"Exercises in Excess"

Food waste and the value of food in the affluent north: A perspective on value chains and their disruption

Tommy Ose

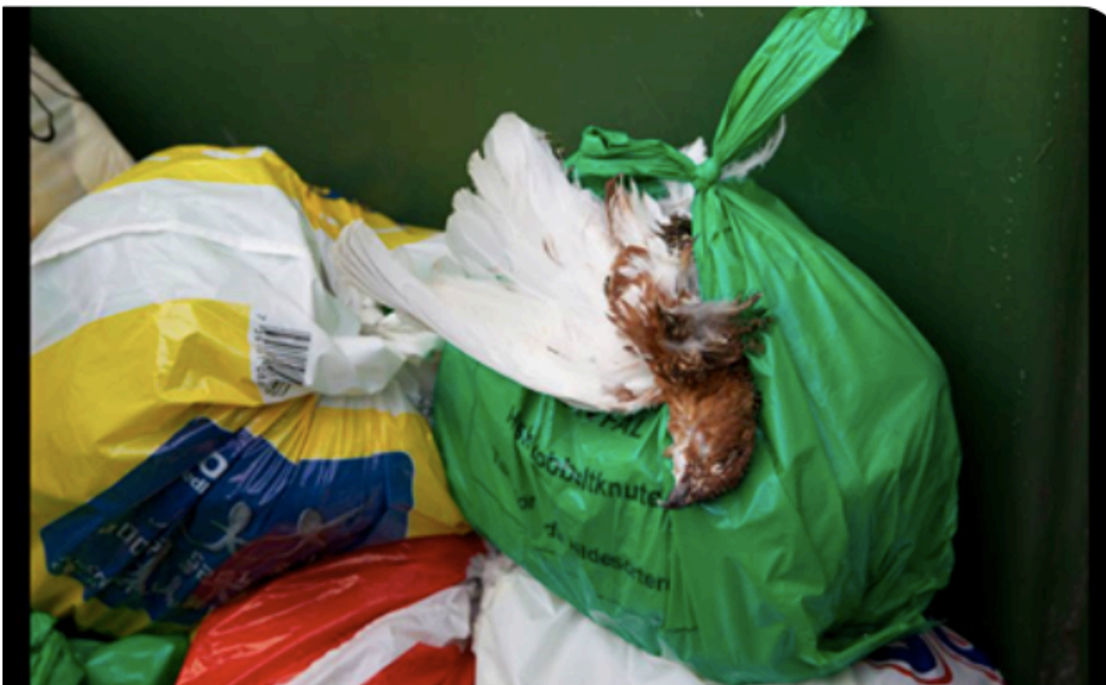

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction 1
A Sack of Potatoes 1
The "Food-Waste" Project 5
My Argument 7
Choosing Conceptual Tools 10
What is Waste? 12
General Waste Literature 13
Readers Guideline and Thesis Structure 17
Chapter 2 Theories of Value and Waste 23
Introduction 23
Anthropological Approaches to Value: Gifts, Exchange and Value Systems 27
Action, Value and Values 29
Potentials, Mediums, Acts 33
Creating Values 40
Summary 42
Chapter 3 History, Change & Continuity - Resource Management in Tromsø and Beyond 43
Introduction 43
Tromsø 44
Climate and Weather 47
Tromsø as a City in Northern Norway 48
Us and Them – Social Stratification in the North 51
Societal Change in Northern Norway 55
Governmental Policies and Regional Developments 59
Migration, Adaptation and Values and Practices of Sustenance 60
A Frontier of Self- Subsistence Households 63
Improved Standard of Living 68
The Boat from Paradise 73
Changing Seasons 77
Chapter 4 Methodology 83
Introduction 83

Doing Fieldwork in Tromsø 85
Initial Contact and Presentation 86
Access to the Field 88
Choosing Households 89
How the Households were recruited 91
Issues Concerning the Sample 94
Methods of Data-collection 98
The Shopping Trips 101
The Formal Interviews 102
Follow-up Conversations 104
The Waste-Diaries 104
Fridge- and Freezer-Rummages 106
Different Field Activities and their Influence on Data Quality 108
Other Activities 110
Making Field-Notes 111
Structuring the Empirical Material – Data Quality and Composition 113
The Sensitivity and Morality of the Topic of Food Waste 115
Openness, Trust and My Role and Position in the Field 120
Insider – Outsider Dynamics 123
Ethics and Anonymity 126
Combining and Comparing Different Data Sources 127
The Gap between Discourse and Practice - Ideals and Self-presentation 130
Topical Developments - Romantic Pasts, Contemporary Concerns 133
Summary 135
Chapter 5 Our Households 137
Introduction 137
What makes up a household? 137
The Households - Jon and Gry 141
Georg and Josefine 142
Tor and Kaisa 145
Jorunn and Kjell 147
Ingeborg and Svein 149
Kåre and Nina 150
Anders 152
Erika and Roger 154
Ingrid and Fredrik 155

