly, I will explain the actual analysis. Throughout the chapter, I will add my reflections with regards to the methodological challenges and limitations of the study.

2.1 Studying historical change through textual analysis

Through studying language, we can also get a deeper understanding of our social reality. An interesting way to learn more about a topic is to look at who is talking about it, what is being said by whom, and even in what fora the talk is taking place. Further, an especially interesting question to ask, might be: who does not say anything about that subject, or is not being given a voice?

Texts are, and should be, places where various disciplines can meet and interact (Asdal et. al. 2008, 10). This advantage will also be reflected in this thesis, as I will draw upon both sociological, anthropological, historical and linguistic perspectives. The constructivist approach to texts which is used here owes much to theorist and philosopher Michel Foucault who has been highly influential across the various social and humanitarian disciplines. An important point made by Foucault is that language use is a form of social action which again contributes to the creation of social reality (after Asdal et. al. 2008, 129). In this sense, there lies power within language.gy

In this thesis, I will use textual analysis to shed light on a piece of relatively recent Norwegian history. As argued by Asdal et al., to study texts is a useful tool for approaching historical issues. This is because all instances of language use are both

influenced by, as well as influential to, the sociohistorical context in which they are produced (Asdal et. al. 2008, 112). On the one hand, the way we use language is always limited by such things as the words, concepts and stylistic genres that are available to us. What these are, and how they are understood, is affected by our sociocultural environment as well as our specific historical situation. Yet, on the other hand, even within the limitations offered by linguistics, cultural categorizations and other historically specific factors, we still have the possibility to make a myriad of various utterances in a given situation, and because of this, language is always in flux. Texts, then, offer a direct view into the way people function simultaneously as carriers of social structures and as creative actors, with the capacity to influence such structures. This is one reason why taking a textual-analytical approach is particularly interesting with regards to studying processes of historical change.

The understanding that language is both constitutive of and constituted by the social world, also has implications for how this thesis should be read. In the words of Asdal, “Creating texts is in itself a form of action which shapes and creates a new reality” (Asdal et. al. 2008, 112, my translation). Also in this text, every textual choice, from choice of wording to categorization and periodization, plays in on shaping the particular story that is told.

2.2 Data generation

Attitudes to food are reflected in our culture in a myriad of ways, and this study could easily have been based around several other types of data, such as qualitative interviews, TV-programs or cook books. Perhaps, in particular, the apparent recent interest in vegetarian blogs would surely provide an interesting topic of study. However, in this thesis I have decided to focus on newspaper articles. In the following, I will explain why I chose this specific type of data, as well as how I decided which articles to use as the basis of my analysis.

2.2.1 Newspapers as data material

I decided to base my analysis on newspaper articles, primarily with regards to the historical perspective of the study. Because all the four newspapers chosen have been

established cultural institutions throughout the period at hand, they provided existing texts which offer a unique glimpse into a part of Norwegian cultural history. Further, as representative of a piece of Norwegian public debate, I believe that newspaper texts provide insight about certain established social understandings and attitudes. As argued by Conboy, the language of the news “assists in the creation of a set of public discourses through its selection of narratives and the language it employs to project them” (Conboy 2007, 5). News media thus shapes our views of the world and our perceptions of what can be considered meaningful action.

One drawback of centering my analysis around Norwegian newspaper articles, which must be mentioned, is that I have had to translate the text extracts into English. I have aimed at keeping my translations as close to the original wording as possible. Yet, textual choices and meanings still change in the process of translation. As choices made in the writing of texts is exactly what I am exploring in this thesis, these slight changes in the data can be regarded as a limitation to the study.

I have chosen to focus my study around both printed and web editions, both regular and paid, of the four national daily newspapers *Aftenposten*, *VG*, *Klassekampen* and *Nationen*. Further, the data is limited to the period between 1990 and 2014. This time period was chosen because I believe it to be long enough to reveal remarkable historical change, yet short enough for me to get an overview over all the relevant articles published in the period. The four newspapers presented above were chosen both due to circulation figures of their print editions, number of readers of online editions as well as a wish to include newspapers covering the three major political strands in Norway. Below, I will briefly present the four newspapers and why they were included in the study. The numbers presented below are all retrieved from *medienorge*, which is an official information page for facts about Norwegian media (*medienorge* 2015; *medienorge* 2015a).

Aftenposten

This is currently Norway’s biggest print newspaper, and their morning edition had circulation figures of 187 694 in 2014. Their online edition is also among the most popular in Norway, with 778 000 readers in 2014. It has been included in the study both due to its importance as the most read newspaper in Norway, both in print and online version, and also as a representative of a traditionally conservative newspaper.

VG

VG used to be Norway's biggest print newspaper from 1981 until 2010, and had circulation figures of 138 188 in 2014. It is currently the most read online national newspaper, with 1964 000 readers in 2014. It is included in the study both due to its high number of both online and print readers in the period relevant for this study, and as a representative of the tabloid newspapers.

Klassekampen

Whereas the above mentioned newspapers were all chosen mainly due to their high number of readers, Klassekampen is included in order to get a broader political representation in the data. As Aftenposten has traditionally been a right-wing newspaper, I have chosen to include Klassekampen due to its position as the most selling of the daily national newspapers representing the left-wing. However, it is important to note that their circulation figures of 19 025 in 2014 are not comparable to those of the above mentioned newspapers. Their number of online readers are also relatively low, being 28 000 in 2014.

Nationen

This is the smallest newspaper included in the study, with circulation figures of 12 369 in 2014. Still, I found it highly relevant to include it due to its close connections to Norwegian 'center-politics', which represents agricultural interests. With the inclusion of Nationen in my data set, I have covered the three main strands in Norwegian political sphere. Nationen's number of online readers in 2014 were 30 000.

In order to access the relevant newspaper archives, I have used the search engine Retriever. This is an online database which offers access to the archives of all the major Norwegian daily newspapers, though sadly, their archives are not complete. For the newspapers VG and Aftenposten, Retriever offers access to all printed material since 1945 and 1983, respectively. In the case of Klassekampen, it only offers access to articles printed from the beginning of 2001. Fortunately, the National library has a digital newspaper archive that goes further back, which has allowed me to find the rest of the relevant articles. For Nationen, the newspaper has a publicly accessible online archive of articles dating as far back as 1996. However, the limited number of hits provided in this period has brought me to believe that it does not offer complete search hits for articles

dated earlier than 1999. I have been in contact with the newspaper in order to try to clarify this, but they have not been able to give me an answer as to when their online archive became fully digitalized. As earlier editions of *Nationen* have also not been digitalized by the National library, this unfortunately means that my data material is skewed, as it is lacking a complete overview of the articles from *Nationen* between the period of 1990 and 1999. Thus, in order to somewhat rectify this imbalance, I have taken samples from the National library's microfilm archive, by manually going through the editions from January, May and September in the years 1991 and 1995.

2.2.2 Why these articles?

Except from in the case described above, I have collected my data by searching for the key term 'vegetarian*' ['vegetar*' in Norwegian] using Retriever. I was initially planning to use several key terms, but due to the large number of hits that were generated, I decided to limit the scope of the study by focusing on this one term. Yet, the fact that the data is solely based on one specific key term obviously sets limitations to my findings, as other relevant articles where the exact term 'vegetarian' has not been in use, are left out. It would surely have been highly interesting also to include other related key terms, such as 'meat-free', 'meat consumption' and 'vegan', in order to get a broader overview of the topic at hand.

After having gone through all the Retriever-hits and the articles in the National library archives, I ended up with a total of 562 articles, ranging from news articles, editorials, feature articles, recipes, various columns as well as letters to the editor. At this time, I had already sorted out the articles which I regarded as being completely irrelevant for my research, as they were not actually dealing with the topic. In order to get a better overview of the material, I made a large excel document where I sorted the remaining articles by theme. Not surprisingly, the three most clearly recurring themes were health, animal ethics/welfare and environmental concerns. I also had a separate category for what I referred to as 'theme articles', which were articles that were focused around the presentation of vegetarianism as a topic. Additionally, I had a category for recipes and a last, smaller, category I referred to as celebrity gossip.

As 562 is a way too big number of texts for a qualitative analysis like this one, I decided to limit the scope of my data by leaving out letters to the editor, recipes and restaurant

reviews. Further, I read more thoroughly through the remaining articles, gathering a smaller sample based on the criteria of how well I judged the texts to be directly related to my research question. In this process, I picked out the texts I perceived to be representative both of the general sample as well as of the time period in which they were produced. This way of selecting data can be described as ‘typification selection’[‘typifiseringsutvalg’] (Berge 2005), which refers to choosing data that is rendered as typical for their period.

My choice of articles was of course also driven by my research question, which centers on historical change. When reading through the texts this second time, I asked myself: Which of these articles would not have been written or printed/posted earlier in the historical period I am studying? At this point, I decided to leave out the typical ‘health-related’ news articles, which tended to present research either framing vegetarianism purely as a health hazard or as the key to longevity. The reason why I left out this article-category altogether, was that these articles tended to be more or less the same throughout the period under study. As my research question is particularly oriented towards change, it became natural to rather give attention to the articles that revealed a form of discontinuity or development in the treatment of the topic. This particular approach owes much to Foucault, who was particularly concerned with historical discontinuity (after Asdal et. al. 2008, 128). The second thorough reading-through of the material left me with a sample of 96 articles, which provided the basis for my analysis. Out of these, I have again chosen 37 articles that I have chosen to analyze in further depth, and will make reference to throughout this thesis.

2.3 Analytical approach

My analysis has largely been guided by the understanding that one of the great advantages of qualitative research lies in its possibility to offer an exploratory and flexible approach, where the analytical tools that one ends up using are not chosen beforehand, but rather are shaped by what one finds in meeting with the data. The analytical approach taken in this thesis further follows what Veum refers to as a “reconstructive or empirically-explicative method” which means that it seeks to present a reconstruction of certain textual norms found in the data material, in a way that seeks to be as clear and retraceable

as possible (Veum 2008, 61). Below, I will elaborate on analytical considerations I have made throughout the process.

2.3.1 The concept ‘vegetarian’ as research object

The topic of interest in this thesis is a specific concept, namely the concept ‘vegetarian’. The common denominator of the texts under scrutiny is that I believe they can tell us something about the various meanings attributed to this concept in the period in which they were published. As argued by Reinhart Koselleck, concepts can be understood to relate to historical reality and change in two ways. Firstly, they function as ‘indicators’ of historical change, in the sense that they carry within them the linguistic expression of historical reality. Yet, at the same time they also function as factors of such change, in the sense that they themselves are part of creating it (after Asdal 2008, 18; Koselleck 1972). This understanding of how concepts function again points to the dual role of language, as both constituted of and constituting the social world. Accordingly, a critical scrutiny of the way the concept ‘vegetarian’ is dealt with textually at a specific time in history can tell us much about the sociocultural reality in that time period. Changes in the way the concept is dealt with can also be seen as an expression of broader sociocultural changes, which it is highly interesting to explore.

In this thesis, the concept ‘vegetarian’ is understood both as a noun, an adjective and an adverb. It is further understood as a non-static concept which can be, and has been, filled with many different meanings. This means that I am not only interested in media presentations of ‘vegetarians’ as a social group or in ‘vegetarianism’ as a distinct ideology or lifestyle. Rather, I am interested in looking at all the ways in which the concept ‘vegetarian’ is used in the newspapers. Because of this, I will, throughout the thesis, make reference to the ‘vegetarian’, understood as a general concept. However, I will also make use of more specific terms, such as ‘vegetarianism’, ‘being vegetarian’ or ‘vegetarian days’, but this is only in referring to contexts where the concept is used in this specific way.

As the main motive of this thesis is precisely to look at the different meanings attached to the term ‘vegetarian’ in the data material, I will not offer a set definition to the concept. However, if one were to seek to define the term, one would soon realize that this is in fact not that simple. There might seem to be a widespread agreement that the noun

‘vegetarian’ refers to a person who follows a diet free from meat. According to the online version of the Oxford Dictionaries, a vegetarian is defined as: “A person who does not eat meat or fish, and sometimes other animal products, especially for moral, religious, or health reasons” (Oxford Dictionaries 2015). Another definition, found in a Norwegian online dictionary, is a “person (or animal) that essentially lives on plant foods” (Bokmålsordboka 2015, my translation). The two definitions presented above reveal some of the conflicting perceptions of what it means to “be a vegetarian”. While according to the first definition, a person who frequently eats non-meat animal products such as eggs and dairy might be called a vegetarian, the latter definition links the concept to the consumption of plant based foods only. The practice of avoiding all animal products, however, is often referred to by a different term, namely veganism (Oxford Dictionaries 2015). Further, in popular language many people perceive those who eat both fish and even chicken as vegetarians, as long as they avoid other types of meat. This definition of vegetarianism is also used in some research, such as a report on perceptions of animal welfare in Norway done by The Norwegian National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO) in 2002. In the survey which laid the basis for this report, some of the informants even referred to themselves as vegetarian while at the same time reporting to “gladly eat” beef, pork and lamb (Berg 2002, 19). As these example show, the core of the ‘vegetarian’ is in fact not that easy to grasp.

2.3.2 Looking for textual norms

As all the choices made in the production of a text affect the ‘story’ being told (Asdal et. al. 2008), the possibilities for what can be included in a textual analysis are near to endless. Because I am interested in looking at the broader historical changes which have taken place in this area over a period of 24 years, I will not provide a thorough textual analysis of each text, but rather focus on what is typical for the texts seen as a whole, and describe when and how the typical gets disrupted, in other words where changes occur. A relevant concept here is what Aslaug Veum calls ‘implicit intertextuality’, which refers to the exchange and sharing of textual norms across different texts. Such norms can concern both “wording and ways of expression, themes or compositional and other genre-related traits” (Veum 2011a, 83, my translation). My starting point was the assumption that there must exist a form of implicit intertextuality, or sharing of textual norms, between the various texts in my data material, but that what these norms consisted of was

likely to have changed throughout the period at hand. The driving question is: Which recurring stories are the concept ‘vegetarian’ entangled in, and in what ways do these stories change throughout this time period?

In order to decide which such textual norms to focus on, I started off by skimming the texts and looking for recurring and typical linguistic and semiotic traits. Based on this initial procedure, I have chosen to give particular attention to two types of textual traits, namely use of ‘textual voices’, which can be related to the creation of various subject positions in the texts, and use of textual genres (Veum 2011b, 96). Although these two categories will be at the center of my analysis, I will also touch upon several other linguistic traits, such as metaphors and comparisons. Further, I must note that although it is commonly accepted that also visual features, such as images and text positioning should be included in textual analysis, I have chosen not to include such aspects in the analysis. The main reason for this is that the actual newspaper page was not available for many of the texts in the archives I used, which would have made the analysis skewed. Also, this choice was a way of narrowing down the point of focus when working with a rather large data material.

2.3.3 Periodization

The concept of ‘discourse’ is a good example of a term which has been given a large variety of different meanings across various contexts and academic cultures (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 1). In this thesis, ‘discourse’ will be understood, rather simply, as “a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 66-67; Fairclough 1993, 138). With regards to my study, then, it makes sense to talk about a general ‘newspaper discourse’ on the ‘vegetarian’, that is the speaking of the ‘vegetarian’ from the perspective of the newspaper. Within this general discourse, my focus will be on the more specific perspectives that have been present throughout the time period at hand, which are also understood as discourses. Although the definition of ‘discourse’ used in this thesis is originally formulated by Fairclough, who is a leading theorist within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) research, this thesis does not adhere to a CDA framework. Rather, taking the starting point that modern textual studies are open to “a large degree of heterogeneity and eclectism” (Veum 2008, 62) both with regards to theoretical and methodological approaches, this thesis

approaches various perspectives to historical textual analysis more as a toolbox from which one can draw out relevant concepts, than as set, 'ready-made' packages.

The presentation of the results from my analysis are based upon an attempt to reconstruct the textual norms found in my data, presented through the analytical concept of 'discourse'. Although my periodization is not structured around already-set time intervals, it is still chronological, as it is based on an understanding that there exists a certain dominant discourse on the 'vegetarian' in a given time period. As I will get further into in chapter four, I have reconstructed three such discourses, which I have found to be dominant to various times throughout the period at hand.

3 Meanings and origins of vegetarian practices and ideologies

In this chapter, I will provide a brief presentation of the origins of meat abstention and the development of ‘vegetarian’ ideologies in Western culture, as well as consider their position in contemporary society. A particular focus will be placed on the development of an awareness of and interest in vegetarian practices and ideologies in Norway, both in the general public as well as among researchers. This is relevant to my study because the concept ‘vegetarian’ has long historical roots in Western culture, which play in on its meanings in the period dealt with in my analysis. Before this historical introduction, however, I will introduce some relevant theoretical perspectives on the symbolism of meat and vegetarian practices, which might hopefully add to the understanding of the topic at hand.

3.1 The symbolism of food

What we eat is a highly cultural matter, which tends to be influenced by far more than nutritional values and what we have available. This is a point that has been given much attention by social anthropologists and sociologists, particularly over the last 50 years (Caplan 1997; Lévi-Strauss 1970; Douglas 1970; Fiddes 1991; Bourdieu 1989). Our ways of dealing with food are entangled in social and cultural meaning, and the study of it can provide an understanding of such different social issues such as questions of power relations, identity formation and social values. In this thesis, the central concern is the symbolism and meaning attached to food practices. This perspective that can be traced back to the work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who argued that food is not only good to eat, but also “good to think with” (Lévi-Strauss 1968, 87). Because what we eat, and equally important, what we do not eat, can tell us much about culturally and historically specific ‘systems’ of meaning (Barthes 1975), and because such meanings both tend to be stable as well as in flux, studying food is a fruitful way of studying both social change as well as continuity (Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013, 213).

3.1.1 Meat – a dominant yet ambiguous symbol

As argued by social anthropologist Nick Fiddes, understanding the meanings of vegetarianism and understanding the meanings of meat are two sides of the same coin, as the former is primarily defined by its rejection of the latter (1991). The dominant position of meat in Western cultures has been pointed out both by him and several other social scientists (Fiddes 1991; Twigg 1979, Beardsworth and Kiel 1997). Sociologist Julia Twigg, originally basing her argument on British food culture, argues that there exists a hierarchy of foods where meat thrones at the top. The highest status is given to red meat, while whiter meats such as chicken have a lower status, though still higher than non-meat foods. Under meat, she argues, we find the animal products, such as cheese and eggs, and on the very bottom we find vegetables and fruits, which are generally regarded as being insufficient for forming a full meal (Twigg 1979, 17).

Meat's special place in Western societies often tends to be explained by reference to its nutritional value, with particular stress on its high amount of protein. However, as pointed out by Fiddes and others, such arguments alone are insufficient in explaining our society's enthusiasm for meat. Sociologists Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Kiel use examples of Western meat taboos in order to stress the way culture and symbolism regulates our nutritional patterns. As an example, they point to the cultural taboo on the large part of wild animal species, particularly applicable to predatory birds and mammals, which is so incorporated into Western culture that it is taken for granted by most individuals (Beardsworth and Kiel 1997, 209). Although stating that it is difficult to account for the cultural significance of this specific taboo, they point to the suggestion that it derives from the idea that, on the symbolic level, predatory animals are regarded as being "too 'strong' for human consumption" (Beardsworth and Kiel 1997, 209).

In seeking to explain the high status of meat and animal products, theorists often point to their symbolic associations with strength and power. In this regard, meat's connection with blood is often mentioned (Twigg 1979; Fiddes 1991; Beardsworth and Kiel 1997, 210). Blood can be seen as having an important symbolic role as the "vital fluid", and often tends to be associated with valued characteristics such as strength, power, virility. Thus consumption of meat on a symbolic level can be argued to be a consumption of these high valued attributes. Yet, the connection of meat to blood also makes it a food that is particularly connected with taboo, in particular in its raw, uncooked form (Twigg

1979; Fiddes 1991). The thought of blood does not only bear positive connotations, it can also make us uncomfortable, and function as a reminder of death and decay. Further, as pointed out by Twigg, even the more valued attributes associated with meat, such as virility and power, are only valued in certain doses in the dominant culture. In its uncooked form, therefore, meat tends to be regarded as being too close to animal nature, too 'high in potency' (Twigg 1979). However, through the process of cooking, the visibility of the blood disappears, and the meat gets its position as a proper human food, throning on top of the food hierarchy. If we follow Twigg's argument, a similar symbolism might be in place with regards to the taboo on predatory wild animals discussed above. As meat from animals that are themselves meat-eaters is regarded as inhabiting a 'double-dosis of power', it becomes too 'strong' for the dominant culture (Twigg 1979).

Meat as a "Natural Symbol"

The understanding of meat as an ambiguous yet powerful cultural symbol is also held by Fiddes, who's study of the "human passion for meat" has lead him to argue that its dominant position rests on its representation of human dominance over the rest of the world (Fiddes 1991). As I will get into later in this chapter, a philosophical yearning for something that distinguishes humans from the rest of the animal kingdom have been in place in Western thought since the times of Aristotle and Plato. As argued by Fiddes, this longing for an exclusively human identity, "for an attribute that uniquely distinguished us from the rest of creation, and for an epoch when recognizably humans first emerged" is what has made meat acquire its strong position as what he calls a "Natural Symbol" (Fiddes 1991, 50; Douglas 1970).

As Fiddes demonstrates, meat-eating has long had the role of a key practice by which humans have distinguished themselves as a species. For example, in seeking to explain the origins of modern humanity, he argues, historians tend to place a particular focus on the moving from foraging towards hunting between 2 and 4 million years ago. This transition tends to be regarded as having laid the grounds for much of our current social organization and technologies (Fiddes 1991, 55). Another such milestone often brought up by historians is the Neolithic (Agricultural) revolution, which is often described as "the birth of civilization". Fiddes stresses that the domestication, control over and

consumption of animals is a core practice in both of these groundbreaking historic developments, which tend to be regarded as key events in the formation of the “modern man”. These historical incidents, he argues, can be viewed as examples of core events in the narrative of how modern humanity occurred. Instead of dwelling on the archeological or historical facts, his point is that the control over animals and nature has played an important role in our understanding of what characterizes us as human.

Further, Fiddes argues that this urge to demonstrate human power to subjugate and control the wild and untamed – nature and the animals – has been particularly prominent since the emergence of the industrial revolution, when new technology and knowledge was first used to set in place a systemic exploitation of what is regarded as natural resources. As explained by Fiddes:

The soil and its animal and vegetable stock, has traditionally been regarded as a raw material to be manipulated through the devices of human science, with the legitimate aim of maintaining the greatest possible control over all growth, to maximize the yield for the human population (Fiddes 1991, 79).

Within this worldview, where the natural world is regarded as a wilderness to be cultivated and tamed by humans, the animals have a special symbolic role, as having control over them is more demanding than controlling plants and soil. Deriving from once live animals that have been transformed through processes of domination and control, meat becomes a Natural Symbol of the core values of modern Western society.

Meat-eating is ideological

The above discussed symbolism of meat is obviously not something we are aware of in everyday life. Rather, it is based in an underlying belief-system which has become so naturalized in our culture that we take it for granted. Here, the concept of ideology, understood as a form of latent everyday belief is relevant (Wodak and Meyer 2009). In the terms of Van Dijk, ideology can be described as “a cognitive ‘machine’ or – in more contemporary parlance – the fundamental ‘programme’ that generates the group attitudes which sustain optimal group reproduction (...)” (Van Dijk, 1991, 37). It is a widely accepted understanding that vegetarianism is often based in a form of ideology. However, an important point made by Fiddes is that meat-eating is equally ideological (Fiddes 1991, 5). In the same way as many vegetarians base their food practices in an underlying belief

that killing animals for food is ethically wrong and that animals should be granted with the same right to life as ourselves, meat eating is based in a belief-system which grants the animals a position as resources to be exploited in order to fulfill human wants and needs. And as demonstrated by Fiddes, in contemporary Western societies, the practice is closely tied up in a symbolism of human superiority and control.

The notion that meat-eating is ideological has also been argued by Joy, who uses the term ‘carnism’ to refer to the dominant belief-system which sees certain animals as well as certain animal bi-products, as food (Joy 2001). As argued by Joy, by naming the belief-system which underlies the meat-eating practice “we are better able to acknowledge that slaughtering nonhuman animals for human consumption is not a given but a choice (...)” (Joy 2001). By adding a name to the meat-eating ideology, Joy makes an important point which is also a key notion guiding this thesis, namely that language is a highly powerful social tool. Through her introduction of the term ‘carnism’, she gives a name to the naturalized ideas about meat-eating that have a strong position in Western societies, and thus demonstrates linguistically that both the avoidance of meat and/or animal products as well as the consumption of meat are equally based in ethical-philosophical viewpoints.

Although Western cultures can thus be argued to be dominated by a carnist ideology, the ambiguity of meat discussed above might be interesting to keep in mind when considering the history of vegetarianism. Just like meat-eating, the abstention from meat also appears to have had a kind of double-role, being connected both to social deviance and low status, as well as with a purer and more spiritually clean way of life. As we shall see, the question of whether or not to eat meat, has, from the beginning, touched upon fundamental questions about what we humans are and should be.

3.1.2 Vegetarianism as a bodily expression of “the good”

Throughout its history, the dietary choice of vegetarianism has been made only by a relatively small minority in Western societies. Interestingly, it has tended to be practiced as part of more encompassing world-views and lifestyles rejecting certain parts of mainstream society (Twigg 1979, 16). Thus, within the various groups of vegetarians in history, abstention from meat consumption has often gone alongside the rejection of other products or practices. Examples range from the ascetics and other spiritual or religious movements where meat has usually been avoided together with other “non-divine” or

“stimulating” foods such as alcohol, to animal rights activists and vegans who tend to avoid all animal products, including leather and gelatin. Through a physical rejection of meat, and potentially also other substances which are perceived as having a heavy negative symbolism, vegetarians have used food as a way of putting their perceptions of what is good and bad into practice. With meat, which has been at the core of the Western food tradition, as the main object of their rejection, vegetarians throughout history can be argued to have been placing themselves outside of the mainstream cultural community.

Further, by refusing to accept the tradition of a Western dualist hierarchy which places humans distinctively above animals, many vegetarians throughout history have actively questioned mainstream perceptions of what it means to be human. Instead of viewing animals as fundamentally different from us, many vegetarians have regarded them as our fellow creatures. They have argued that animals share many of our physical as well as mental and spiritual qualities. The understanding of animals as our equals can in many ways be regarded as a challenge to the very basis of modern Western societies (this is suggested by Thomas 1984, 303). If we are not the natural rulers of the earth, what are we then? And what does this imply for how we should cohabit with other living beings?

Twigg, who has studied vegetarianism in Western societies, argues that vegetarianism can be regarded as a “purity movement” which has as its goal to establish the “good, saved, pure society” (Twigg 1979, 29). The perceptions of what this purity would mean, though, would most likely be disagreed upon by the various vegetarian movements. As we shall see, there have been two main forms of arguments present in the history of vegetarianism (Twigg 1979, 16). One of these is the ethical, altruistic notion which perceives meat as impure due to its deriving from the infliction of suffering and death upon animals. This understanding is often part of a general rejection to exploitation and suffering in both animals and humans. The second one is the less altruistic health argument, which regards meat as impure in the sense that it is unhealthy for both the human body and character. This argument has often been used from a religious or spiritual perspective, where meat is regarded as both sinful and brutalizing.

More recently, however, what might be understood as a third type of argument has become widespread, namely the environmental argument. This argument rests on the idea that vegetarianism is a better option for the planet, particularly because of the high level of greenhouse gas emissions associated with meat production. This category fits well

within Twigg's notion of a purity movement, where the goal is a clean and "healthy" planet where people take care of their natural environment. The ideal, meat-free society longed for by vegetarians throughout history can thus be understood as one free from impurity and evil, whether it take the form of exploitation of animals, sin and immoral thoughts and behavior, physical illness and disease or as in later times, man-made deterioration of the planet.

3.2 The origin and current state of Western vegetarian ideologies and practices

Abstention from meat has a long global history, which can most likely be traced back to the old Egyptian civilization (Spencer 2000, xi). Here, however, I have chosen to focus on Western history in general and the Norwegian context in particular. For purposes of clarity, I must note that the focus in this chapter will be on the abstention from meat as a conscious, voluntary act, as in fact most people throughout history have maintained a vegetarian diet due to either poverty or scarcity (Spencer 2000, xii). Also, I must point out that as I will get into further details about the historical development of various arguments for vegetarianism in the subsequent chapter, this must be understood as a more general introduction to its origins and current position in Western societies.

3.2.1 Early meat abstention and the question of human superiority

The history of vegetarianism in Western civilizations can be dated back over 2000 years, to the early Ancient Greece (Röcklinsberg 2012, 128-29). In its early days, abstention from meat appears to have been an ethically justified action largely motivated by an understanding of animals as our fellow creatures. Interestingly, the early Ancient period fostered both the Western dualistic tradition, which tends to place humans above animals in a natural hierarchy, as well as its critique. The Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, who both lived in the period 400-300 B. C., are often described as the founders of the Western notion of dualism, which divides the world into conceptual oppositions such as 'reason' and 'nature', 'idea' and 'reality' and 'human' and 'animal' (Röcklinsberg in Gjerris et. al. 2012, 127). These conceptual pairs were viewed from a hierarchic perspective, where the first concept stood above the latter. As Röcklinsberg explains:

Thus humans were more important than the animals, and this was motivated by their ability for reason, which offers the possibility to achieve insight into the ‘form’ behind reality, to mastering one’s instincts through rational thought and action and ideally achieve wisdom, *sophia*” (Röcklinsberg 2012, 127, my translation).

These ideas, which firmly placed humans above animals on the ethical value scale, have since played an important role in justifying human behavior towards animals.

However, the notion that humans are naturally above other animals was not agreed upon by all Ancient Greek philosophers. Pythagoras (570 to 490 B. C.), who tends to be considered the earliest proponent of vegetarianism in Western history, had a rather different idea of the relationship between humans and animals. He believed, most likely inspired by Eastern influences, in the concept of ‘metempsychosis’, the idea that all living creatures possess an immortal soul which can move between the bodies of both humans and animals. Therefore, he believed that all living creatures had an equal value and could be regarded as kin, which is, of course, not to be killed (Spencer 2000, 47, 54). However, he also had less altruistic motivations for his vegetarianism, as he believed that living on light foods, such as cereals, fruits and vegetables, was the healthiest and purest form of living, the one which brought you closest to the gods (Spencer 2000, 49-53). It thus appears that he was one of the first Western thinkers to link abstention from meat with asceticism. Yet another argument for vegetarianism associated with Pythagoras is the notion that it may enhance peace, as a person who was accustomed to killing an animal was believed to easier be able to kill human beings (Spencer 2000, 54).

Arguments for abstention from meat were later made by Greek thinkers such as Seneca, Plutarch and Porphyry (Spencer 2000, 85). The latter, who lived in the period 233 to 306 wrote a work titled *On abstinence from animal food*, where he argued for a vegetarian diet both for physical and psychological health, as well as from a perspective of animal justice (Spencer 2000, 104). Among Porphyry’s arguments, which appear to have been largely inspired by Pythagoras, was the understanding that animals cannot be excluded from the realm of rational beings, as he saw them as being carriers of both internal reason in the form of capabilities such as memory and social abilities, as well as external reason, in the form of language (Röcklinsberg 2012, 128-29).

With the introduction and expansion of Christianity in Western societies came new arguments in favor of human superiority over the rest of nature and the animals, which further justified using the latter for food. Both in Genesis and in Exodus there are passages

which tell of man`s unique position in relationship to the rest of creation. These in turn have been interpreted by some to mean that humans are free to use and exploit non-human nature as they please. Influential Church Fathers who have contributed to such an interpretation are Saint Augustine (354-430) and later Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who argued for a natural, hierarchic order where humans were above the animals (Becker Nissen 2012, 151-53).

The idea that humans are in their ethical right to subjugate the natural world and use it for its own good rests upon the philosophical premise of ‘anthropocentrism’, a human-centered world-view which sees human beings as inhabiting a higher intrinsic value than non-human life, or even as the only beings who inhibit intrinsic value (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2015). This view of the world, which, as we have seen, had its roots in the Ancient philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, gained a strong position in Western thought with the spreading of Christianity, and has since then had a strong position in Western thought (Leiss 1972; Thomas 1984, 17; Barry 2007, 31).

It was not until the early modern period, in England, that arguments for ethical vegetarianism reappeared in Western public debate. The conflicting perceptions of the human/animal relationship in early modern England, and the implications of these perceptions on the practice of meat eating, are vividly discussed by historian Keith Thomas. As he demonstrates, the dominant world-view in this period was heavily built on the early Christian understanding that humans are at the center of creation (Thomas 1984, 24-25). An influential public figure in this period was Descartes, who believed that animals could be compared to machines and had no soul (Thomas 1984, 33). Within this human-centered world-view, animals were created solely for the purpose of serving human needs, and it was natural and unproblematic to use them for food (Thomas 1984, 19).

However, according to Thomas, societal and cultural changes in the early modern period, combined with the emergence of naturalism within science, gradually paved the way for ideas that challenged this anthropocentrism (Thomas 1984, 89-92). Particularly from the 17th century on, there was an increasing tendency to see animals as sharing many traits with humans, both intelligence, language and other psychological features (Thomas 1984, 129, 137-38). It must be mentioned, too, that the most famous of all Renaissance men, Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) was a vegetarian, and wrote passionately about his

concern for the pain inflicted on animals by humans. Leonardo appears to have been rather alone in his choice of diet in his time, but throughout the 18th century, more and more writers were concerned with the feelings of animals and with the suffering inflicted upon them by humans (Thomas 1984, 149). In this period, Ancient philosophical teachings of Plutarch and Porphyry were translated and spread among intellectuals, which helped give spark to a renewed interest in the vegetarian diet (Thomas 1984, 292). Additionally, there were now arguments for meat abstention to be found in Christian teachings, as theologians started to agree that humans had not originally been carnivorous in the garden of Eden. Meat consumption could therefore be understood to symbolize “man`s fallen condition” (Thomas 1984, 289).

Thus it happened that morally grounded arguments for vegetarianism appeared in the English public debate in the 17th century. A notable figure at the time was the ascetic Thomas Tryon (1634-1703), who like Pythagoras, believed in the spiritual aspect to all living beings and therefore found it wrong to kill animals for food. Tryon is credited for being the writer of one of the very first vegetarian cook books, the *Bill of Fare of Seventy-Five Noble Dishes of Excellent Food*, published in 1691 (Spencer 2000, 199, 200). Another crucial belief of his was that meat was unhealthy and that it was bad for one`s character (Thomas 1984, 291). Like many vegetarians before him, Tryon thus argued from a perspective where notions of physical health were grounded more in ideas of morality and spiritual purity, than in actual nutritional science.

3.2.2 ‘Vegetarianism’ becomes institutionalized

The modern term ‘vegetarian’ first appeared in writing in the 1840s, and tends to be connected to the establishment of the first secular vegetarian association, The Vegetarian Society of Great Britain (Vegetarian Society 2015; Yeh 2013). When this association was formed in 1847 it was in a context where both philosophical, religious as well as more-or-less scientific arguments for vegetarianism flourished among several smaller religious and reformist groupings.

The Vegetarian Society was established as a means of joint effort between representatives from the religious movement the Bible Christian Church and people from a reformist school known as Alcott House Academy. The former was a religious group inspired by the teachings of Swedish thinker Emanuel Swedenborg, who believed that eating meat

was bad for the human spirit, as he saw it as a symbol of ‘the fall’ (Spencer 2000, 239,243). The Alcott House, on the other hand, was a rather radical school based on educational reformist ideas. For them, a vegetarian diet based on raw, plant-based foods was a crucial part of a healthy lifestyle, along with exercise, fresh air and celibacy (Spencer 2000, 244-245). At the time of its establishment, the Vegetarian Society consisted of about 150 people.

The early arguments for vegetarianism promoted by the Vegetarian Society appear to have been based on a combination of moral, religion and science. Its official charter was:

to induce habits of abstinence from the flesh of animals as food, by the dissemination of information upon the subject, by means of tracts, essays, and lectures, proving the many advantages of a physical, intellectual, and moral character resulting from vegetarian habits of diet; and efforts of its members, the adoption of a principle which will tend essentially to the increase of human happiness generally (The Truth Tester 1847, 29).

At the Society’s initial conference, its establishers argued that vegetarianism was the original diet intended by God, and that eating meat had a “brutalizing” effect on one’s character. As mentioned earlier, the latter argument was also held forth by Pythagoras (Spencer 2000, 246). Additionally, they pointed to the relatively new understanding that the production of meat requires much more resources than that of plant-foods. This argument, which is still highly relevant, was first held forth in the early 19th century by doctors such as William A. Alcott and Anna Kingsford (Röcklinsberg 2012, 135-36; Spencer 2000, 246-47).

According to Whorton, its “zealous fusion of moralism with nutrition unfortunately has given vegetarianism the reputation of fanaticism and thus retarded objective evaluation and recognition by mainstream nutritional science” (Whorton 1994, 1103S). As an example, he points to the American health reform movement in the 1830s and 1840s initiated by the Presbyterian minister Sylvester Graham. The movement was characterized by a form of popularized “science” where Christian values guided health advice. A key argument within the movement was that meat was a “stimulant” which could lead to both disease and immoral behavior (Whorton 1994, 1105S, 1107S). The tendency of vegetarianism to be tied up with the ‘alternative medicine’ movement can still be noticed today, as several spiritual and religious groupings still adhere to vegetarian diets for purity reasons.

After its early beginning in England, vegetarian ideologies and practices slowly but steadily spread throughout Western societies, leading to the establishment of several vegetarian organizations throughout Europe and the United States. In Norway, an organized movement was established in 1930, with the founding of the Norwegian Vegetarian Association [Norges Vegetariske Landsforening] (Røgler 1938; Norsk Vegetarforening 2015a).

At this time, vegetarianism was a relatively recent phenomenon in Norway. The practice is believed to have been introduced to the country by Seventh Day Adventists in the late 19th century. In chapter 4, I will give further consideration to the ideas promoted by the Seventh Day Adventists and other early vegetarians in Norway. For now, however, I will only mention the curious fact that in July 1938, Norway was the hosting country of the 10th World Vegetarian Congress. The event was part of a series of international congresses arranged through the International Vegetarian Union, an international network established in 1908 (Røgler 1938). The topics discussed at the Congress appear to have been highly similar to those promoted by the early Vegetarian Society in England, being based in a combination of ethical, spiritual and medical arguments (The Vegetarian Messenger 1938).

Healthy vegetables

The late 19th century was marked by “a dramatic spurt in popular awareness (even acceptance) of vegetarianism” as well as an increased general awareness of the possibilities that lie in meat-free cooking (Whorton 1994, 1104S). The public acceptance of vegetarianism in England manifested itself in the growth of vegetarian restaurants, of which, in 1897 London, there were already seven. With prices that were relatively low, these particularly appealed to people from the lower middle classes (Spencer 2000, 258).

In the early 20th century, an increasing awareness about the vast malnutrition in the newly urbanized Western societies, combined with important discoveries within the field of nutrition and health, also led to a growing recognition of the nutritional value of vegetables (Spencer 2000, 275, 280; Whorton 1994, 1108S). The discovery of what were to be known as vitamins brought with it new nutritional guidelines, which eventually led to a large increase in the consumption of fruits and legumes (Goldman 2003, 252; Whorton 1994, 1108S). In this period, health reformers were also directing public

attention towards the importance of fiber for intestinal health. Encouragements to eat more plant-based foods were put forth by medical professionals, with good help from commercial actors such as Kellogg`s (Whorton 1994, 1108S). These scientific developments led more nutritionists and other health workers to take interest in vegetarianism. The appearance of the “nature cure movement”, whose followers believed that illnesses could be cured through living in the most natural and healthy way, helped boost the enthusiasm. The movement strongly promoted fasting on a raw vegetarian diet, combined with the use of fresh air, exercise and relaxation, as part of their treatments (Spencer 2000, 288).

Further, with the rationings of the Second World War, people had to make use of the little food they were allowed, and meat was rarely available. In the U. S., the government heavily promoted frugal consumption during the wartime, promoting “meatless days”, and encouraging households to grow ‘victory gardens’ in order to provide themselves with fresh produce (Witkowski 1998). In this period, food shortage also made it more common to go out and look for edibles in nature, leading to the spreading of recipes based on wild plants such as nettles, also in Norway (Nissen 1941). Although the wartime diet was largely based on necessity rather than a genuine interest in vegetarianism per se, the spreading of meat-free recipes combined with the increasing knowledge about the nutritional value of vegetables is not unlikely to have led to an increased normalization of using vegetables as the main part of a dish.

3.2.3 The current state of vegetarianism in Western societies

In the early 21st century, vegetarians still make up a small minority in Western societies. However, vegetarian practices continue to gain acceptance and interest among the general public. Perhaps most importantly, the relatively recent realization of the negative impact of meat industry on the climate has produced a new argument for steering away from meat. The notion that meat production is bad for the climate appears to have gotten increased public attention since the publication of the UN report *Livestock`s Long Shadow* in 2006. Unlike other arguments for vegetarianism, which have tended to come from smaller movements, often with an ideological or religious backbone, the climate argument holds the privilege of having been held forth by influential global institutions (See e. g. UNEP 2010, 82). Further, the long-held belief that meat is a necessary part of

a healthy diet is finally outdated, and today national health institutions tend to approve of the understanding that one can live healthily on a vegetarian diet (see e. g. HHS & USDA 2010; NHS 2013). In 1988, The Norwegian Directorate of Health began providing nutrition advice for vegetarians, and now acknowledges that “A well-composed vegetarian diet is nutritionally adequate and may have positive health effects in terms of prevention and treatment of several diseases” (Helsedirektoratet 2015).

Vegetarianism as an object of research

Since the latter part of the 20th century there has been a slowly increasing interest in vegetarians and vegetarian practices among researchers. Several studies have been conducted with the aim of quantifying the current numbers of vegetarians found in different countries, and understanding more about their motivations. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, comparing quantitative studies of vegetarianism is often challenging because people tend to understand and use the concept in a variety of ways. For example, recent studies have suggested that the number of vegetarians in England is about 2% of the population (NHS 2013; Vegetarian Society 2015), yet an earlier study from the same country found that 9% claimed to be “fully or partly vegetarian” (Berg 2005, 52). In reviewing the existing research on vegetarianism, Ruby found that a recurring finding was that women are more likely to be vegetarian than men, and that the two most common motivations for becoming vegetarian are health arguments and ethical concerns for animal welfare (Ruby 2012). Other studies have found that vegetarians are more likely than omnivores to embrace liberal and “altruistic” values (Gale et. al 2007; Kalof et. al. 1999).

In Norway, the first documentable survey of vegetarians was conducted in 1996, by the research company Scan Fact, on the orders of the Norwegian Meditation organization *Acem*. The study found that approximately 60 000 Norwegians stated to be vegetarians at the time, making up about 1,7% of the Norwegian population (Nygaard 1996). Further, it found that approximately every fifth Norwegian above the age of 15 stated that they could imagine themselves not eating meat and fish for an extended period of time, under the right conditions (Nygaard 1996). However, the informants’ main objections to becoming vegetarian were the good taste of meat and fish, the idea of vegetarian food as being unvaried, and the belief that their family would not like it. On the other hand, their main

motivation for wanting to try it, was the perception of vegetarian food as being healthier and cleaner, as well as the idea that it was less resource demanding (Nygaard 1996).

Since this pioneering study in 1996, the topic of vegetarianism has been touched upon in several studies undertaken by the Norwegian National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO). Reports issued by SIFO in the early half of the 2000s suggest an increasing interest in vegetarianism in Norway (Berg 2002, Berg 2005). According to a study from 2004, the amount of people who reported to be fully or partly vegetarian was 4 % (Berg 2005, 12). Further, in the same study, 16% of the respondents reported to be dissatisfied with the selection of vegetarian food in their local grocery stores, a tendency that was interpreted to suggest an interest in this type of food. As stated by the author of the SIFO-report based on the study, Lisbet Berg, this could be seen to suggest that the boundaries between being a vegetarian and being a meat eater are not as clear cut as they used to be (Berg 2005, 12.) The report also stated that vegetarianism is clearly gendered, and that it is particularly common among young women. As early as in 2001, a bit more than 10% of Norwegian female students reported to be “fully or partly vegetarian”, while in 2004 this number had increased to 12% (Berg 2005, 54).

However, there appears to be some disagreement among SIFO-researchers on these developments. In another report issued by SIFO in 2008, it is stated that studies from 1997, 2000 and 2004 all have shown that only 1% of the Norwegian population refers to themselves as vegetarians and that 99% of respondents had reported to have eaten meat within the last three months. According to these studies, the amount of people who stated to understand why someone would make the choice of becoming a vegetarian had in fact decreased between 1997 and 2007. This was despite of what the researchers saw as an increased focus on negative environmental aspects of meat in the public debate (Lavik 2008, 12).

It is difficult to say what accounts for differences in the findings in the various SIFO-reports. A possible reason for the variety in numbers of self-reported vegetarians might be the fact that the 2004 study refers to people reporting to be “fully or partly vegetarian”, and thus includes a group of people who eat meat from time to time. However, if we are to trust the latest numbers from SIFO, which are the ones presented in the 2008 report, the number of vegetarians in Norway is still only about 1%.

According to SIFO, vegetarianism has been less widespread in Norway than in many other European countries. For example, one of their reports shows that in 1999, 2 % of Norwegians reported to be “fully or partly vegetarian”, while, as mentioned above, the number for England was found to be 9 % (Berg 2005, 52). However, as the recent numbers for England appear to be approximately 2 %, and as it seems that there has not been carried out research on this topic in Norway since 2008, it is at present hard to say for sure how Norway stands in relation to other countries. The variety of ways in which vegetarianism is measured quantitatively adds to this difficulty.

Increased interest in vegetarian diets

Although the numbers of vegetarians remain relatively low, several factors point to an increased interest in vegetarian food in Western societies. Popular initiatives such as Meatless/Meat-Free Monday, which have its origins in the American national frugality campaigns, seek to increase public awareness of the benefits of eating less meat (Meatless Monday 2015). This buzz-word has not only become popular among animal rights organizations who promote vegetarianism, it has also been caught up by celebrity chefs who seek to keep up with the latest health and environment advice (see e.g. jamieoliver.com 2015). In 2009, the Belgian city of Ghent became the first town in Europe to introduce an official “Veggie-day” every Thursday, in order to encourage their citizens to eat vegetarian once a week (Traynor 2009). Also, according to a study done by the private market research agency Mintel, the number of food and drink products labelled as vegetarian which were launched on the global market grew from 6% in 2009 to 12% in 2013 (Mintel 2014). The researchers believed that the growth was due to a consumer trend of partly avoiding meat products, often referred to as flexitarianism. It appears that while vegetarianism has historically been a rather clear-defined concept, which has generally been of little interest among others than the vegetarians themselves, the lines between being a vegetarian and not being one have now become more fluid.

Also in Norway, several factors suggest an increased interest in vegetarian food among the general public. For example, while there was only one vegetarian restaurant in the whole of Norway in 1991, there are now eight purely vegetarian restaurants in Oslo alone (NOAH 2015). In 2010, Oslo Vegetarian Festival was arranged for the first time, and has since then become a yearly happening. In 2014, the festival was extended from being a

one-day event to lasting for two days, due to its high number of visitors. Interest in vegetarian and vegan food blogs also appears to have grown drastically, particularly over the last five years. According to its author Mari Hult, the popular vegan food blog *Vegetarbloggen* has gone from having 20.000 monthly readers in 2010 to about 120.000 in 2014 (Rollag Evensen 2014). Another vegan food blog, *Veganmisjonen*, reported to have had about 400.000 monthly readers at the end of 2014 (Veganmisjonen 2014). Norwegian frozen foods producer Findus also seems to have noticed the interest in meat-free foods, as they recently revealed plans to expand their range of vegetarian food products, due to increasing pressure from consumers (Lindahl 2015).

4 Shifting discourses: from alternative to mainstream

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the concept ‘vegetarian’ as framed in Norwegian newspapers has undergone a radical change from the beginning of the 1990s and until today. My aim is to present a clear analysis of how this change has been created textually, through the use of various textual choices. A guiding premise for the analysis will be the understanding that the form and content of a text are inextricably linked, and thus that both should be taken into consideration when mapping out textual meaning. In order to narrow down the scope of the analysis, I will place particular emphasis on how genre and voice use shapes the creation of different textual subject positions in the shifting discourses on the ‘vegetarian’.

The chapter will be centered around what I have found to be three dominant newspaper discourses on the ‘vegetarian’ in the period ranging from 1990 to 2014. For reasons of clarity, the main findings from my analysis are presented in a roughly chronological order, where each dominant discourse is treated in a separate subchapter. The analysis begins with a presentation of the discourse that was dominant in the first half of the 1990s, which I have decided to name the ‘alternative health treatment discourse’. In 1995, this discourse was challenged and substituted by what I have decided to call the ‘animal ethics discourse’, which represents an entirely new way to give meaning to the concept ‘vegetarian’. Although the entrance of this discourse brought with it an increasing normalization of the concept, the articles continued to present a rather narrow ‘vegetarian subject position’. In both of the above discourses, voices promoting the ‘vegetarian’ were present in the newspapers mainly in the form of interview objects, thus largely maintaining a separation between the newspaper voices and the vegetarian voices. This changed shortly after year 2000, when what I have named the ‘sustainable consumption discourse’ entered as the dominant ‘meaning-ordering perspective’ in the texts. In this period, a broader variety of voices became engaged in the discourse, and journalists and writers started to become personally occupied with the topic. Simultaneously, the framing of the ‘vegetarian’ went from being rather one-sided towards becoming more complex, incorporating a broader variety of issues. A key finding from the analysis, which guides the successive chapters of this thesis, is that the 2000s has witnessed a sort of ‘opening

up' of the vegetarian concept, where it is framed as something that is increasingly relevant not only to specific alternative groups of people, but to everyone.

4.1 Vegetarian diet as alternative health treatment

The first dominant discourse in the newspapers I have studied is one that I have decided to name 'the alternative health treatment discourse'. At the core of the articles from the early 1990s, is the understanding of vegetarian practices as a form of alternative treatment that people engage in to improve their health or heal from various forms of illness. Before I go on to discuss how the 'vegetarian' is framed in the newspaper articles from this period, I will set the stage for the analysis by briefly presenting the historical context of the health treatment approach to the 'vegetarian' in Norway.

4.1.1 The historical context of the 'health treatment discourse'

As explained in chapter 3, the notion that vegetarianism is health-promoting has been a key understanding for many of its Western proponents since it was first argued by Pythagoras over 2500 years ago (Twigg 1979, 16; Beardsworth and Keil 1997, 229). In Norway, the health argument for vegetarianism has been present since the practice was first introduced to the country in the late 19th century, most likely by Seventh Day Adventists (Røgler 1938; Norsk Vegetarforening 2015b). The Seventh Day Adventist Church is a Christian Protestant denomination with connections to the American health reform movement that took place in the latter part of the 19th century. The importance of maintaining good health through taking care of one's body has been a central belief for its members ever since the denomination was established in 1863. Because one of its founders, Ellen G. White, had a strong belief that good health could best be achieved through a vegetarian diet, many Seventh Day Adventists are vegetarian, and the diet has a special position within the community. Since the movement was brought to the country by missionary John Mattesson in 1878 (Hansen 2015), Adventists in Norway have been actively engaged in different forms of health promoting work, in which a vegetarian diet has often played a central part. For example, as early as in 1881, they established Norway's first health journal, *Sunnhetsbladet*, which had, and still has, a vegetarian profile (De Lange 2011, 17).

The belief that a vegetarian diet is the best way to achieve good health was also a core argument when the Norwegian Vegetarian Association (Norges Vegetariske Landsforening) was founded in 1930 (Røgler 1938; Norsk Vegetarforening 2015a). The association, which represented much of the same holistic, multifaceted approach to vegetarianism as its predecessor, the British Vegetarian Society, was described by its secretary Dr. H. J. Røgler as working “in harmony with the nature cure movement [sic] whose pioneer in Norway (O. Olvik) was the founder and first editor of the health magazine *Naturlægen*” (Røgler 1938). The ‘nature cure movement’, referred to by Dr. Røgler in the above quote, was a group of health reformers who argued that illnesses could be cured through a natural and healthy lifestyle. An important part of their treatments was the practice of fasting and the maintenance of a raw vegetarian diet, combined with the use of fresh air, exercise and relaxation (Spencer 2000, 288). Another influential movement in this period was the ‘frisksport’-movement, where an important figure was the controversial and charismatic speaker Are Waerland. Waerland’s speeches on the health benefits of a mainly raw lactovegetarian diet, without sugar, salt and white flour, which he called the three white poisons, drew large audiences, particularly in Sweden (Myskja 2008; Store Medisinske Leksikon 2009). The popular movement would end up lending its name to Norway’s first vegetarian restaurant, *Friskspporten*, established by the above mentioned Røgler in 1938, and later renamed *Vegeta Vertshus*, (Norsk Vegetarforening 2015b; VG 2002). This pioneering restaurant was to be the only of its kind for more than 50 years.

The idea that one could avoid illnesses and improve health by eating proper and “natural” food, largely consisting of vegetables and grains, had been around for a long time. It has also been heavily promoted by representatives of the health reform movement of the mid-19th century, where people such as Sylvester Graham and John Harvey Kellogg were central figures. It was within this movement that the concept of ‘health foods’ appeared, and laid grounds for the establishment of so-called ‘health food stores’ in the late 1940s. The first company to open such stores in Norway appears to have been A/S Bios, whose ‘health foods’ were strictly vegetarian (Lucas helsekost 2015; Norsk Vegetarforening 2015b). By the 1980s, the idea that a vegetarian diet was particularly healthy, and could have both healing and disease preventing properties, had been promoted within several alternative dietary approaches. Among those who embraced it was Danish nutritionist Julia Vøldan, as well as followers of macrobiotics and the acid-base diet. In this period,

several so-called ‘health homes’ were established in the Nordic countries. These were places where people came to be treated through consuming vegetarian foods and fasting (Store Medisinske Leksikon 2009). As I will argue in the rest of this subchapter, it is this treatment-oriented perspective that dominates the newspapers’ treatment of the concept ‘vegetarian’ in the first part of the 1990s.

4.1.2 A therapeutic practice for the particularly interested

From 1990 to 1995, the ‘vegetarian’ was a rarely mentioned topic in the newspapers under scrutiny. Out of the 96 articles that make up the basis for my data material, only 12 were published in this time period. With regards to intertextuality, the few articles from this period that do deal with the topic tend to be rather similar, both genre-wise and with regards to topic and language use. The typical genre in which the topic is brought up is the feature article, often taking the form of a “human-interest story”, where the main objective is entertainment rather than in-depth scrutiny or raising political or social questions (VG, 02. 03. 1990; AP, 21. 08. 1991; VG, 06. 11. 1991; VG, 10. 01. 1992; AP, 03. 01. 1993; AP, 08. 06. 1993). Further, the texts typically have the form of journalistic interviews with people who are engaged in vegetarian diets for various health reasons. The quoted voices of the interviewees are given quite a lot of space in the texts, although of course, merely through the wording and orchestration of the newspaper (Veum 2011b, 107). The typical journalistic voice use is that of a reporting, impersonal tone. Hence, one gets the impression that the journalist is standing “outside the discourse”, looking in on the interviewees, who are given the role as its main subjects.

As already mentioned, a typical aspect of these feature stories is that they tend to present engagement in vegetarian practices as a kind of therapy. For example, the practice is often connected to specific places where people come for a limited period of time, either as a means of curing illness or as part of a de-stressing break from the ordinary (VG, 02. 03. 1990; AP, 21. 08. 1991; VG, 06. 11. 1991). In a feature article about a place called Kleivstua Vegetarian Centre, two male guests who are interviewed are quoted as describing the place as somewhere one can “come to rest”, “retrieve one’s health” and “charge the batteries” (AP, 21. 08. 1991). The two, who are both described as businessmen, say that they have visited the center several times, and state that “people who are stressing around like us should be here at least once a year”. In this quote,

vegetarianism is presented as a practice that is mainly of interest to people who are stressed, and also as something one is engaged in only for a short period at the time. Another example is an article about a treatment center described as specifically attracting people suffering from various diseases, from psoriasis to heart or lung disease, framing vegetarian food as “an important part of the treatment” (VG, 02. 03. 1990). A similar story is presented in an article where the newly hired TV-presenter Magnhild Øwre is confronted with the question of why she is a vegetarian. The interviewee open-heartedly explains herself by referring to her chronic gut problems, which she describes as having been cured by “dietary therapy” after a visit to a health center (VG, 10. 01. 1992). Through connecting the engagement in vegetarian practices to therapy, it is framed as a goal-oriented practice, which is less a goal in itself than a means of achieving freedom from disease and health problems.

Vegetarian food as non-food

By focusing more on the health aspects than on the culinary aspects of vegetarian food, the articles imply that vegetarian food is not something one eats because it tastes good, but rather because of its health-promoting abilities. An example is the tendency of referring to the food through a focus on vitamins. In the article about Kleivstua Vegetarsenter, the food offered at the center is only mentioned in the following paragraph: “The meals are chock full of vitamins and minerals. One mixes one’s own salads using all the ingredients. In addition, there is porridge for breakfast and a hot dish for dinner” (AP, 21. 08. 1991). The porridge and the salad are the only actual food items that are mentioned specifically. Other than that, the reader only gets to know that there are various ingredients and that there is a daily hot dish. There is no focus on the types of food served, for example whether the kitchen draws on one or more specific cuisines, or how the food tastes, smells and looks. Instead, the focus is on the vitamins and minerals, which have also gotten a place in the heading – “The vitamin-hulder at Krogskogen”. A similar approach is found in another article, where the journalist has been invited to a place called Solbakken Helseheim, to taste their vegetarian cooking (AP, 03.01.1993). While there is more focus on the taste and appearance of the food in this article than in the one mentioned above, the main focus is still on health and vitamins. In their description of eating the vegetarian food, the journalist describes a surrendering “to the incredibly appetizing realm of vitamins which is bursting in front of us”.

The tendency to discuss food through a focus on vitamins can be connected to what Gyorgy Scrinis has named ‘the nutritionism paradigm’, referring to the dominant idea “that the health effects of food can adequately be understood in terms of their nutrient composition” (Scrinis 2013, 25). This form of ‘nutritional reductionism’, which treats nutrition questions not through a focus on actual food ingredients and general diets, but through a focus on specific nutrients, such as for example vitamins, he argues, has been a dominant paradigm in nutrition science since the middle of the 19th century, and has also largely influenced lay people’s understanding of food (Scrinis 2013, 42-45). As demonstrated by cultural historian Inger Johanne Lyngø, the “discovery” of vitamins and the general ‘nutritionist’ focus in nutritional science has made visible imprints on Norwegian culture since the so-called ‘dietary revolution’ that took place in the 1930s (Lyngø 2003). When journalists in the 1990s make use of such ‘nutritional reductionism’ in describing vegetarian food, this is a good example of how developments within natural science are taken up in, and shaping, lay culture.

Another recurring tendency in the newspaper articles from the early 1990s is the connection of a vegetarian diet to unorthodox eating practices such as the consumption of raw vegetables, as well as to the practice of fasting. An example of the former is found in a quote by ‘vegetarian consultant’ and nutrition expert Morten Lassem, stating that “The point with the vegetarian food is that it is alive, and full of energy which has already been used up by the animals when we eat animal substances. Vital foods should be as raw, natural and unprocessed as possible” (AP, 03.01.1993). As implied in this quote, absence of meat per se is not sufficient. The food should also be raw and “untreated”, apparently as a means of maintaining its vitality and energy which is believed to diminish or disappear in the process of cooking. The understanding that many foodstuffs are at their healthiest when consumed raw may be connected to the “discovery” of vitamins and the early ‘nutritionist paradigm’ referred to above (Lyngø 2003), though interest in the less quantifiable properties of raw foods, such as “vitality” and “aliveness” has an even longer history among vegetarians. Further, in some articles, “fasting and a vegetarian diet” is mentioned as an almost inseparable pair (see for example VG, 04.10.1994; VG, 06. 11. 1991). Through connecting vegetarian diets to fasting, a concept that refers to the practice of not eating solid foods, or even to not eating at all, the articles are suggesting that there is a link between not eating meat and not eating in general.

The framing of vegetarian food as “vitamins” and “raw vegetables”, and the association of vegetarianism with fasting, is particularly interesting when viewed in the light of social theories of food and cooking. Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has argued that the practice of using heat in order to transform ingredients from their raw, natural state, into a cooked meal, is a universal human practice used to distinguish ourselves from the rest of the natural world (Fiddes 1991, 15; Lévi-Strauss 1970). From such a perspective, raw ingredients represent a form of non-food, something that is not yet ready for human consumption. Further, as pointed out by Fiddes, it is not only the preference for cooking one’s food that tends to be considered a human universal. Such an argument can also be made with regards to the practice of eating meat, which often tends to be regarded as “the quintessential food” (Fiddes 1991, 15). Fiddes gives several examples, both from social situations as well as academic literature, of people who practically equate ‘meat’ with ‘food’. One example is indeed the writings of the above mentioned Lévi-Strauss, who he argues, “largely fails to acknowledge that in most cases he is not discussing the cooking just of food, but particularly the cooking of animals” (Fiddes 1991, 15). The notion that meat equals “food”, has also been suggested by Twigg, who argues that there exists a food hierarchy, where meat and other animal products have the highest status, and are considered pivotal when creating a meal (Twigg 1983).

The way vegetarian food is framed in the above discussed newspapers can be argued to fit well within such a theoretical framework. In particular, the connection drawn between vegetarianism and fasting can be argued to draw the story to its natural conclusion – if eating food equals eating meat, then on the symbolic level, there is not a huge difference between the avoidance of meat and avoidance of food altogether.

4.1.3 The subject: The abnormal vegetarian

By dealing with the concept ‘vegetarian’ mainly in ‘human-interest stories’, where people are interviewed due to their different eating habits, the newspapers frame engagement in vegetarian practices as a curiosity. In the articles from the early 1990s, the typical ‘vegetarian’ subject position is that of the individual interviewee who is mostly motivated by various health arguments. The typical subject is someone who has struggled with stress or various physical illnesses, and who eats or has eaten vegetarian food, which is often

described as consisting largely of raw vegetables, in order to become better. Further, the ‘vegetarian subject’ tends to be presented as a strange and deviant character.

In several articles, linguistic elements are used to suggest that vegetarians are social outsiders who differ from what is perceived as normal. For example, in the article title “The vitamin-hulder at Kroghskogen” the authorial voice of the newspaper makes use of a metaphor, ‘huldra’, to describe the owner of the center (AP, 03.01.1993). ‘Huldra’ is a mythic female creature from Scandinavian folklore, believed to be living in the woods or in the underworld. At first glance, she is incredibly beautiful, but when one looks closely, one discovers that she has a cow’s tail. She is also known to be dangerous, and to use her beauty to trick men into getting what she wants. By describing the owner of the vegetarian center through a reference to this mythical figure, the journalist suggests that she is a mysterious, and perhaps even unaccountable, nature-child.

Another example is found in an article about the most prominent family of vegetarians in Norway, the Røgløer-family. The text’s opening sentence reads: “They prefer garden-weed salad to a blood-dripping steak” (AP, 08. 06. 1993). Here, the journalist makes use of an exaggeration in the form of an invalid comparison, in order to stress the social deviance of the family. The above sentence suggests that for vegetarians, a salad of garden-weed is a reasonable comparison to a steak dinner. If one reads the whole interview, one finds that one of the family members does mention that he likes salad of garden-weed. Yet, he describes it as a side dish that is part of a dinner consisting of soy steak and mushroom stew. Apparently, the journalist did not find the sentence: “They prefer a soy steak with champignon stew to a blood-dripping steak” to be catchy enough, so she focused on the salad, which might as well have been part of a meal with meat. In this way, however, she stresses the abnormality of engaging in vegetarian practices.

A similar example is found in an article titled “Carrot-lover takes over in *Norge Rundt*” (VG, 10. 01. 1992). The article, which I have also referred to earlier in this chapter, is a feature story about a new presenter for popular traditional Norwegian TV-show. The text focuses mainly around the fact that she became a vegetarian as a means of curing a chronic intestinal infection. Again, it even contains a quote where she states that “Although I’m a vegetarian, I don’t eat carrots and raw vegetables three times a day”, the heading describes her as a “carrot-lover”. The use of the word “carrot” as a means of describing vegetarian food in general suggests that the food is unvaried, consisting not of dishes but

of unprepared ingredients. Further, by describing the interviewee through the rather condescending term, 'carrot-lover', when she is even quoted as stressing that she does not have a particular love for carrots, the journalist appears to ridicule her dietary choices.

How can we explain this tendency of describing vegetarians in ways that make them appear as abnormal and strange? As has been pointed out by both Twigg and Fiddes, there is a strong social community built around the appreciation of meat as the highest valued food item. Additionally, as explained in the previous chapter, meat can also be understood, not only as a key symbol of food in general, but also as a symbol of Western civilization (Fiddes 1991, 65). From this perspective, by rejecting such a powerful unifying symbol, and even worse, by rejecting a, or perhaps even *the*, key aspect of human civilization, it makes sense that vegetarians would appear as social deviants.

The understanding that being a vegetarian somehow places you on the outside of the social community, also shines through in quotes where vegetarians are describing themselves and their food habits. In some articles, vegetarians appear to be stressing their role as "normal people" by adding the conjunction 'but' to their admittance of being or eating vegetarian. A quote from the composer Sigvald Tveit, who is asked how a vegetarian diet has been beneficial for his problems with arthritis, reads, "I have changed my diet towards vegetarianism, but I still enjoy life's pleasures of food and drink" (VG, 04. 10. 1994) By constructing the sentence in this manner, vegetarianism is rhetorically being presented as allegedly contradictory to the enjoyment of "life's pleasures". This statement can be argued to align with Twigg's food hierarchy, where meat is placed on top of other foodstuffs. Further, the statement can also be understood as a means of negotiating one's social position, as someone who, despite their deviant meat-avoidance still embraces the human trait of enjoying good food and drink.

A similar example can be found in a quote by the above mentioned TV-presenter, stating that "I do not eat carrots and raw vegetables three times a day. Neither do I say "shame on you" every time someone is smoking, and beer and wine is 100 % vegetarian". Here, it appears as though she seeks to distance herself from the typical vegetarian subject, while at the same time stressing that she accepts and takes part in other socially important practices, such as smoking and drinking alcohol (VG, 10. 01.1992).

4.1.4 Summarizing remarks

What I have argued in this subchapter is that an ‘alternative health treatment discourse’ was the dominant newspaper discourse of the ‘vegetarian’ until the mid-1990s. Here, it was mainly framed as a therapeutically oriented practice, and the people engaged in it were presented as deviant and abnormal. The typical ‘vegetarian subject position’ in this period was someone who struggled with a form of illness and was interested in alternative treatment practices. Through being understood mainly as a means to improve one’s health, vegetarian food was largely framed as a kind of non-food, which was uncooked and associated with fasting. This vegetarian subject further tended to be framed as some sort of outsider, who was not included in the sociocultural community structured around the appreciation of traditional food.

4.2 Vegetarianism as a lifestyle grounded in animal ethics

From the mid-1990s we see a slight increase in the amount of newspaper articles dealing with the ‘vegetarian’. More importantly, however, there was also a radical shift in the framing of the topic. In this period, a completely new discourse emerged and took place as the dominant discourse, namely the ‘animal ethics discourse’. The shift in the framing of the ‘vegetarian’ in this period appears to be connected to sociocultural changes within the Norwegian vegetarian movement, changes which again were reflecting developments in the broader Western context.

4.2.1 The historical context of the ‘animal ethics discourse’

Just like the health-argument, animal ethical arguments for vegetarianism have existed since the time of Pythagoras, and have been promoted by several individual thinkers throughout history, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Tryon, and Gandhi. Yet, it was not until the late modern period in England that a more widespread concern for what we today refer to as ‘animal welfare’ first appeared (Thomas 1984). As demonstrated by Thomas, utterings about the importance of being good to animals and not causing them unnecessary suffering became common in English society throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. In this period, the concept of ‘animal cruelty’ became increasingly recognized

and condemned, and in the early 19th century, it was adapted in the legislative system through various prohibition acts, such as that of ‘cruelty to horses and cattle’ in 1822 (Thomas 1984, 179, 149).

Yet, although an increasing concern for animal ethics flourished in this period, it was hardly agreed upon what should be defined as unnecessary suffering for animals, and what would be the implications of causing such suffering. With regards to animals bred for their meat, the general public concern tended to extend mostly to their ‘good treatment’, whereas the practice itself was largely unquestioned. There were, however, voices in this period who connected questions of animal ethics to the practice of vegetarianism. As explained in chapter 3, the topic was mentioned as one of several motivations for the founding of The Vegetarian Society of Great Britain in 1847, and similarly for that of the Norwegian Vegetarian Association 83 years later. Although it was not uncommon for vegetarians in this period to argue against the killing of animals for food, the argument tended to be tied up in Biblical ideas as well as less altruistic concerns about the perceived negative effects of bringing ‘animal elements’ into the body (Thomas 1984, 291; Spencer 2000, 243).

There were some individuals in the late 18th century who expressed ideas that animals, too, should have rights. Yet, it would take almost 100 years before these ideas were taken up by an institutionalized movement. A famous quote written by Jeremy Bentham in 1789 reads, “The day may come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which only human tyranny has withheld from them” (Bentham quoted in Thomas 1984, 179-180). Bentham’s use of the term ‘rights’ was not adopted or conceptually developed in his time period. However, throughout the latter part of the 20th century, an increasing condemnation of the treatment of animals in the livestock occurred, along with the expression of new ideas about the moral status of animals.

The modern term ‘animal rights’ is associated with the writings of philosopher Tom Regan in the 1970s and ‘80s. Regan’s position, which has been highly influential both in academic as well as activist circles, is based on the idea that also non-human animals have an inherent value, due to their positions of being “experiencing subjects-of-a-life”, and that they therefore have an equal right to be treated with respect (Regan 2013, 119; Maurer 2002, 72). Another influential philosopher in this period, whose writings gained even broader audiences, was Peter Singer. Singer’s book *Animal liberation*, which was

published in 1975, would become an inspiration for many who chose vegetarianism or veganism as a lifestyle. In the book, Singer argued against what he referred to as ‘speciesism’, which is discrimination in favor of a particular species. He based his arguments on the utilitarian notion of the minimizing of suffering, and argued that animals must be considered in the equation, as they too are able to suffer (Singer 2009). The increased focus on the suffering of animals and of the notion of animals as worthy of a right not to be exploited by humans, led to the establishment of several organizations dedicated to promoting animal rights. Among the most influential is People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which was established in the U. S. in 1980, and since then has been an active proponent of vegetarianism and veganism internationally (PETA 2015).

The growing interest in the topic of animal welfare and rights which took hold in Western societies throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, eventually found its way to Norway, and led to new actors promoting vegetarianism mainly on ethical grounds. An ‘animal protection movement’ had been present in Norwegian society since the establishment of the Association Against Animal Cruelty, which in 1859 was turned into the still existing Association for the Protection of Animals [Dyrebeskyttelsen]. However, like its English predecessors, the movement focused primarily on seeking to improve the lives of animals and speak up against what they defined as ‘animal cruelty’, and did not tend to view the use of animals for food as ethically problematic (Ellingsen 2013).

Thus, as explained by Ellingsen, it was not until the establishment of the organization NOAH in 1989 that the notion of animals’ right to life, of which the logical consequence is that of vegetarianism, was consistently voiced by a Norwegian organization. The new and more radical focus on animal rights in this period can be connected to the general spreading of such ideas in Western societies in the late 1900s. Probably, it can also be understood in the context of the increasing rationalization of Norwegian agriculture, which has brought with it a strong decrease in agricultural holdings, particularly since the 1990s (Store Norske Leksikon 2015). In any case, NOAH was the first organization in Norway working to promote vegetarianism primarily from a modern animal rights perspective, promoting the viewpoint that animals, too, are individuals who have a right to live and be treated with respect. In 1993, the organization started their still ongoing yearly tradition of handing out free vegetarian food in Oslo city center, as a means of

creating positive awareness around the diet (Martinsen 1999). As a matter of coincidence, the organization's offices for many years would be Osterhausgate 12, the same address where the first Seventh Day Adventist meeting in Oslo had taken place in 1878 (NOAH 2013; Hansen 2015).

The mid-1990s also saw the re-establishment of another important actor, The Norwegian Vegetarian Association [Norsk Vegetarforening]. The association reappeared in 1995 as a joint effort between the old association [Norges Vegetariske Landsforbund] and a newly started initiative, creatively named The Vegetarian Association [Vegetarianerforeningen].

With the establishment of these two important organizations, which both strongly promoted the animal rights argument, the Norwegian vegetarian movement was both strengthened and redefined. Whereas earlier important promoters of vegetarian diets, such as the Seventh Day Adventists and the health food movement, had tended to frame it mostly as an individual lifestyle choice, the new institutionalization of vegetarianism in this period appears to have reinforced the notion of vegetarianism as an ethically-grounded ideology, and as the backbone of an organized movement.

4.2.2 A trendy and increasingly relevant practice

Out of the 96 articles that make up the basis for my data material, 17 of them were published between the years of 1995 and 2000. Although there is not a large increase in numbers of articles dealing with the topic in this period, there are remarkable qualitative changes in the way the topic is treated. A key qualitative change which took place in 1995 was the appearance of the first articles dealing with the practice of vegetarianism as a topic in itself. Whereas the typical text before 1995 was the 'human-interest story', where the main topic was not the 'vegetarian' in itself, but rather people or places connected to the practice, we now see the occurrence of several topic-oriented feature stories on vegetarianism.

The articles in this period still tend to be within the genre of the 'feature story', but they differ from earlier articles, in the sense that they also have information-oriented traits. For example, the typical topic-oriented feature story is likely to present the reader to a 'facts frame' on vegetarianism or a list of definitions of various types of vegetarians,

distinguishing between lacto-vegetarians, ovo-vegetarians and vegans (AP, 12. 06. 1998; AP, 02. 09. 1998; AP, 07. 02. 1999). Through this stylistic choice, the newspapers take on the role as a provider of information, and vegetarianism is presented as a topic of interest and relevance, rather than a curiosity. These articles also often present a number of vegetarians in Norway, most of them referring to the presumed number of 60 000, taken from the Scan-Fact survey from 1996 (VG, 21. 12. 1997; AP, 02. 09. 1998; NA, 04. 06. 1999). This way of framing vegetarians as a social group, through numbering and subcategorization is a completely new tendency in my data material, which suggests that the topic is perceived by newspaper authors as being of increasing public interest.

Another notable change in this time period is the occurrence of articles that discuss the availability and quality of vegetarian food options in Oslo (AP, 15. 03. 1996; AP, 12. 06. 1998; AP, 02. 09. 1998). An example is the Aftenposten article “Few green options when eating out” (AP, 15. 03. 1996), which both presents the reader to a list of restaurants and cafés “where you are guaranteed to get vegetarian food”, as well as a ranking of various restaurants according to their capability to provide vegetarian food options. Interestingly, this article takes a radical new approach to the topic, by suggesting that the reader might in fact be a vegetarian, or at least that she might have an interest in vegetarian food. This tendency stands in a stark contrast to the typical articles in the beginning of the 1990s, where the ‘vegetarian’ was mainly presented as a topic for the particularly-interested. The framing of vegetarian food as something that is of interest to the reader, suggests that engaging in vegetarian practices is perceived as something that has become more widespread and normal.

The occurrence of the “green wave”

Paying attention to the appearance of new words and phrases can be a useful way of studying changes in ideas and cultural perceptions of a topic. An interesting rhetorical change in this time period is that the journalists started to connect the concept ‘vegetarian’ to different words than before. For example, it is increasingly referred to as a wave and a trend, and the new word “vegetarian-wave” occurs. The earliest example is the Nationen-article “Real ‘veggies’ don’t eat eggs”, which has the subtitle “Green food and animal protection – new wave among youngsters” (NA, 26. 09. 1995). Later in the article one can read that “The vegetarian-wave is spreading both here in Norway and the rest of the

world”. The same word is used in the title of an article printed in the same newspaper a couple of days later, with the title “The meat industry fears vegetarian-wave” (NA, 29. 09. 1995). A similar rhetoric can be found in an article from VG two years later with the title “Green wave among young people”, which talks about the increasing popularity of being vegetarian (VG, 21. 12. 1997). The “wave”-metaphor signals that vegetarianism has suddenly become popular. Yet, the use of this specific word can be interpreted in different ways. According to an online dictionary, the word wave can be defined as “a disturbance on the surface of a liquid body, as the sea or a lake, in the form of a moving ridge or swell” (Dictionary.com 2016). In its most literal meaning a wave refers to a movement which occurs and then disappears again, giving the word a connotation of something fleeting and temporary. Still it must be noted that it is quite common to use the word to describe widespread opinions or social movements, and thus despite of the “temporary” connotations connected to the term, the use of it does not imply that the phenomenon cannot bring with it social change.

In many of the articles it is stated in the authorial voice of the newspaper that interest in vegetarianism has risen. Typically, the topic is framed through an initial reference to high numbers of vegetarians and increasing popularity of the diet in England or the United States (NA, 26. 09. 1995; NA, 29. 09. 1995; AP, 21. 12. 1997). One article states: “The vegetarian wave is spreading – in England, 14 % of all girls between the age of 14 and 17 are vegetarians. In Norway too, there is a strongly growing interest for vegetarian food” (NA, 29. 09. 1995). Another article text reads “Also in Norway, it is becoming increasingly common to stop by a fast food place to eat a vegetarian burger made of grain instead of a hamburger” (NA, 26. 09. 1995). This statement is rather curious, as I have not found any sources suggesting that there existed fast food places serving vegetarian grain-burgers in Norway in 1995. Rather, to my knowledge, there only existed two vegetarian restaurants in Norway at the time, Vegeta Vertshus and Krishna’s Cuisine, which were established in 1938 and 1992, respectively. Hence, one might regard the normality described above as a form of sensationalism. My impression is that there might also be a form of intertextuality at work, where journalists build on other newspaper articles on the topic, and thus end up retelling a sensationalist story of “the wave” of vegetarianism. Perhaps can this story be better explained by a growing visibility of organized vegetarianism, and a growing interest in the topic among certain journalists, than by a booming number of actual vegetarians and vegetarian cafes.

In the dominant newspaper discourse, vegetarian practices have now gone from largely being allocated to specific places, referred to as ‘vegetarian centers’ or ‘health centers’ towards being given a place in urban everyday life. It is gradually becoming of interest to someone who is eating out in Oslo, as well as to the average *Aftenposten*-reader. In this sense, one can say that the ‘vegetarian’ is increasingly moving from the periphery towards the center.

4.2.3 The subject: The idealist voice focused on animal ethics

As before, the articles from the period between 1995 and 2000 are often largely based around interviews with people who are engaged in vegetarian practices. However, the interviewees have largely gone from being people with relations to various “health centers” to being people who are engaged in animal ethics and have a more idealistic approach to their dietary choice. There is also an increasing tendency for the interview objects to be public figures, representing an ethically-oriented vegetarian ideology. The relatively new existence of the two organizations NOAH and NVA, which were presented in chapter 2, has now become both visible and influential. Two interview objects are given particular attention in this period, namely Siri Martinsen, the leader of the animal rights organization NOAH, and Ernst Røgler, a representative of NVA (NA, 26. 09. 1995; AP, 15. 03. 1996; AP, 09. 08. 1996; VG, 21. 12. 1997; AP, 02. 09. 1998). They are both vegetarians working actively, through vegetarian interest organizations, to promote vegetarianism as an ideology-based lifestyle

Unlike earlier interview objects, who tended to focus on the therapeutic abilities of vegetarian food, the interviewees now tend to frame vegetarianism as an ethically oriented practice. Further, it tends to be connected to an idealistic mindset, where the key motivators are the concern for animals and the environment. The increasing connection of the ‘vegetarian’ to an ideological discourse focusing on animal rights or environmentalism, can be seen in many of the articles, as a striking contrast to the previously dominant personal goal-oriented health approach.

Further, while vegetarian practices were previously often presented as something one practiced in a particular place, and for a limited period of time, it is now increasingly being framed as a sort of identity, something you either *are* or *are not*. An example of the undermining of the ‘alternative health treatment discourse’ can be seen in this quote from

Røgler from the Vegetarian Association: “People choose to become green-eaters for several reasons. Some because they find it wrong to eat animals when it is not a vital practice. Others do so due to their opinions about the meat-industry, or even for health food-reasons [sic]” (AP, 15. 03. 1996). A similar focus on ideological arguments is found in this quote from Siri Martinsen from NOAH: “There are as many reasons [for being vegetarian] as there are vegetarians, but the two most important ones is for the animals and for the environment” (AP, 09. 08. 1996). In both of these quotes, animal ethics reasons are the first thing mentioned when interview objects with important positions within vegetarian organizations explain why people ‘become vegetarian’.

With the sudden visibility of interview objects like Martinsen and Røgler, there is an important change in the newspaper representation of who and what a vegetarian is. Whereas in the ‘alternative health discourse’ on the ‘vegetarian’, the typical subject was an individual who dipped into or embraced the practice mainly for personal reasons, such as illness or stress, the image of the person engaged in vegetarian practices is now shifting in the direction of someone who is highly motivated by animal ethics, as well as someone who is likely to be part of an organized social movement. The diminishing importance of the health-approach can also be seen in the following quote from an article where a group of young vegetarians are interviewed: “- We are in normal good health, not going to make a big deal out of that, laughs Grøndahl. – Vegetarians die too, Børde smiles laconically” (AP, 12. 06. 1998). Here, one might get the impression that the journalist has tried to approach the topic from an ‘alternative health treatment’-perspective, and has hoped to get his interview objects talking about the healing benefits of their diet. However, with the latter statement, the interview object Børde sharply cuts off any references to this now seemingly outdated discourse. For the typical vegetarian subject in this period, health arguments are secondary at best.

“Who wants to eat dead animals?”

Within the ‘animal ethics discourse’, a key motivation for being a vegetarian is that one does not want to contribute to the suffering or death of animals (NA, 26. 09. 1995; NA, 04. 06. 1999; AP, 09. 08. 1996; AP, 15. 03. 1996). Perhaps not surprisingly, this focus is particularly present in articles where representatives from NOAH are interviewed. In one such article, the opening paragraph reads: “They do not eat eggs, because they are

protesting against caged hens. Milk products are banned, because the cows are being treated badly. They are vegetarians, they are young, and their numbers are increasing” (NA, 26. 09. 1995). This quote sums up many of the changes in the discourse on vegetarians that took place throughout the latter part of the 1990s. Firstly, the consistent use of the word “they” stresses the framing of vegetarians as a social group with shared interests and motivations. Further, the use of the words “protesting” and “banned” which both have clear connotations to political activism and also both have negative connotations in the sense that they involve saying no to something, suggests that vegetarians are a form of political group which reject certain aspects of society. Vegetarians are framed through a focus on what they oppose and what they *do not* eat, not by what they do eat, and thus the ethics of meat-eating is suddenly questioned.

As mentioned above, NOAH-leader Siri Martinsen is perhaps *the example* of the typical vegetarian subject in this period. In her statements, as well as in statements from other vegetarians who speak from an animal ethics perspective, meat-eating is portrayed as an unethical practice, and attention is directed towards the meat industry and the animals involved in it. This quote from Martinsen is a good example of the new vegetarian voice that appears in this period:

With the present industrialized livestock production, to eat meat is to accept the suffering of animals. Animals are created with legs to run with and a head to think with. It is not natural for them to be standing in the same place on a concrete floor all year. Also, it is bad use of resources to spend that much grains on meat production (AP, 09. 08. 1996).

NOAH is an organization that argues from a rights-perspective much similar to that of Regan, and thus opposes the killing of animals for food in general. Yet, the main critique here is directed towards a historically specific institution, namely the present livestock production and its concrete floors. In this context, the “industrial” has clear negative undertones, and is contrasted with its positive counterpart the “natural”.

The animal-ethics voices in the mid-1990s are the first voices in the newspaper discourse on the ‘vegetarian’ to give attention to the food production system. By lifting the gaze of the ‘vegetarian subject’ from their own body towards the complex food production system and the bodies of the animals who are kept and killed for their meat, Martinsen and other animal-ethics voices, ‘open up’ the discourse to a broad array of complex moral questions. Further, unlike earlier, when the typical focus was on the abnormal eating habits of

vegetarians, the ‘vegetarian’ voices in this period turn the table, questioning the meat-eating habits of most Norwegians.

Interestingly, the animal ethics discourse is also picked up by a single journalist-voice in this period, namely that of Aftenposten’s Nazneen Khan. Two specific articles written by Khan are particularly interesting, as they are the first in my data where a journalist draws upon the animal ethics discourse. In one of these articles, the opening paragraph reads, “Are you uncomfortable with the idea of eating dead animals, and swear solely to vegetables? Or are you tired of meat and would like some variation? Then you have probably discovered that going to a restaurant in Oslo isn’t easy” (AP, 15. 03. 1996). She also uses similar wording in another text, featuring an interview with Siri Martinsen about NOAH’s yearly tradition of handing out free vegetarian food in the main street in Oslo (AP, 09. 08. 1996). She starts off the article with the sentence “On Saturday you can experience how easy and simple it is to eat food without dead animals in it”.

In both the above examples, Khan makes use of the personal pronoun ‘you’ in order to approach the reader in a direct, almost commercial-like manner, directly confronting them with their eating habits. By using the phrase “dead animals” in sentences where it might have been natural for most people to have used the word “meat”, she stresses that meat is a product that has a background as a live animal which might have had an interest in staying alive. Through these textual choices, Khan implies that the practice of eating meat is worthy of critique on the grounds of animal ethics. The way she expresses herself also suggests that she believes some readers are likely to agree with her, and that those who do not would benefit from reflecting upon their eating habits. As a journalist, Kahn is quite alone in expressing concern for these issues at this time.

Vegetarian food – not just raw vegetables?

The newspaper articles from the mid-1990s further reveal that the concept ‘vegetarian’ was filled with conflictual meanings in this period. For example, there appears to have been disagreement about the characteristics of vegetarian food and the eating habits of vegetarians. The ‘alternative health discourse’, with its focus on raw vegetables and abstention from alcohol and other stimulants, had not completely disappeared. An example of this discourse can be found in the below quote from the Aftenposten article “Healthy and delicious”, where a chef was interviewed about his experiences with

vegetarians eating out: “Most vegetarians drink little alcohol, most often they do not drink at all. A party of four vegetarians, ordering tea or water and four different vegetable dishes, is not exactly the chefs’ or the waiters’ dream” (AP, 12. 06. 1998). In addition to drawing on the alternative health discourse on vegetarianism, describing vegetarians as tea-drinking teetotalers, the chef also seems to place “vegetable dishes” below other dishes in a hierarchy of restaurant food. Another example of the alternative health perspective can be found in an article where the leader of the Vegetarian Association, Røgler, is testing vegetarian options at a restaurant. Røgler’s response after having been served a crepe with tomato and basil sauce, filled with a compote of peppers, beans and sugar peas is:

Sure...This is alright, but I do miss the raw vegetables. The raw vegetables are the most important thing. The fact that the vegetables are cooked kind of becomes a bit negative. But they were alright, I prefer them sort of half-cooked, though (AP, 02. 09. 1998).

Being quoted as the leader of the Vegetarian Association, this statement is likely to be interpreted by a newspaper reader as a general opinion among vegetarians.

Yet, there is also an increasing number of articles that connect vegetarianism to a more ‘normal food’-discourse. An example of this discourse comes from another, younger, representative of the Norwegian Vegetarian Association, Pål W. Thorbjørnsen, in an interview about what vegetarians eat for Christmas (AP, 23. 12. 2000). Unlike his colleague Røgler, Thorbjørnsen stresses that most vegetarians do not regard cooked or raw vegetables as a complete dish.

For vegetarians, sauce, cranberries, vegetables and potatoes will not be considered a complete dish. These are side dishes, also to us. We would very much like to have a main dish, and this can be anything from a stew to soy-hot dogs. And it should also not be boiled, but fried, deep-fried, baked or marinated.

The focus on what vegetarian food is *not*, that it is not merely consisting of side dishes, and that it can be prepared in a variety of ways, suggests an interest in moving away from established perceptions of the ‘vegetarian’. A similar focus is found in the interview with NOAH-leader Siri Martinsen about the organization’s upcoming handing-out of free vegetarian food (AP, 09. 08. 1996). The article states that Martinsen “promises that there will be no grass on the grill on Saturday. But rather vegetarian pizza, baked vegetables, skewers, stews and vegetarian burgers”. Here, the reference to grass can easily be

interpreted as a kick in the direction of the alternative treatment-discourse where vegetarian food often is mainly described as raw and uncooked.

It appears as though the new focus on vegetarian food as ‘normal food’ can largely be connected to the new, young and ethically motivated vegetarian voice, which occurred in the newspapers in the mid-1990s. Whereas the typical vegetarian subject within the alternative health treatment discourse was someone who had a physical purity-orientation and was likely to embrace alternative eating practices, the moral-purity oriented subject in the animal ethics discourse appears to be interested in establishing an understanding of vegetarian food as normal, everyday food, which has much in common with other types of food. It is as though the vegetarian subjects within this discourse, aware of their abnormality when it comes to ethical beliefs, are trying to negotiate their position as normal people through stressing that their eating habits are not so unconventional after all.

4.2.4 Summarizing remarks

In this subchapter, I have argued that an ‘animal ethics discourse’ entered the newspapers in the mid-1990s, and became the dominant perspective for framing the concept ‘vegetarian’ in this period. In this discourse, vegetarian food started to become disconnected from its earlier association with dietary therapy and fasting. While engagement in vegetarian practices was previously relegated to the periphery, it was now increasingly described as something common, trendy and of relevance. The typical ‘vegetarian subject’ in this period was not particularly concerned with personal health or physical purity, but rather with issues concerning the industrial food system, and in particular, with what they regarded as the questionable ethics of using animals for food.

Interestingly, although this discourse highly differs from the one that came before it, the two still have an important thing in common, which is that they both present one specific type of easily identifiable, typical ‘vegetarian subject’, whose voice mainly appears in the form of an interview object, who speaks from the ‘outside’ of the newspaper itself. Yet, though the ‘vegetarian’ is now presented as being less of a curiosity, the typical ‘vegetarian subject’, in spite of their urbanity, continues to be a form of social outsider, someone speaking from a point of view which is outside of mainstream society.

4.3 The ‘vegetarian’ as a solution to an unsustainable food system

In this subchapter I will present what I have chosen to call the ‘sustainable consumption discourse’, which is the dominant discourse in my data material from the beginning of the 2000s until present. This is a broader and more encompassing discourse than the two discussed above. It should be noted that I do not use the term ‘sustainable’ as a fixed term in this context, but rather as a collective term for the complex array of concerns that the concept ‘vegetarian’ is connected to from the early 2000s. These involve both environmental concerns, but also concern for social issues such as resource use and allocation, global food security and food safety, as well as issues related to animal ethics. At the core of the sustainability discourse is the notion that the existing food system is unsustainable, but also that consumers have the possibility to contribute to a more sustainable society by choosing to eat food that is more ‘natural’ and that has been produced under more ethical circumstances. In this context, vegetarian food is often brought up as a plausible alternative.

4.3.1 The historical context of the ‘sustainable consumption discourse’

The industrialization of agriculture that started in the late 18th century, and the large structural transformation in food production that came with it, eventually became the source of new environmental and social concerns. As part of this development, several critiques of industrialized meat production have appeared, leading to new arguments for vegetarian practices and reduced meat-consumption.

As we have seen, intensive animal farming was criticized from a resource-use perspective already in the early 19th century by public figures such as doctors William A. Alcott and Anna Kingsford (Röcklinsberg 2012, 135-36). The argument, which was also used by the early Vegetarian Society in Britain in defense of their diet, was that the production of meat requires much more resources than that of plant-foods (Spencer 2000, 246-47). Concerns for the high amounts of resources used in meat production were present also among the early vegetarians in Norway. As early as in 1901 an article promoting vegetarianism from a resource and peace-perspective was printed in *Sunnhetsbladet*. In the article, named “The state-economic and world political consequences of flesh-eating”

(Buerdorff 1901, my translation), it was argued that meat production was a waste of resources and nutrients. Its author, Benno Buerdorff, concluded by naming it the reason for war between nations, to which the only cure was the establishment of vegetarian colonies, ultimately growing into independent vegetarian states.

Yet, except from the occasional ‘eccentric voices’ mentioned above, it was not before the rise of environmentalism in the 1970’s that concerns about the negative environmental and social effects of meat production started to become more known among the general public. As explained by sociologist Anneke Van Otterloo, the general ‘countercultural climate’ of the 1960s and ‘70s laid grounds for a newfound concern for the environmental degradation caused by modern industrial production (Van Otterloo 2012, 67). Several important environmental organizations, such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, were formed in this period, alongside smaller networks and groups that promoted local, small-scale and organic food production. Many of these groups deemed meat-production unnecessary, and promoted vegetarianism largely on ecological grounds (Van Otterloo 2012, 67-68). The publication of Frances Moore Lappé’s *Diet for a Small Planet* in 1971 is important in this context, as it is known as the first major book to address the waste of natural resources resulting from meat production, simultaneously arguing that it is a contributor to food shortages globally (Lappé 1971; Maurer 2002, 76). In 1989, the resource-argument which had then been made well-known by Lappé, was supported by researchers from the World Hunger Program, who found that in 1986 a so-called ‘basic vegetarian diet’ had the possibility to feed 6 billion people, which then accounted for 120 % of the world’s population (Kates et al. 1989).

In later times, yet another major sustainability concern has entered the public discourse, namely the high level of climate gas emissions associated with the livestock industry. This topic got widespread international attention in 2006 when FAO issued the report *Livestock’s Long Shadow*, stating that 18 % of total global greenhouse gas emissions derive from the industry (Steinfeld 2006, 21). Sustainability arguments such as the climate argument and the resource-use argument have contributed to an increased general skepticism to the high levels of meat consumption, in particular to the levels found in most Western societies. These arguments have appeal also outside of vegetarian groups, as they are not necessarily interpreted as calling for a total avoidance of meat, but rather for a strong reduction in meat-eating. For example, many environmentally-oriented

groups, such as the international Friends of the Earth and the Norwegian organization The Future in Our Hands, are positive to vegetarianism and promote concepts such as “meat-free days” without adhering to a strict vegetarian ideology.

Another factor which has contributed to increased skepticism towards meat in European countries since the 1980’s is the increasing public concern about food safety and especially the safety of meat products, following the occurrence of various ‘food crises’. This term is often used to describe events such as the outbreak of BSE, commonly known as “mad-cow disease” (Viegas et al. 2012). The disease, which was first discovered in cattle in the UK in 1986, is linked to several illnesses that can affect humans, the most well-known being Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (FSAI 2015). Other such food scares are related to microbiological risks such that of as E. coli and Salmonella, which both tend to be associated with animal products (Viegas et al. 2012). Although the meat-fears deriving from such ‘crises’ can largely be understood as individual health concerns, I still believe they should be understood in the context of an increased concern for sustainability and ethics. This is because what makes meat-products problematic in this context is not the inherent qualities of meat per se, but rather, bacteria or other micro substances that derive from the production process. It is thus not meat-eating in itself that is regarded as the main problem, but rather the modern industrial food production system, in which human manipulation of nature has proven to entail unintended consequences.

According to philosopher Christian Coff, we are in recent times experiencing what he calls an ethical ‘crisis’ in the way we deal with food (Coff 2006, ix). As we are faced with several social, environmental and, as discussed in the previous subchapter, animal ethics problems connected to the food production system, it has now become more important for people to try to navigate between good and bad food production practices. This development has implications for how we relate to meat. Although research has shown that Norwegian consumers have a high trust in the food provisioning system in general, as well as in Norwegian meat products in particular (Kjærnes et. al. 2010), decisions about what to eat are increasingly being connected to questions of responsibility and morality also in Norway (Bugge 2015). As I will argue in the rest of this subchapter, the increase in ethical concerns connected to contemporary meat production has had a strong impact on the framing of the concept ‘vegetarian’ since 2000 and onwards.

4.3.2 The ‘opening up’ of the vegetarian discourse

From the year 2000 and onwards there has been a remarkable increase in the amount of articles making use of the term ‘vegetarian’. Out of the 96 articles on which I have based my analysis, 67 of these were published in this period. Yet, more interesting than the mere numbers are the qualitative changes that have occurred. What I seek to demonstrate in this subchapter, is that a form of ‘opening up’ of the vegetarian discourse has taken place since year 2000.

By introducing this term, I seek to stress that although the discourse changed remarkably with the entrance of the animal ethics voices in the mid-1990s, the 2000s witnessed an even more fundamental change in the discourse on the ‘vegetarian’. In the whole period between 1990 and 2000, one can quite easily speak of a ‘typical’ type of article, the feature story, with a ‘typical subject’, the health enthusiast and the animal ethics-idealist. In other words, there were certain ways of addressing the topic in this period, certain patterns, that were rarely strayed from by journalists. In this sense, I argue that the ‘vegetarian’ discourse was relatively closed. However, what has happened since year 2000 is that it has become increasingly difficult to talk about a ‘typical’ article style. Rather, the concept ‘vegetarian’ is now brought up in a variety of different articles, from informatory pieces to reflexive essays. Accordingly, it has become more difficult to point out one specific ‘subject position’ in the newspaper discourse. Vegetarian food is now promoted and discussed by a variety of voices, from scientific experts and political authorities to journalists and food commentators. In this, more ‘open’ discourse, the boundary between the newspaper voice and the ‘vegetarian’ voice is not so clear cut anymore, as an increasing number of voices that actually represent newspapers themselves, have started to recommend and show interest in vegetarian options.

4.3.3 A proper practice for people who care about sustainability

Throughout this period, the term ‘vegetarian’ has to a greater extent become connected to discourses of food ethics and consumer responsibility. Rather than being considered a rare and curious lifestyle choice for a few particularly interested, it is now increasingly framed as a reasonable response to what is perceived as pressing problems of the current food system, such as the global food crisis, environmental problems and recurring livestock diseases. Moreover, it is sometimes even treated as the only solution to such

problems. A recurring understanding is that people should take responsibility for sustainability issues through their eating habits, and that choosing vegetarian is one way of taking such responsibility. The concept ‘vegetarian’ is now promoted by both expert, political and journalist voices, who all tend to connect it to notions of ‘doing good’. This development suggests a form of ‘mainstreaming’ of the concept.

Condemning ‘the industrial’

A new tendency in my data material in this period is that several newspaper writers now bring up the concept ‘vegetarian’ in personal and reflective articles. A recurring topic is a concern for the many negative side-effects of the industrial food production, and an expression of being drawn towards eating more vegetarian food, which is framed as representing a sort of ‘antithesis’ to the former. Now, vegetarian food appears to represent a sense of protest or critique against the contemporary food industry, a kind of solution for people who are concerned about sustainability issues.

An example is the article “What is good food?”, where commentator Trond Wormstrand states:

I am not a vegetarian, but I am no longer tempted by the thought of industrial meat. Wild fish, game and vegetarian food is more often on my menu (...) The changes in taste came due to an increased interest in food and cooking. (...) I got a chef’s critical view on the ingredients: Real food means home-made food. (...) My new food habits is also a silent protest against the international food industry’s unloving treatment of earth, water and animals (NA, 11. 12. 2002).

In this quote, Wormstrand connects his interest in vegetarian food to an increased concern for what has happened to his food before it ends up on his plate. He explains that an interest in what lies behind the meal, the “cooking” and the “ingredients” led him to the realization that “real food” is something that is made at home, and not by the “international food industry”. Here, he places vegetarian food, along with wild fish and game, in the category of food that is perceived as more ‘real’. The connection between vegetarian food and home-made food is interesting, as one can easily find vegetarian foods among the products of the international food industry, such as frozen pizzas, French fries or canned soups. Yet, it is ‘industrial meat’ that is portrayed as the main problem. The framing of vegetarian food in this quote stands in a stark contrast to the two dominant discourses of the 1990s. From having been described largely as a sort of non-food in the

alternative health treatment discourse, towards becoming presented as more normal food in the animal ethics discourse, the tables have now turned. In a discourse where meat is largely associated with a destructive and ‘unnatural’ industry, vegetarian food suddenly gets the role as being the most ‘real’.

The perception of the vegetarian as the antithesis of the industrial is also revealed in the personal column piece “Teach the kids about animals”, written by columnist Mala Naveen (AP, 31. 05. 2006). Referring to a documentary she has recently seen, Naveen explains that “The soul-less industrialized food production pushed me closer to my decision of eating more vegetarian food”. Also here, engaging in vegetarian practices is presented as a form of solution to a problematic food industry, and vegetarian food is portrayed as having more soul and as somehow less industrialized. Perhaps the reason why she perceives the production of vegetarian food as less “soul-less” is because it (or at least the production of vegan food) does not involve the killing of such large quantities of animals? Naveen goes on to encourage parents to teach the kids “the names of cows, rabbits, goats, sheep and pigs by letting them look at them and touch them. Give them a relationship to animals built on something else than eating them”. This, she argues, would “do nature and the planet a big favor”. Considering her reference to the food documentary mentioned in the beginning of the article, this rather naïve suggestion appears as an attempt of relief from feelings of guilt due to being a consumer within the contemporary food industry.

In these articles one can sense a sort of longing towards earlier, pre-industrial times, where the food is perceived as having been more “real” and having more “soul”. The contemporary tendency to condemn industrially produced foods has been described by historian and philosopher Rachel Laudan as ‘culinary luddism’ (Laudan 2015). In her article, “A Plea for Culinary Modernism”, she argues that this nostalgia for foods that are unprocessed, natural and artisanal has “presented itself as a moral and political crusade” since the emergence of the countercultural movements. Yet, she argues that, in spite of its good intentions, this ‘culinary luddist’ ethos can in fact be understood as being quite naïve and ahistorical. In her plea for a new ethos that “does not prejudge, but decides case by case when natural is preferable to processed, fresh to preserved, old to new, slow to fast, artisanal to industrial”, she reminds us that most of the ‘traditional’ products and

fresh foods we have available today would not have been accessible to us if it were not for the global, industrial economy (Laudan 2015).

“Food is not just food”

Further, although harsh criticisms of the industrial livestock industry had been present in my data material since about 1995, in the form of statements from animal rights activists, the fact that they are now expressed by newspaper journalists themselves, suggests that such perceptions have become more widespread. In many articles from after 2000, it almost appears as though a veil has been removed from the eyes of the article authors. They convey that the food they eat does not exist in a vacuum, but rather has a history as well as an environmental and a social impact. This realization appears to produce feelings of guilt and discomfort, particularly with regards to meat eating.

An example of a journalist expressing unease with the position of animals in the contemporary food system is found in the article “Holy cow, depressed meat”, where VG-journalist Marie Simonsen almost appears surprised to have realized the fact that meat has a history as a living animal (VG, 18. 03. 2001). Simonsen talks about what she refers to as different “near vegetarian experiences”, referring to times she has felt like becoming vegetarian. As an example, she mentions a time she was in Texas, where the steak, as she explains, came in three sizes “big, grotesque and cow”, and where she was served a “half little pig”. Through describing the dishes through the words “cow” and “little pig”, she makes it clear that the preparation and size of the meat she got served in Texas made her uncomfortable because it had too many resemblances to the actual animal. Later in the article, she states: “Food is not just food. The vacuum packs in the refrigerated counter fool us into believing otherwise, but even the minced meat was once alive.” Stating that meat derives from animals should of course be as unnecessary as to state that the grass is green. Still, that a journalist feels the need to state this obvious fact, suggests an increased alienation from the food production process.

Simonsen’s laments can be regarded as an example of what Bjørkdahl and Syse argue to be an increasing incapacity for Western consumers to acknowledge that meat derives from animals (Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013) Whereas in earlier times, various cultural rituals have been in place which have secured the transformation of animals from living beings to food items, they argue that the main strategy for coping with this ethical unease are

mechanisms of concealment. The increasing tendency to conceal meat's animal origin can again be connected to an increasing sense of 'biocentrism', the idea that animals too are worthy of moral consideration (Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013). Perhaps Simonsen's reaction can be seen as an example of these tendencies, as in a completely anthropocentric world no one is likely to make a fuss about the death of animals?

The climate argument and the entrance of expert-subjects

The idea that production of vegetarian food is generally less harmful to the climate than meat production was first introduced in my data as early as in 1996, in the Klassekampen-article "Eat a carrot instead" which centers around an interview with professor Lars Bakken from the Norwegian College of Agriculture (KK, 24. 07. 1996). However, except from a 2001-article, written by professor Bakken, the topic did not get attention by journalists again until from around 2005 and onwards. With the entrance of the climate argument, new subject positions, such as scientific experts and, as I will discuss later, politicians, entered the discourse.

As already explained, my main focus in this thesis is on typical and representative texts from the time period under study, yet in a historically oriented analysis like this one it is also interesting to see how some texts are ahead of their time. The above mentioned article from 1996 is one such text, which particularly stands out as it is the first in my data to frame vegetarian practices as being recommended by experts. The article is centered around professor Bakken's research on the nitrogen circle and Norway's nitrous oxide emissions, which has lead him to the conclusion that we need to eat more vegetables. Firstly, its title "Eat a carrot instead..." is written in imperative, giving a direct order to the reader. As seen in earlier texts, the word "carrot" is often used as a metaphor for vegetarian food in general. This new framing of vegetarian food as something the reader *should* eat was completely new at the time. The fact that the quotation in the headline comes from a researcher, an expert on the field, gives the statement even more authority.

Like the above mentioned headline, the article contains several quotes from professor Bakken that stress the topic of consumer responsibility. An example is the following quote, where consumers' food choices are portrayed as having a direct impact on greenhouse gas-emissions:

Consumption patterns are the natural place to start in order to reduce the nitrous oxide emissions. What would really count, would be if we changed our diet. Vegetarians basically have a point when they argue that meat-consumption is old-fashioned in a world with a growing population and the climate threat (KK, 24. 07. 1996).

In this quote, vegetarians are being framed as socially and environmentally conscious, and as an example to be followed by others. Considering that the article was written in 1996, one can speculate that it might be the group of trendy young people referred to as the “vegetarian wave”, that Bakken refers to as *having a point*.

That aside, as explained above, the climate argument for engaging with the ‘vegetarian’ did not actually make a considerable appearance in my data material until the latter part of the 2000s. At this time, a couple of headlines, such as “Vegetarian food is best for the environment” (AP, 14. 10. 2005) and “- Meat worse than car use” (VG, 16. 03. 2007), started to appear. Both of these headlines provide clear messages to the reader, without them actually having to read the text. Further, both articles have the form of news articles featuring interviews with representatives from environmentally-oriented organizations, who point to research showing the negative effects of meat production on the environment. In the former article, it is stated that “Compared to meat, even a vegetarian diet based on ingredients from all over the world would provide an enormous gain in terms of CO₂-emissions, it is concluded in a report from The Future In Our Hands” (AP, 14. 10. 2005). Like in the article from 1996, the article focuses on the research behind the statement, presenting the reader to the calculations it was based on, a choice which might be argued to add strength to the argument. As seen from these examples, the entrance of the climate argument brought with it a new framing of the concept ‘vegetarian’, as something which is recommended by scientific experts as the most sustainable choice for everyone.

Food for the future

The notion that vegetarian food is *food for the future* is a recurring narrative in the newspapers since it is first brought up in the above discussed article from 1996. In one Aftenposten-article from 1998, the journalist makes a humorous attempt at predicting the coming food trends of the following year (AP, 31. 12. 1998). In his vision of what food habits will look like in 1999, the journalist predicts that: “Vegetarian food will soon be

offsetting meat, and the customers will soon become so environmentally conscious that the salmon's childhood is more important than its taste". As explained above, this statement is part of a humoristic piece where the journalist makes fun of upcoming food trends, hence it must be interpreted accordingly. Yet, it is still interesting that the author envisions a future where vegetarian food has become increasingly common and trendy. As explained earlier, the idea of the 'vegetarian' as something trendy appeared alongside the notion of the 'ethical vegetarian' which entered the newspaper discourse in 1995. This has been a recurring narrative since then. It is for example brought up by food writer Yngve Ekern, who in a 2012-article asks: "How cool is it really to enjoy oneself with meat from animals whose lives have been miserable?" (AP, 07. 07. 2012). With this rhetorical question, Ekern apparently takes it for granted that the reader agrees with him that eating meat, at least meat which derives from the contemporary meat industry, is both unhip and morally wrong.

The future narrative also appears in the 2008-article "This is what the climate society will look like" (VG, 05. 01. 2008). In the article, the journalist envisions what the Norwegian society might look like in 2050, with the premise that we have been able to cut our climate emissions to the level perceived as necessary by climate scientists. In this vision of the future, meat consumption is portrayed as old-fashioned:

Eating meat several times a week was completely accepted in the beginning of the millennium. The attitudes towards meat changed remarkably quickly when chef celebrities started making vegetarian meals, as part of the environment trend. It took just over a year from the first British TV chef made his first vegetarian program to restaurants worldwide had to change their menus.

Here, vegetarian food is portrayed as playing an important role in an optimistic envisioning of the future, where humanity has taken the advice of climate researchers to its heart and changed its ways in order to handle the environmental crisis. In the above quote, meat is envisioned as changing status towards becoming more or less unaccepted. This can be compared to how the status of tobacco smoking has changed remarkably in Norway since the 1950s, particularly among the highly educated. The British TV chef envisioned to create a groundbreaking vegetarian TV-program is not named in the text, but a reader with a slight knowledge of popular culture is likely to take the reference to celebrity chef Jamie Oliver. Interestingly, the idea that Oliver might launch a vegetarian series in the near future is not at all far-fetched. In fact, the famous chef has reportedly

told the Daily Mail that he has already written a vegetarian cookbook that he would like to turn into a TV-program, but that he is struggling to convince producers that this is of interest to the general public (Buckley 2015). Hence, the above described future vision describes a development that might in fact soon become reality.

“Food is politics”

From 2009 on, articles that frame the ‘vegetarian’ as something that belongs within the realm of politics start to occur. The contrast to the articles from the early 1990s is stark. From being something that was practiced by a couple of individuals in alternative health centers often placed in far-away areas, the practice is now entering a completely new field of central political and national institutions.

My data suggests that food is now increasingly being regarded as a political issue, both in the general public and by politicians. For example, two 2009 and 2010- articles from Klassekampen present the reader to two new cookbooks, both issued by idealistic groups, that focus on providing environmentally friendly recipes and food tips (KK, 03. 10. 2009; KK, 30. 01. 2010). The opening sentence in one of the articles reads “Food is politics” (KK, 30. 01. 2010). This understanding is also found in the personal, argumentative piece “Old ideas are crumbling”, written by Klassekampen-journalist Åse Brandvold (KK, 02. 05. 2008). In the text, the journalist describes how she, in spite of not being a vegetarian, chose to serve her guests vegetarian and organic food at a “fancy” dinner party, out of consideration for “the food crisis”, and thus made “the personal into something political”. Brandvold thus takes global political issues into the equation when deciding what to have for dinner. Yet, with this statement, she suggests that contrary to meat-eating, eating vegetarian food is a political act. This example might be understood as pointing to the complex position of meat in the contemporary. It is considered problematic, and is connected to global problems such as the ‘food crisis’, yet, at the same time it still has a role of a naturalized, “apolitical” practice.

The notion that consumers engage in a form of political action when they decide what to have for dinner is also present in another article, featuring an interview with minister of environment and development, Erik Solheim (AP, 07. 12. 2009). The article makes reference to the then ongoing climate negotiations in Copenhagen, and presents a quote by Solheim stating that “Additionally, each and every one must think about how they can

contribute”. His solution is presented in the opening paragraph, the four B-s “Bil, butikk, biff og bolig” [Car, store, beef and housing]. In this article, problems related to meat consumption have made their way to the political news section. A politician is now directly encouraging people, through the media, to cut down on the meat and eat more vegetarian, as a means of “doing their part” for the climate. Within this discourse, the concept ‘vegetarian’ is regarded as a topic that is relevant for everyone.

However, while the above discussed articles present the actual cutting down on meat as something individuals are responsible for themselves, other texts place food consumption within the realm of issues that should be handled by direct political measures. In the article “Wants to introduce a weekly vegetarian day” (VG, 12.08.2009), the reader is introduced to Green party-politician Sondre Båtstrand who is suggesting a “public vegetarian day a week”. The two politicians Båtstrand and Solheim are both referring to the same problem, but are suggesting two quite different solutions. While for Solheim, people themselves are responsible for cutting down their meat consumption, Båtstrand sees this as a topic that should be addressed through political means.

Although the *possibility* that the concept ‘vegetarian’ could be of interest to politicians has now entered the newspaper discourse, the notion that politicians should actually care about or be engaged in vegetarian practices, still appears to be rather uncommon and unexpected. This comes across in the interview with Båtstrand, where it is stressed that the actual carrying out of his suggestion of public vegetarian days is regarded as being quite unimaginable at the time being, both by the journalist and by Båtstrand himself. The understanding that politicians rarely care about vegetarian practices is also stressed in the article “Look, a meat free politician!” (VG, 20. 02. 2014), which features an interview with the politician Stefan Heggelund, described as the “first known Parliament-politician fed on greens”. Through the headline, which is written in imperative, directly addressing the reader, the journalist suggests that a vegetarian politician is a real curiosity. Yet, while stressing that Heggelund is a rare instance, the focus on abnormality, typical for the early 1990s, is completely gone. The article includes no references to carrots. Instead, it has an info-box presenting the reader to the names of famous vegetarians, such as Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci and Paul McCartney, in this way suggesting that Heggelund is in the company of several acknowledged individuals.

Vegetarian days, not people

Alongside the new focus on the negative effects of meat consumption on the climate, appears the notion of meat-free or vegetarian days. The concept is promoted by various voices, who fill it with different meanings. A recurring subject in this period is the representative of some state institution that has implemented the measure. These voices tend to focus primarily on its climate benefits, framing it as a way to do one's part for the climate. An example is the feature story "The city where beef is banned", where the reader is introduced to the Belgian city Ghent, which is the only European city to have introduced an official meat-free day a week (AP, 07. 06. 2009). The article features an interview with Ghent's vice mayor, Tom Balthazar, who is responsible for the implementation. When asked why he made this decision, Balthazar's answer reads: "I heard a lecture by Rajendra Pachauri, leader of the UN climate panel and Nobel prize winner along with Al Gore. He is encouraging everyone to take the consequences of their own consumption. That is the easiest way to start". Both through Balthazar's authoritative position as a city vice mayor, as well as through his reference to the leader of an important UN institution, cutting down on meat for climate reasons is being framed as a pressing political issue.

An article about the implementation of so-called "Meat-free Monday" in the Norwegian army also suggests that institutionally implemented vegetarian days are primarily regarded as a climate measure (AP, 18. 11. 2013). In the article, the section chief of the military's defense logistics organization, Pål H. Stenberg, is quoted as stating:

The military is supposed to reflect the rest of society. And we are seeing an increasing consciousness with regards to environmentally friendly food. Meat-free days is a climate measure. But we are also leaning on public dietary advice, which tell us that we should eat less meat for health reasons.

Here, the choice of introducing meat-free days in the military is described as a natural choice following a perceived interest in environmentally friendly food in the general society. Although both Balthazar and Stenberg also bring up the health advantages of cutting down on meat, the climate argument is mentioned first in both of the quotes, suggesting that it is the most important reason for the implementation. By framing meat-free days as a climate measure, it is made clear that Stenberg is not to be confused with other voices promoting the concept 'vegetarian' on health or animal ethics grounds, reasons which are perhaps not regarded as being equally embraced by the general society.

However, the concept of meat-free days is not only embraced by the voices of representatives of national institutions. It is also promoted in personal opinion pieces written by acknowledged individuals within the food field. These voices tend to place a stronger focus on ideas concerning animal ethics and welfare, though not neglecting the climate and health benefits. An interesting example is the opinion piece “No regretful sinner”, written by celebrity restaurant owner and cookbook author Jan Vardøen (AP, 04. 04. 2011). In the text, Vardøen, who has previously published books such as *Tough food – hot dogs and beer* and *Tasty hot dogs and tasty beer*, describes a rather macabre dream where he stands before the Pearly Gates and gets introduced to the over 17 000 animals he has taken part in eating during the course of his lifetime. He goes on to discuss the campaign “Meat-free Monday” that has been fronted by Paul McCartney, and concludes with the statement “(...) I might just try McCartney’s suggestion: Perhaps, then, St. Peter will look a bit kindlier upon me”. Here, the implementation of vegetarian days is presented as a form of penance carried out to make up for the sinful act of eating a lot of meat. Interestingly, however, it is not the high amount of greenhouse gases that is the main argument for the tough and hot-dog loving Vardøen, it is the thought of the amount of animals he has eaten. Again, the actual contemplation of where the meat comes from appears to have brought up feelings of guilt and discomfort, and vegetarian food becomes something to turn to in order to relieve that guilt. Discomfort about the use of animals for food was also a core issue in the late 1990s, but then it was mostly brought up by young and unknown interview objects presenting the “vegetarian youth trend”, or by people representing various vegetarian organizations. The fact that such discomfort is now being expressed by the author of meat-heavy cookbooks, suggests an increased normalization of concern for animal ethics.

Similar arguments are made by food journalist and co-author of the cookbook *Meat-free days*, Yngve Ekern, who’s enthusiasm for skipping the meat at least some days a week is reflected in several articles. In one opinion piece, Ekern encourages the readers to try a “veggie-holiday” this summer, because as he explains, the holiday is the easiest time to “do something good in this world” (AP, 07. 07. 2012). Also here, the underlying idea is that eating vegetarian is the ethically good thing to do. The suggestions of having a “veggie-holiday” or a meat-free day a week also reveal an understanding that we do not have the capacity or willpower to do good all the time, but that doing so for a while is at

least better than nothing. Again, we are reminded of the complex position of meat in the contemporary.

My findings support an assumption made by the editors of the Danish anthology *Kød* [Meat], who argue that “there seems to be a change in attitudes, where various views on meat and meat-eating has a completely different and more significant role than they had ten years ago” (Gjerris et al. 2012, 11, my translation). However, while the above mentioned editors go as far as suggesting that meat has gone from being “natural and sought after to being something towards which one is expected to take a stand” (Gjerris et. al. 2012, 11, my translation), my analysis shows that although vegetarian practices are framed as increasingly relevant for everyone, meat still has a strong role as a natural and undisputed core component of the Norwegian diet.

4.3.4 Summarizing remarks

In this subchapter, I have argued that a sustainable consumer discourse entered the newspapers and became the dominant discourse on the ‘vegetarian’ from the year 2000 and onwards. As opposed to the two previous discourses, this one has a more ‘open’ character, in the sense that it does not have one ‘typical subject’ and one ‘typical article’ type. Instead, we now see a broader variety of voices, which both includes representatives of the newspaper itself, as well as scientific experts, politicians and ‘food people’ taking their place in the discourse.

Alongside this opening of subject positions, there have been remarkable changes in the framing of the concept ‘vegetarian’. I refer to the sum of these changes as a mainstreaming of the concept. By using this term, I do not suggest that it has become mainstream to be a vegetarian. Rather, I argue that the development of an increasing public concern for environmental, animal ethical and social problems connected to contemporary industrial food production, has led a variety of public voices to embrace vegetarian practices as a means of seeking to do their part in dealing with these problems. As a broad array of voices, from columnists to politicians, now engage with the concept ‘vegetarian’ and frame it not only as relevant but even as something we should all engage with, the concept has become increasingly normalized and demystified.

5 Why the increased interest in the ‘vegetarian’?

So, how has this ‘sustainable consumption-discourse’ on the ‘vegetarian’ come about? In this chapter, I will argue that theorizations of late modernity offer several perspectives and concepts which can help us understand these changes. Although numerous aspects to late modernity theory are relevant to the discussion, I will focus on two factors which I regard as particularly fitting to explaining my findings. Firstly, the contemporary tendency of individualization of responsibility in an increasingly globalized world, and secondly, the ‘widening of the ethical net’ (Fiddes 1997, 252), which refers to the growing influence of ‘biocentrism’, a world view where non-human life is granted moral standing closer to that of humans (Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013, 227). The running theme within both of these perspectives is the idea that in recent years many hitherto strong social institutions have been crumbling, leaving individuals with a newfound responsibility to take meaningful action in their own lives. My intention is to show how engagement in vegetarian practices may appear as a meaningful answer to the needs of the late modern human.

5.1 The ‘new’ modernity

The concept of late-modernity, and related terms such as ‘high’ or ‘liquid’ modernity, is associated with the works of social theorists Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman, and can be understood as an attempt to describe the state of contemporary society. The transition from modern society to its new, ‘late’ state is not marked by a specific date or historical event. Yet, the shift is often connected to the many societal changes that have taken place since the 1970s (Aakvaag 2008; Franklin 1999). According to ‘late modernity’- theory, Western societies have undergone so many sociocultural changes in this period that the era of ‘modernity’ must be understood as having entered a second, and in many ways radically different, stage.

Within social theory, ‘modernity’ is a concept that tends to be associated with the development of industrial society in the late 18th century, and is used to describe the specific sociohistorical factors regarded as characteristic for the time period that followed.

A core ethos in this time period was that of a strong belief in human progress, and a perception of the non-human world as a mass of resources to be subjugated and exploited in the name of industrial and technological development. The modern era is further characterized by several specific economic and political institutions, such as industrial production and market economy, nation states and electoral democracy. Another important institution in modern societies is the nuclear family, around which social life is organized (Aakvaag 2008, 262-64).

Although a common understanding is that when ‘modern’ society entered the scene, it replaced the so-called ‘traditional’ society, a core argument made by Giddens is that it would be wrong to say that the entrance of modernity immediately saw the disappearance of tradition (Giddens 1994). What he argues is that:

For most of its history, modernity has rebuilt tradition as it has dissolved it. Within Western societies, the persistence and recreation of tradition was central to the legitimation of power, to the sense in which the state was able to impose itself upon relatively passive ‘subjects’ (Giddens 1994, 56).

This statement might seem strange, as in its normal use, the term ‘modern’ tends to be understood as meaning more or less the exact opposite of ‘traditional’. Giddens does not contradict this understanding of the two terms. However, he argues that the modernization of Western societies is a gradual process, that can be understood as consisting of two stages. In its previous stage, the time period which we refer to as the ‘modern’ era, society was in fact not modernized through and through. What happened, rather, is that with the transition towards the industrial society, old traditions were largely substituted with new ones, such as that of “heteronormative regulation of family and sexuality, bourgeois culture, working class culture, national culture mediated through the educational system, etc.” (Aakvaag 2008, 274). In other words, in the earlier stages of modernity, tradition still lived on, only in new forms. Therefore, although industrial and premodern societies were radically different, for a long time the two still had one thing in common, namely the ability to provide individuals with set social and cultural institutions, offering a sense of collectivity and thus a sense of moral order.

According to Giddens, it is not until more recent times that Western societies have entered a stage where they can be described as ‘post-traditional’ (Giddens 1994). What he argues is that contemporary societies are now undergoing changes which have their origins in

the transition to modernity, but which more recently have accelerated and taken new all-encompassing forms. What we are currently witnessing can be understood as the increasing intensification and radicalization of modernity itself (Giddens 1990, 51).

Globalization, having intensified over the last decades, has radically narrowed the gap between the global and the local. Through globalization processes, local traditions are increasingly being put under pressure or even dissolved. Global actors are to a greater extent influencing the choices we make in our everyday lives, and at the same time we are becoming more aware that the choices we make have global consequences (Giddens 1994). Giddens expresses a particular concern for contemporary environmental problems, and sees them as a direct consequence of globalization. As he argues, “the diffusion of industrialism has created “one world” in a more negative and threatening sense... a world in which there are actual or potential ecological changes of a harmful sort that affect everyone on the planet” (Giddens 1990, 76-77). Thus, along with the intensification and expansion of the ‘modern project’ and the crumbling of tradition, there also is a growing awareness of the many and complex negative consequences of modernity. People living in Western societies are now becoming more and more aware that our current way of life has caused several of the challenges that we face in today’s globalized world. Yet, these consequences are often invisible to us in our everyday lives, either because they take place in other parts of the world, such as that of much industrial pollution or exploitation of workers, or because they literally take place ‘above our heads’, such as climate change.

This diagnosis of contemporary society bears resemblance to sociologist Ulrich Beck’s argument that we are currently living in a ‘risk society’ (Beck 2005). This statement might seem puzzling, as one can argue that Western societies have never been safer. We are spared from living with the horrors of war, there are no national food shortages, we have access to clean water and medical care. Most of us have enough money to make our lives go around, and then some. However, what Beck argues is not that our everyday lives have become more dangerous. Rather, whereas in the early part of modernity, risk was associated with the dangers of the natural world, which had to be kept in place by human technology and industry, risk in late-modernity is manufactured by man himself. It has come about as a result of the success of the modern project in subjugating the natural world. Through its desire for control and power, humanity has created its own monsters, such as nuclear threats and climate change. In the words of Beck, we are currently

confronted with “unnatural, human-made, manufactured uncertainties and hazards beyond boundaries” (Beck 2005, 649).

The awareness of the many negative consequences of modernity has led to an increasing disbelief in our current ways of doing things. Coupled with a lack of collective morale, what we are currently witnessing can be described as a form of crisis of morality (Franklin 1999, 197). This point has been made by Bauman, who argues that today, society no longer functions as a provider of a moral compass (Bauman 1993). Thus, individuals in late modernity must live with a double sense of uncertainty. Firstly, we know that many of our everyday life choices, such as that of deciding what to eat, are likely to have negative global consequences, though the exact scope of these consequences are difficult for us to grasp. Secondly, due to the weakening role of tradition and collective morale, we are left with an increasing uncertainty with regards to which actions we should understand as morally defensible. According to Giddens, it is on the basis of this insecurity that the newfound interest in environmental politics in recent years has come about, as a means of seeking to reestablish a sense of morality and ‘normative security’ (Barry 2007, 106).

5.1.1 The individualization of responsibility, ‘life politics’ and the self

The growing awareness of the many unintended negative consequences of the ‘modern project’, coupled with the crumbling of tradition, has made the question of how to live one’s life increasingly difficult to answer. What to do when our old ways appear to be wrong? How do we live when the social institutions that formerly guided our lives no longer function? According to Giddens, a characteristic of today’s society is that due to the decline of tradition, individuals are in the position where they have no choice but to choose (Giddens 1994, 75). As he explains:

What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are the focal questions for everyone living in circumstances late modernity. Questions which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behavior (Giddens 1991, 70).

This placement of all kinds of choices, including moral ones, on individuals, has both negative and positive consequences. On the one hand, as discussed above, we are forced

to constantly make choices which have complex social, as well as global, consequences. As tradition loses its grip on a growing number of areas in our lives, we are currently faced with an array of moral choices whose effect are way beyond our comprehension. In this way we, as individuals, are involuntarily handed a great deal of responsibility for things that are often unfathomable and out of reach to us. Yet, this responsibility might also be viewed as an opportunity, as each and every one of us are now given the possibility to envision and strive for a better world. This duality of late modern society is captured by Giddens, who describes it as a “world where opportunity and danger are balanced in equal measure” (Giddens 1994, 58).

Giddens’ description of a contemporary tendency to regard individuals as carrying responsibility for broader global problems, fits well with the findings presented in this thesis. The understanding that people should consider the broader consequences of their food consumption, is expressed not only by individuals reflecting on their personal eating habits, but also by authorial expert voices. An example is the quote from professor Lars Bakken at the Norwegian College of Agriculture (KK, 24. 07. 1996), which states that: “Consumption patterns are the natural place to start in order to reduce the nitrous oxide emissions. What would really count, would be if we changed our diet”. By drawing up a clear connection between the local, that is ‘our diet’, and the global, that is the levels of ‘nitrous oxide emissions’ in the atmosphere, professor Bakken’s quote is a good example of the contemporary understanding that the world has become smaller. A similar understanding is found in the interview with minister of environment and development, Erik Solheim (AP, 07. 12. 2009), where a discussion of the climate negotiations in Copenhagen, is accompanied by the statement “(...) each and every one must think about how they can contribute”. With this phrasing, Solheim makes the global climate issue a personal, moral matter.

‘Life politics’: The ‘self’ and the global

Giddens has captured the above discussed connection between individualization and globalization with his concept of ‘life politics’, which can be defined as:

political issues which flow from processes of self-actualization in a post-traditional context, where globalizing influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realization influence global strategies (Giddens 1991, 214).

As seen from this quote, the concept refers to the ways in which broader global issues are both shaped by and shaping individuals' everyday life choices. As opposed to emancipatory politics, which Giddens sees as a politics of life chances, it is a politics of lifestyle, or life decisions (Giddens 1991, 214). The possibility to make choices is thus no longer the sole goal of politics, choice-making is political in itself. Yet, issues of life politics move beyond the mere realization that the 'personal is political', as they also involve the construction and maintenance of notions of identity and self-understanding, which are no longer provided by traditional institutions. A key understanding for Giddens is that, in late modernity, our sense of 'self' has become tied up in a 'reflexive process', where it constantly needs to be constructed and sustained in the form of a coherent self-narrative (Giddens 1991, 215). As food consumption is one of many areas where individuals are faced with a myriad of choices that possibly have global consequences, it becomes an area where both questions of moral responsibility as well as questions of the 'self' are at stake.

My findings support Giddens' idea that individuals in late modernity are engaging in questions of 'life politics' as they go about their everyday lives. The 'reflexive individual', who's contemplations on the question of what to eat largely echo bigger questions of who to be and how to act, is a recurring voice in the 'sustainable consumption discourse'. One example is journalist Mala Naveen's reflections after having watched a documentary about contemporary industrial food production (AP, 31.05.2006). The film has made her reflect upon questions of how to make the right choices in one's everyday life, and how to take local action for the best of the planet. In the article, she encourages parents to teach their kids about animals, and give them a relationship to animals based on something else than eating them. In directly connecting what she considers as bad conditions for animals in the food industry, to questions of what it means to be a good parent, Naveen is both linking global issues with local practices as well as with issues of personal identity formation.

Other examples from my data include the articles written by Trond Wormstrand and Åse Brandvold respectively. Both of these two writers are expressing direct concern for "the international food industry's unloving treatment of earth, water and animals" and the global "food crisis". Both explain that they have decided to eat differently than they would before taking these issues into consideration. Interestingly, the identity-related question

of 'being vegetarian' is brought up by both Wormstrand and Brandvold, who stress that although they are actively choosing to express their discontent with the food industry, they are not vegetarian. By stressing that they do not identify as vegetarian, the writers imply that a 'politics' of identity is taking place.

A related example is the article by Jan Vardøen, where he states that he is not a "regretful sinner" in spite the fact that he finds it uncomfortable to think about the animals he has eaten. In the text, Vardøen openly reflects upon the broader consequences of his love for meat, and makes it clear that these reflections have brought up a sense of unease. Yet, by choosing to name his article "No regretful sinner", he stresses the fact that he will not let these reflections define him. Maybe this choice of wording might be connected to Vardøen's position as a public person, who can be seen as representing a typical 'macho-ideal'. Perhaps, by using this heading, Vardøen might be understood as saying, I may care about animal welfare, but I am still my 'macho' self?

It is interesting to consider the 'vegetarian' concept in relation to questions of identity. In the 'sustainable consumer discourse', 'vegetarian' appears to be less something you are, than something you do. Weekdays or holidays are more likely to be 'vegetarian' than people. Yet, why do the various subjects in this discourse engage with the concept 'vegetarian' without wanting to identify as 'vegetarians'?

Perhaps a possible answer can be found in the above theorizations of 'life politics' and the self. As mentioned earlier, for individuals living in late-modernity, questions of what and how to eat are linked to a myriad of choices. However, the instability of late modernity and its 'crisis of morality' makes it difficult for individuals to know what to choose at any given time. Here, we must remember that eating 'vegetarian' food is not the only option that can be perceived as ethically right. Other issues to take into consideration in deciding what to eat is for example whether the food is 'local', 'organic', 'fair-trade', 'free-range' and so on. Further, questions of ethics are of course only some of the questions consumers in late modern society are faced with. Additionally, issues of health have also become more and more important for Norwegian consumers. Also here, an increased individualization of responsibility has taken place in recent times, as individuals are to a greater extent expected to take care of their bodies and health through well-informed dietary routines (Bugge 2012). In this context, 'vegetarian' becomes yet another dietary choice amongst the 'low-carb-high-fat-diet', the 5:2 diet and other diets

that we are told are health-promoting. Thus, if we adopt the understanding that in deciding what to eat, individuals are constantly baffling with the questions such as ‘Who am I? What do I want? How should I act?’, it is perhaps not strange that most people are unwilling to set strict conditions for their future food choices, and thus their future ‘self’, by adhering to the specific and limiting label of ‘being vegetarian’?

Although the above discussed issues might help explain why people in late modernity are concerned with broader global issues of a moral character when they make food consumption choices, they do not explain why we see an increased interest in the ‘vegetarian’ concept in particular. The next two subchapters will therefore be devoted to exploring this question.

5.1.2 Eyes on the animal

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, one of the most prominent characteristics of the contemporary newspaper discourse on the ‘vegetarian’ is that it is marked by a hitherto unseen expression of general concern for the animals in the livestock industry, also from outside animal rights circles. This concern, which is expressed by a number of food writers and journalists, appears to bring with it feelings of unease and even guilt, and an increased inclination towards eating more vegetarian. How do we explain this new tendency to express concern for the animal behind the meat? Why does Jan Vardøen have nightmares about looking into the eyes of animals who have been killed in order to satisfy his hunger for meat (AP, 04. 04. 2011)? Why does VG-journalist Marie Simonsen refer to a situation where she was served meat that had not been prepared in a way which properly concealed its future as a pig, as a “near vegetarian experience” (VG, 18. 03. 2001)? Again, a possible answer might be found when considering the sociocultural changes following the transition to modernity, and later to that of late modernity. Perhaps can the increased interest in the ‘vegetarian’ be connected to broader socio-historical changes which have rendered animals in the self-contradictory position of being both increasingly marginalized, as well as increasingly visible.

The invisible animal

In contemporary urban society, meat is mostly presented to us in the form of neatly cut pieces wrapped in sterile white and clear plastic packaging, or as one of many ingredients

in a ready-made product. The animals we eat are in this sense invisible to us. The tendency of cultural concealment of animal slaughtering, and of distancing the meat from its actual animal origin, has its historical roots in the transition to the ‘modernized’ society, but appears to have accelerated in contemporary times (Franklin 1999; Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013).

As has been demonstrated by several cultural theorists, the modernization of Western societies brought with it huge changes in the practical day-to-day encounters between humans and animals. Whereas in the traditional farming society, people had largely lived their lives alongside their animals, the development and growth of modern cities rendered many animals to disappear from our immediate surroundings (Franklin 1999; Berger 1980; Thomas 1984; Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013). As explained by sociologist Adrian Franklin, during the early industrial revolution the working horse was still present in people’s daily lives, functioning as a reminder of preindustrial times. Yet, as machines were taking over an increasing number of tasks, soon it, too, was obsolete (Franklin 1999, 38). Thus, from having been an important part in people’s everyday lives, the farm animals were increasingly hidden from view. While most people moved towards the cities, the new animal industries were eventually moved to the countryside.

With the move away from traditional farm life, the slaughtering of animals for food now went from being undertaken in each individual household to being handled by professionals, in the new institution of the slaughterhouse (Vialles 1994; Fitzgerald 2010). As has been pointed out by anthropologist Noëlie Vialles, the new ways of handling the process of animal slaughtering which came about with the invention of the slaughterhouse in the 19th century, has turned it into an “invisible, exiled, almost clandestine activity” (Vialles 1994, 5). This development is expressed not only through the tendency to place slaughterhouses in far-off locations, out of sight for urban citizens, but also through the introduction of new rationalization and specialization processes with regards to the actual slaughtering act. In the slaughterhouse, two different workers are provided with the specific, demarcated tasks of stunning and bleeding each animal. Thus, no one stands with the actual responsibility for killing of the animal (Vialles 1994).

The changes pointed to by Vialles and others suggest a growing cultural unease with our treatment of livestock animals, that can be connected to a newfound moral concern for non-human beings. As mentioned earlier, such concerns first started to become

widespread in the early 19th century England. In this period, a concern for ‘animal cruelty’ arose, and was accordingly adapted in the legislative system through various prohibition acts, such as that of ‘cruelty to horses and cattle’ in 1822 (Thomas 1984, 149). Sociocultural developments thus rendered animals kept for their meat in an increasingly ambiguous position. On the one hand, they, like all animals, were regarded as sentient creatures which were to be protected from acts of cruelty. On the other, they were, to a greater extent than ever, being used as raw materials in the expanding mass production of hitherto unseen amounts of meat (Franklin 1999, 41-42). The paradox of the situation was that while people were able to eat more meat than ever, new measures were at the same time taken to distance the meat from its animal origins.

Through a comparative study of the evolution of the classic Norwegian cook book *Gyldendals store kokebok*’s editions from 1955 to 2002, Bjørkdahl and Syse show how the animals we eat have become increasingly invisible, also in the Norwegian context. In the oldest edition, explicit pictures of dead animals are a recurring sight. Along with photographs of slaughtered, half animals, some of them with the head still intact, are vivid textual descriptions of how to skin, pluck and cut up the animal, in order to turn it in to edible meat (Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013, 11). This detailed description of the transformation from whole animal to food, stands in a stark contrast to the pictures and texts found in the 2002-edition of the book. Here, the detailed photographs of slaughtered animal bodies have vanished altogether. Instead, there is a simple black-and-white sketching of a pig, and a big color photograph of six different types of minced meat, where it is only apparent through the written caption that they derive from different animals (Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013, 16). The cultural development which is demonstrated through this study, is that of an increasing tendency to regard meat as a mere ingredient, which is bought and used in a similar way to other ‘ingredients’.

Visible animals – a source of hope and comfort

While today’s society is characterized by a physical as well as cultural invisibility of the animals we eat, animals are in many ways also closer to us, and more included in our social worlds, than ever. John Berger writes, quite pessimistically, that while what we can call the ‘actual animal’ has been marginalized, the latter period has seen a reappearance of animals in the form of imagery and new institutions such as zoos and circuses, which

have allowed humans to look at animals “from the outside”. Berger argues that animals have gone from being a part of people’s immediate life worlds, towards becoming mere objects of human entertainment. In his own words, they have become a part of “the spectacle” (Berger 1980, 15). While this can be said to be true in the case of zoos and other commercial entertainment industries which involve the use of animals, there are also aspects to the modern practice of pet keeping that have made it possible for people to have new, enriched forms of social relationships with animals.

As mentioned earlier, a key topic in theories of late modernity is the crumbling and destabilization of many core social institutions. One such institution is the traditional nuclear family, which became under threat with the countercultural movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Beck-Gernsheim 1998). In this period, close relationships to pet animals were by many regarded with suspicion, as one feared that close affiliation and empathy for animals would lead to a decline of traditional social relations (Franklin 1999, 84). However, such concerns are rarely seen in today’s society, where processes of individualization have brought with them an acceptance of the idea of the family as an ‘elective relationship’ (Beck-Gernsheim 1998), where the individual herself is free to choose her familial companions.

In this ‘post-familial’ society, pet-keeping has not only become increasingly common, the animals we include in our households are also to a greater extent regarded as family-members. This tendency is reflected in the Norwegian language, in which it has become increasingly common to refer to these animals as ‘family animals’ (see e. g. Veterinærinstituttet 2016). Referring to changes in the British society, Franklin mentions several examples that suggest that animals are increasingly treated as part of the family. Among the examples mentioned is the rise in interest in specialized products for animals, ranging from low-fat food products to grooming equipment, the growing tendency to move away from animal-specific names such as Whisky and Rover [sic] towards giving the animals regular human names, as well as the establishment of pet cemeteries in the 1970s and 80s (Franklin 1999, 91-95).

As suggested by Franklin, the growth in pet-keeping in the late modern period might perhaps be connected to a new need for comfort in the form of stable companionship, a need for ‘someone to come home to’, in a society where old social ties are weakening (Franklin 1999). Perhaps the increasing tendency to have an animal in one’s life that one

regards as an individual and a close companion worthy of love and respect, might help us understand the growing concern for the moral status of animals in general.

Animals in late modernity might soon also provide comfort and security to humans in another, quite different form: that of medical safety. As reported by the BBC, researchers were in 2014 for the first time able to successfully transplant a pig's heart into a baboon's body (Swain 2014). Although the baboon did not survive much longer than a year, the event marked a development within the field of xenotransplantation, a science in which an ultimate goal is transplantation of animal hearts into human bodies. The research is focused on the use of pig's hearts, as they share several anatomical similarities to human hearts (Swain 2014). Scientific developments within this field present us with a lot of new ethical concerns, and as pointed out by BBC journalist Frank Swain, surely open up several new perspectives on the moral standing of animals. Maybe one of the reasons why a growing number of people appear to be concerned with animal ethics, is the increasing knowledge about our many anatomical and genetic similarities? Put in another way, if the close relationship many of us already have with our pets was not enough to make us reflect upon the similarities between 'them' and ourselves, then the possibility of carrying a pig's heart inside one's chest is most probably likely to do so.¹

As argued above, in recent times we find ourselves in a situation marked by an increasing discrepancy between the way we think and feel about animals, and how we actually treat them. The practice of breeding pigs in order to someday be able to transplant their hearts into human bodies reflects well the paradoxical position of animals in late-modernity. While we continue large-scale, systematic industrial breeding and exploitation of them in order to use their bodies to satisfy our own wants and needs, we can no longer close our eyes to the fact that those bodies, and the individuals to which they belong, are actually very similar to ourselves.

5.1.3 Towards a less anthropocentric world

The developments discussed above all suggest that the sociocultural position of animals in contemporary Western societies is increasingly ambiguous. Yet, how can we make

¹ Syse, Karen Lykke. 2015. *Kjøttets kulturhistorie i Norge - en smakebit*. Foredrag på Nasjonalt folkehelseinstitutt 6.11.2015.

sense of the paradox described above? There are indications that, just as other traditional institutions and belief systems are crumbling in late modernity, so are our old perceptions of the relationship between ourselves as humans and other living beings (Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013; Franklin 1999).

A 'widening of the ethical net'

As was touched upon earlier in this chapter, the 'modern' project, which took a particular hold on Western societies in the late 18th century, rested on a specific, anthropocentric idea about the relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world, where the role of the former was to dominate and control the latter. As explained in chapter three, the idea of 'human domination of nature' (Leiss 1972), which has been most aggressively expressed since the entrance into the industrial era, builds upon the legacy of Western dualism formulated by Plato and Aristotle. Within this world-view, the social world is divided into oppositional and hierarchically organized categories, and humans, with their 'culture' are perceived as existing apart from the social category of 'nature'. However, in the late modern era, where 'all that is solid melts into air', also ideas about our own role in relation to the rest of nature appear doomed to be challenged (Berman 1982 after Franklin 1999, 85; see also Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013, 222).

As demonstrated by Thomas, and as already touched upon in chapter three, ideas that questioned the 'societal goal' of human conquering of the natural world, originated in the early modern England (Thomas 1984). Both modern vegetarianism as well as environmental conservation sprung out of this period, precisely as a counter reaction to the booming exploitation of the non-human world. Of course, in this period, these ideological movements only existed in the form of weak currents that were still largely overshadowed by the grand 'modern project'. However, now that this project increasingly is being placed under scrutiny, as it has proven to lead us into a bundle of unexpected troubles, a new space for alternative world-views and ideological directions has been made.

Several social theorists argue that the anthropocentric world-view described above is currently being challenged by a recent development towards a 'widening of the ethical net' (Fiddes 1997, 252), which rests upon a weakening of the oppositional and hierarchical divide between the human and the non-human (Franklin 1999; Bjørkdahl and

Syse 2013). One of the theorists concerned with this ideological change is Fiddes, who argues that recent developments, such as the revelation of the destructive impact of human industrial activities on nature, have led a new world-view to increasingly be gaining grounds in Western societies. This worldview, which can be understood as a counter-reaction to the idea of 'human domination of nature', does not see 'culture' as superior to 'nature', but rather as complementary to it.

Also Franklin, whose writings are focused primarily on the human-animal relationship, argues that, particularly since the 1970s, the "anthropocentric, human progress-orientated view" has begun to change (Franklin 1999, 6). He connects this change to societal developments specific to late modernity, largely building on the works of Giddens and Beck. Among his key arguments is the idea that contemporary society is marked by a newfound misanthropy which he sees as explicitly tied to the perceived current crisis of morality discussed in the beginning of this chapter (Franklin 1999, 197). He argues that, whereas earlier, environmental destruction could be accepted as something to be sacrificed for the 'greater human good', this is no longer the case in late modernity. Rather, he argues, today that 'greater good' is no longer in sight, and exploitation of the environment can not so much be connected to a collective human goal, as "to the free and unbounded operation of an indifferent market" (Franklin 1999, 197). As a reaction to these realizations, which he argues have weakened our faith in our own species, we are witnessing a new tendency to express empathy towards animals and the non-human world, which can be understood as a means of seeking to retrieve a sense of morality and good values (Franklin 1999).

In the words of Bjørkdahl and Syse, the ambiguous position of animals in contemporary society might be easier to make sense of "if one recognizes that anthropocentrism is giving way, slowly and across multiple sites, to biocentrism" (Bjørkdahl and Syse 2013, 227). This development, which involves "a growing tendency to grant animals a moral standing similar to that of humans", they argue, has found several expressions in Western culture since the latter part of the 20th century. Some of the philosophical arguments that can be connected to this strand of thought, such as the contributions of Peter Singer and Tom Regan, have already been mentioned. The emergence of the field of environmental ethics in the 1970s has also been of considerable importance for the development of the philosophical standpoint of 'biocentrism'. The ideas which sprung out of the 'deep

ecology movement', where Arne Næss was a central figure, might have been of particular importance in the Scandinavian context. A key tenet within this movement, as explained by Næss, is the understanding that:

The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth) [sic]. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes (Næss 1995, 68)

The ideas formulated by the deep ecologists can be understood as breaking with the view of anthropocentrism, as they assign an intrinsic value also to non-human life, which is regarded as independent of the value it may have to humans. As the reader might remember, this viewpoint bares similarities to that held by Regan, who argues that animals should be assigned intrinsic value, as they too, are “experiencing subjects-of-a-life” (Regan 2013, 119).

There are indications of an increased support for this type of ideas in Norway in recent times. Perhaps the most telling example is found in the Animal Welfare Act of 2010, in which it is explicitly stated that “Animals have an intrinsic value independent of the usefulness they might have for humans” (Dyrevelferdsloven § 3). As stated by former Minister of Agriculture, Lars Peder Brekk, the implementation of the law was perceived to be in line with people's perception of animals (Regjeringen 2009). With the implementation of this law, it can be argued that biocentrically-oriented ideas, reflecting a broader concern for non-human life, have been introduced in the Norwegian legal system.

5.1.4 Meat as a symbol of the ‘outdated’?

If we accept the understanding that biocentric ideas are gaining grounds in various ways, how do these ideas affect our cultural perceptions of meat? As explained in chapter three, Fiddes has argued that the long held Western passion for meat can be explained by its position as a strong ‘Natural symbol’ for “human control of, and superiority over, nature” (Fiddes 1991, 6). But what becomes of this symbolism if we accept the understanding that the idea of human sovereignty is now gradually being challenged? According to Fiddes, what happens is that meat is increasingly regarded as a problematic foodstuff. Its connotations to power and human superiority are still acknowledged. Yet, in light of the

many negative developments brought about by this way of relating to the world, with the contemporary climate crisis as a core example, this symbolism is no longer exclusively embraced with undivided enthusiasm. To a growing number of people, it has come to bear associations with something outdated, from which one wishes to distance oneself.

The increasing unease with the contemporary food system, which entered the newspapers with the ‘sustainable consumption discourse’ in the early 2000s, might be understood as an expression of ideas that challenge the old anthropocentric world-view. Within the contemporary discourse on the ‘vegetarian’, the ‘industrial’ is a condemned term, which tends to be set up against the more positively valued terms ‘real’ and ‘natural’. Within an ideology that saw human subjugation of the natural world purely as a good thing, the term ‘industrial’ would likely bear solely positive connotations, as it points to the ‘modern’ goal of transforming the natural world, understood as a resource, into goods for human use. Yet, the highly negative connotations of the word in recent times, suggests that these processes of domination are increasingly understood as problematic.

Even more interesting, however, is the widespread unease with meat expressed in this period, and the tendency to connect it to this negative notion of the ‘industrial’. Although meat is far from the only foodstuff of which the lion’s share is produced under industrial circumstances, my analysis suggests a tendency to regard meat as being ‘particularly industrial’. This point is illustrated in the analysis by the articles written by Trond Wormstrand and Mala Naveen, who both express a reluctance to meat-eating that is connected to a wish to distance themselves from what they describe as the “industrial” (AP, 31. 05. 2006; NA, 11. 12. 2002). As already mentioned, Laudan describes the contemporary cultural tendency to condemn what is perceived as “industrial foods” as ‘culinary luddism’. Yet, why do the ‘culinary luddists’ Wormstrand and Naveen appear more inclined to eating vegetarian food? Perhaps the reason is found in Fiddes’ understanding of meat as a ‘Natural symbol’ of human control over the natural world. If we adopt the understanding that meat has largely symbolized the core ideas of the ‘modern project’, and if we further agree with the notion that this project might appear to be crumbling, the symbolism of meat may also be starting to lose its appeal.

A recurring understanding in the ‘sustainable consumption discourse’ is that meat, or at least that which has been produced industrially, has an air of ‘outdatedness’ to it. This attitude is, for example, expressed by food journalist Yngve Ekern, who questions the

'coolness' of eating meat "from animals whose lives have been miserable" (AP, 07. 07. 2012). It is also conveyed by professor Lars Bakken, who endorses the understanding that meat eating is "old-fashioned in a world with a growing population and the climate threat" (KK, 24. 07. 1996). Of course, ideas about what is 'cool' and 'fashionable' are constantly changing, and that a couple of people suggest that meat is unhip at a given time can hardly be understood as a signal of a shifting world view. Yet, I argue that the repeated expressions of unease with meat that can be found in the newspapers throughout this fourteen-year period, appears to go beyond a mere interest in being cool and trendy. Understood as a symbol of a human ascendancy over nature which has proven to have rendered both human and non-human livelihoods in a highly vulnerable state, it makes sense to regard meat as something outdated. In this context, meat avoidance comes to symbolize a means of reestablishing the lost 'normative security' and collective morale, it comes to stand for 'doing good'.

The depth of this newfound perception of meat avoidance as a means of 'doing good', is perhaps at its most visible in the way the 'meat-free' concept has been supported and taken into use by national political institutions in the latter part of the 2000s. Perhaps the most telling example, is the fact that the Norwegian Army has come to take interest in the concept. This development is particularly interesting considering that the Army is an institution that many would say is one of society's most important symbols of 'modern', 'macho' values such as strength, dominance and control – precisely the values that are also associated with meat (Fiddes 1991; Twigg 1979). When this particular institution chooses to promote going 'meat-free' every Monday, it is hard not to interpret this as a sign of the times, which might suggest that these values are gradually being challenged.

However, the developments discussed above should not be taken to imply that the anthropocentric world-view has lost its hold on Western societies. Neither has meat lost its naturalized symbolic position. In the contemporary newspaper discourse, meat-eating is still largely framed as the norm, in the sense that it is a practice which people are expected to be engaged in, unless the opposite is explicitly stated. Thus, although my findings can be understood as part of a move towards post-traditionalism, it would still be a huge exaggeration to describe contemporary Norway as a post-traditional society.

Interestingly, my findings suggest that meat-eating is currently in the position of being a taken-for-granted practice, which, at the same time, is regarded as ethically problematic.

Perhaps can the recent interest in the concept of ‘meat-free days’ be seen as accentuating how an increasing number of Norwegians are drawn between the two opposing understandings of our relationship with the nonhuman world? As Fiddes reminds us, these two understandings are indeed “mutually incompatible” (Fiddes 1991, 223). Yet, I believe that the concept of ‘meat-free days’ can be interpreted as a means of negotiating between the two. Through labelling one day per week, ‘meat-free’, one can engage in the practice of ‘eating for the planet and the animals’. Yet, in a culture where it is regarded as natural to eat meat for the rest of the week, meat’s traditional position on top of the food hierarchy is still largely unchallenged. On the symbolic level, then, the embracement of the ‘meat-free’ concept might be regarded as a means of seeking to bring the alternative, biocentrally-oriented view into a society which is still dominated by anthropocentrism.

5.1.5 The ‘vegetarian way out’

The demystification and mainstreaming of the concept ‘vegetarian’ in the early 2000s might be understood as a reaction to a sense of moral crisis and disorder in the contemporary, globalized society. Parallel to the above discussed changes in the symbolism of meat, the concept ‘vegetarian’ has appeared as a symbol of a way out of the mess the ‘modern’ ethos has gotten us into. While meat is associated with the ‘unloving’ and ‘soul-less’ industrial, the term ‘vegetarian’ has associations of being its symbolic opposite. Its direct connotations to ‘the good’ is most explicitly expressed in the article by Ekern, who suggests having a ‘vegetarian holiday’ as a means of doing “something good in this world” Ekern (AP, 07. 07. 2012). Yet, similar symbolism shines through in several articles. An example is the interview with professor Bakken, where vegetarian food is framed as what we really should be eating, the ethically best choice (KK, 24. 07. 1996). It is also expressed through the voices of vice mayor of Ghent, Tom Balthazar, as well as journalist Åse Brandvold, who both frame eating vegetarian as a means of taking personal responsibility for broader social problems (KK, 02. 05. 2008; AP, 07. 06. 2009). The ‘vegetarian’ is thus repeatedly associated with being considerate and acting in an ethically correct manner. In short, ‘doing good’.

Similarly, while meat bears associations to something ‘outdated’, the ‘vegetarian’ comes to symbolize its opposite. It is ‘food for the future’. As demonstrated in chapter four, this is an understanding that shines through both in the interview with professor Bakken, as

well as in other articles (KK, 24. 07. 1996; AP, 31. 12. 1998). This view is perhaps most vividly expressed in the article about what ‘the climate society’ will look like (VG, 05. 01. 2008). Here, the ‘vegetarian’ plays a part in a positive envisioning of the future, where humans have managed to find a way out of the contemporary climate crisis. This gives associations to Twigg’s argument that there is a symbolic connection between the ‘vegetarian’ and the “good, saved, pure society” (Twigg 1979, 29). However, whereas this symbolism earlier was shared mainly among people who associated themselves with various vegetarian groupings, it now appears to be shared by a broader array of people, many of whom do not define themselves as vegetarian.

Vegetarian interest as ‘utopian realism’

Above, I argued that the tendency to connect the ‘vegetarian’ to a visualization of a better society now appears to be increasingly widespread. In this sense, the ‘vegetarian’ can be seen as a symbol of a kind of biocentric ‘utopia’, a radically different society, free from the problems caused by humans in our ‘modern’ quest to prove our supremacy over nature. In this regard, the term ‘utopia’ becomes relevant, precisely because of its double meaning, which refers to the two Greek words ‘eutopia’, which means ‘good place’ and ‘outopia’ which means ‘no place’, a place that currently does not exist (More 1965; Halpin 1999, 348).

As pointed out by professor of education David Halpin, the term ‘utopia’ has gotten rather negative connotations in everyday speech, as it tends to be associated with a place that is not, and thus can never be (Halpin 1999, 348). However, as Halpin explains, utopianism can also be viewed as carrying within it a potential for collective change, as it “has the potential to enable the personal experience of hopefulness to be modulated along social rather than just individual lines” (Halpin 1999, 351). This kind of hope for a better society, expressed through social lines, is exactly what I find to be expressed in the contemporary discourse on the ‘vegetarian’. My findings show that a variety of voices now utter an interest in making changes in their personal food habits, due to a growing understanding that what each of us chooses to eat matters in the big picture. The increased interest in the ‘vegetarian’ suggests that there exists a belief that if we are many enough who change our food habits away from today’s large consumption of meat, then it might actually be possible to get closer to a ‘better world’.

In fact, Giddens has argued that one of the things contemporary society needs, is more ‘utopian realism’ (Giddens 1990). This concept might seem like an oxymoron for those who associate the concept ‘utopia’ with unrealistic, far-off daydreaming. Yet, by adding the term ‘realism’ to ideas of the ‘good society’, Giddens tries to distance himself from such interpretations of the concept. Rather, he encourages us to dare to express and visualize our hopes for the future, as, a first step towards making those hopes fulfilled (Giddens 1985). The possibilities that lie in utopianism have also been pointed to by philosopher Mary Midgley, who argues that utopias “act as imaginative pictures of possible houses to be built” (Midgley 1996, 24). In the words of Giddens, “the heavily counterfactual nature of future-oriented thought (...) [allows us to] envisage alternative futures whose very propagation might help them be realized” (Giddens 1990, 154). Yet, he also points out that in order to facilitate the realization of such alternative futures, utopian realist visions benefit from being rooted in existing practices and trends in contemporary society (1990, 155).

The tendency of the late modern human to ‘carry the weight of the world on her shoulders’, pointed to by theorists such as Giddens, could easily be believed to give way to feelings of hopelessness and despair, as no individual can “save the world”. Unquestionably, this side of the coin exists too, and should not be disregarded. Fortunately, however, the individuals engaged in the contemporary discourse on the ‘vegetarian’ appear to respond to the recent individualization of moral responsibility in a more optimistic way, by actively seeking out new and meaningful practices. For this variety of subjects, ranging from journalists and food writers to politicians, there are things we can do to address the cultural and moral crisis in late modernity. One such thing is to change our eating practices, by cutting down our meat-intake. In this context, choosing the ‘vegetarian’ appears to stand out as one way of taking meaningful action in a world which makes increasingly little sense. It becomes an attempt to “steer the juggernaut” (Giddens 1990, 154).

My findings indicate that on the symbolic level, recent engagement with the ‘vegetarian’ concept can be understood as a striving for a ‘good’, sustainable and less anthropocentric society – a form of ‘utopia’. The concept of ‘utopian realism’ hence becomes relevant for several reasons. If we accept the idea that the ‘vegetarian’ represents an alternative to our current domination of nature and the animals, contemporary interest in the concept can

certainly be regarded as an example of “heavily-counterfactual (...) future-oriented thought”. Further, as it was wished for by Giddens, it entails engagement with already existing practices which can be understood to be largely feasible in contemporary Norway.

Based on the above discussion, I thus argue that the contemporary engagement with the concept ‘vegetarian’ can be understood as a means for individuals to engage in ‘life political projects’ where the ‘envisioning of alternative futures’ is a guiding factor. I must stress that my argument is not that most Norwegians, not even most of the subjects discussed in my analysis, dream of a vegetarian utopia. Rather, my assertion refers to a tendency taking place on a broader level of sociocultural meaning, and must be understood as such.

6 Conclusion

Paradoxically, alongside an increase in meat consumption, there seems to have been a growing acceptance of, and interest in, vegetarian food and practices over the last decades. Acknowledging that our diet is influenced by culture, symbolism and various meanings attached to different foodstuffs and eating practices, this thesis has aimed to explore this paradox by studying changes in the meanings attached to the concept ‘vegetarian’. The main research question guiding the thesis was: In what ways has the framing of the ‘vegetarian’ in Norwegian newspapers changed since 1990, and how can changes in the framing of the concept be explained?

Through textual analysis, I reconstructed three different discourses that were dominant within the general newspaper discourse on the ‘vegetarian’ in the period between 1990 and 2014. The analysis was centered around changes in ‘textual voices’ as well as changes in genre use.

The first dominant discourse in my data was the ‘alternative health treatment’ discourse, which was central in the period between 1990 and 1995. Typical for this discourse was that the ‘vegetarian’ concept was mainly dealt with in ‘human interest stories’, largely based upon interviews with people engaged in vegetarian diets. The recurring ‘vegetarian subject’ in this period was a person who had been suffering from illness or stress, and used a vegetarian diet as a means of achieving better health. This subject had typically come across the vegetarian diet at some form of remote health center, where eating vegetarian food occurred among other alternative practices, such as fasting. Through the use of metaphors and other linguistic choices, the journalists made vegetarians come off as rather strange and deviant. Accordingly, vegetarian food was largely conveyed as non-food, mainly consisting of raw, unprepared ingredients.

The second dominant discourse was the ‘animal ethics’ discourse, which entered the newspapers in 1995. Like the one before it, this discourse was largely occurring in ‘human-interest stories’ featuring interviews of people engaged in vegetarian practices. A remarkable change in this period was that vegetarian practices were increasingly described as popular and relevant. This change in the data was strengthened by a new tendency among journalists to address newspaper readers as possible vegetarians. The

typical subject was an idealist who embraced vegetarianism as an ethically grounded lifestyle, and was part of an organized 'vegetarian movement'. She was particularly concerned with animal ethics, and questioned the industrial livestock industry's use of animals. As this subject was mainly engaged in the diet for altruistic reasons, she distanced herself from the previous 'alternative health discourse' and made a point of describing vegetarian food as normal.

In year 2000, 'the sustainable consumption discourse', which is the contemporary discourse on the 'vegetarian', entered the newspapers. This discourse radically differs from the previous ones, as it lacks a 'typical subject'. In this period, an array of various voices, from journalists to food writers and politicians, have come to engage with the concept. I have referred to this development as an 'opening up' of the discourse on the 'vegetarian'. In addition to witnessing a mainstreaming of the concept, this discourse is also more open in the sense that it connects the concept to a complex variety of ethical and moral concerns, not only related to animal ethics, but also to environmental and social issues. The voices within this discourse portray engagement in vegetarian practices as a means of taking responsibility for broader sustainability issues, and 'doing good'.

In order to make sense of the changes described above, this thesis has argued for the relevance of 'late modernity' theory. This theory claims that great societal transformations taking place from the 1970s have led to radical changes in people's everyday lives. These changes can largely be connected to processes of globalization. The expansion of the modern project, through which humanity has managed to subjugate nature in hitherto unseen ways, has, as we are now increasingly becoming aware of, led us into severe and unexpected troubles. Our contemporary times can be understood as being marked by a moral crisis, as society appears to be losing its function as provider of a moral compass. In a world where we have become increasingly aware of the negative global consequences of our consumption, and where former identity markers such as gender, nationality and class no longer provide a set basis for our self-understanding, answers to questions such as what to eat have become part of individuals' 'life political projects' (Giddens 1991, 214).

The findings presented in this thesis support theories arguing that social developments following the transition towards late modernity have resulted in changes in our relationship with the natural world. In line with several social theorists, this thesis suggests that the anthropocentric ideal of human dominance over non-human nature, in which the 'modern project' was grounded, has increasingly come under scrutiny. Instead, we currently appear to be witnessing a 'widening of the ethical net' (Fiddes 1997, 252), a tendency towards including non-human animals in the sphere of beings worthy of ethical consideration. As suggested by both Fiddes and Franklin, this might be explained by a lost faith in the superiority of our species, as a reaction to the large-scale destruction and exploitation of nature and the animals.

Animals have a curiously ambiguous position in our contemporary culture, and this ambiguity appears to affect our feelings towards meat. As argued by Fiddes, the traditional, important position of meat in Western culture can be connected to its function as a 'Natural symbol' for "human control of, and superiority over, nature" (Fiddes 1991, 6). Today, such control has reached a historical peak, as livestock to a greater extent than ever are treated as mere input in an industrial production system. Yet, a growing tendency to grant animals a moral standing appears to have made us increasingly uncomfortable with meat's animal origin. As the anthropocentric ethos is thus currently put under pressure, meat's role has become more problematic.

This thesis has suggested that the recent interest in the 'vegetarian' might be understood as an attempt at a way out of a situation where the sociocultural position of animals and the rest of the non-human world is increasingly difficult to make sense of. My findings indicate that the concept seems to have become a symbol of a newfound perception of the 'good', which can be connected to the spreading of a worldview in which the role of humans towards the non-human is not that of dominance, but that of responsibility and coexistence.

The tendencies pointed to in this thesis have significant implications for our relations with the natural world. Here, I have merely scratched the surface of this highly complex issue. It would be interesting to see more research on human relationships with nature and the animals in Norway and other Western societies, particularly with regards to how these relationships have changed in recent times. For example, an interesting entrance point to

this issue would be to study the presence of anthropocentric and biocentric ideas in political and legal documents, as well as in other types of media.

As a starting point of this thesis was the need for a reduction in Norwegian levels of meat consumption, the recent problematizations of meat can be understood as a welcome development. Although the discursive changes described here have not yet led to a notable decrease in the amounts of meat consumed in Norway, the increased interest in vegetarian practices can hopefully be understood as a first step towards such change. An important challenge for researchers in the near future is to find ways to contribute to reduce the global meat intake. Enhancing our knowledge about the sociocultural meaning in which meat foods and vegetarian foods are entangled, might facilitate this process.

My findings indicate that, in portraying vegetarian food as 'food for the future', a growing variety of people appear to regard 'the vegetarian' as a symbol of a better, more sustainable society, radically different from today's reality. Hence, this thesis has suggested that contemporary interest in vegetarian practices can be understood as an expression of what Giddens refers to as 'utopian realism', defined as "heavily counterfactual (...) future-oriented thought (...) [that allows us to] envisage alternative futures whose very propagation might help them be realized" (Giddens 1990, 154). Viewed as an example of 'utopian realism', the newfound interest in the 'vegetarian' can be seen as an indication that people are actively seeking to regain a sense of meaning and collective morale, which is a scarce good in our late modern times. Whether these signs of a new moral understanding, where the interests of nature and the animals are given a value closer to that which we give ourselves, can help us move in the direction of a more sustainable society, still remains to be seen.

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Appendix : Referenced newspaper articles

Abbreviations:

AP – Aftenposten

NA – Nationen

KK – Klassekampen

- VG, 02. 03. 1990: «Også for de friske»
- AP, 21. 08. 1991: «Vitaminhuldra på Krogskogen»
- VG, 06. 11. 1991: «Ble bedre med faste»
- VG, 10. 01. 1992: «Gulrot-elsker overtar i Norge Rundt»
- AP, 03. 01. 1993: «Rågod seier over ribbefettet»
- AP, 08. 06. 1993: «Grønne generasjoner – kjøtt er pyton»
- NA, 26. 09. 1995: «Ekte "veggiser" spiser ikke egg»
- NA, 29. 09. 1995: «Kjøttbransjen frykter vegetarianerbølge»
- AP, 15. 03. 1996: «Lite grønt på byen»
- KK, 24. 07. 1996: «Spis heller gulrot...»
- AP, 09. 08. 1996: «Vegetarrekruttering»
- VG, 21. 12. 1997: «Grønn bølge blant unge»
- AP, 12. 06. 1998: «Sunt og lekkert»
- AP, 02. 09. 1998: «Magert tilbud for Oslos vegetarianere»
- AP, 31. 12. 1998: «Mat 1999: Mannen som skulle imponere»
- NA, 04. 06. 1999: «Fakta»
- AP, 07. 02. 1999: «Grønt lys for grønt liv»
- AP, 23. 12. 2000: «Og en god, grønn jul...»
- VG, 18. 03. 2001: «Hellig ku, deppa kjøtt»
- NA, 11. 12. 2002: «Hva er god mat?»
- NA, 12. 03. 2003: «Spiser med samvittigheten»
- VG, 26. 02. 2008: «Kutt ut kjøttet»
- VG, 05. 01. 2008: «Slik blir klimasamfunnet»
- KK, 02. 05. 2008. «Gamle ideer for fall»

AP, 07. 06. 2009: «Byen der biff er bannlyst»
KK, 03. 10. 2009: «Grønn samvittighet»
VG, 12. 08. 2009: «Vil innføre en vegetardag i uken»
AP, 07. 12. 2009: «Solheim: –Tenk 4 B-er»
KK, 30. 01. 2010: «Tallerkenetikk»
VG, 26. 03. 2010: «Seier til de grønne»
AP, 04. 04. 2011: «Ingen angrende synder»
AP, 16. 06. 2011: «En ny grønn tradisjon er startet»
AP, 07. 07. 2012: «Riktig, god sommer»
AP, 18. 11. 2013: «Veggismat? Helt kanon!»
AP, 10. 01. 2014: «Hipstermat»
VG, 20. 02. 2014: «Se, en kjøttfri politiker!»
AP, 11. 04. 2014: «Kjøtt?»