Ellen and Ivar 157
Other households 158
Summary 159

Chapter 6 Meals and Rituals - Menus and Diets 161
Introduction 161
Menus 161
Factors Influencing and Deciding the Menus 162
Social Occasions 163
Holidays – Christmas, Easter and Excess 165
Criteria for Food Management 167
Desire for Choice and Variation 169
Proper and Healthy food 171
Preparation and Meals 172
"Just in case" 175
Quantities and Entities 176
Cooking from Scratch 179
Culinary and Dietary Adjustments 180
The Strange Stew - Bricolage and Creativity 182
Fresh Food as the New Standard 184
Summary 188

Chapter 7 Household Frameworks and Communalities 191
Introduction 191
One-Person Households 192
Cooking and Eating Alone 193
Young Couples - Moving in Together 194
Households with young children 195
Children Moving Out 197
Adult Singles and Couples - Generational Differences 198
Being Alone 199
Gender and Food 200
The Household Manager 201
The Housewife - Responsibilities, Honour and Shame 203
Distribution of Knowledge 203
Work and Time – Developments in Norway 206

Available Time and Priorities 208
Household Economy 210
The Access to Food 211
A Mirror of the Past – Romantics and Responsibility 214
Principal Technology and Infrastructure for Household Food Management 216
Freezers 217
Changed Infrastructure and Technology 218
Summary 219
Chapter 8 The Food Management Process - Practices and Analysis 221
Introduction 221
Planning and Provisioning 223
Multiple Mismatches 224
Product Sizes and Special Offers 226
The Poor Quality of Food in the Supermarkets 228
Provisioning Focus 229
Provisioning, Fetishism and Control of Stock 232
Temporal Perspectives on Disposability and Turnover 234
Instability Factors 236
The Concept of Entropy 239
Order, Categories, Chaos 240
Matter out of Place 241
Summary 243
Chapter 9 Disposal Practices Part I 245
Introduction 245
Cultural Ideals regarding Food Waste 245
The Food Management Process - Cleaning up 246
The Handling of Leftovers 247
The Sacrifices of Excess 249
A Hierarchy of Leftovers 251
The Social Status of Leftovers 252
The Ritual of Good intentions 252
Expiry dates 256
The Abstraction of Knowledge 259
Order, Chaos and Waste as the Remains of Practices 262
Disposing to Reinstate Order 264

Rituals of Replacement 266
Technology, Knowledge and Practices of Storage and Disposal 268
The Fridge and Freezer Rummages 268
The Double Fridge Rummage 272
Moving the Freezer 275
The freezer is not a "Perpetum Mobile" 277
Storage, Control, Circulation and Everyday Involvement 280
The Distance from the Tray 282
Storage, Waste and Distance 283
The Redistribution of Waste in Nearby Surroundings 284
Chapter 10 Disposal Practices Part II 289
Introduction 289
Waste Management Technology in the Household 289
Kitchen-Grinders - Matter out of Place and out of Sight 290
The Expressed Effects of Recycling 292
Trust and Distrust 293
Thresholds, Categories and Borders 294
Managing Matter out of Place 296
Cultures of Categorization of Matter 299
Different Times - Changing Categories 300
Recovery and Redistribution – Borders and Distance 302
Personal Thresholds 306
Explanations for Disposal 308
Anxiety, Health and Risk related Disposal 310
The Social Risks of Redistribution 312
Disposal and Invested Labour 313
Excess and the Desire for Exclusive Airborne Coffee 316
Indulgence 320
The Sack of Brazilian Coffee beans 321
Times of Excess and Wasteful Practices 323
Summary 328
Chapter 11 The Relationship between Food, Money, Value and Waste 329
Introduction 329
The Hierarchy of Food and its Value 329
The Value of Meat 331

The Ambiguous Value of Fish 333
Excess - Budget Not Necessary 339
Provisioning and Priorities 340
Economic Motivations - Wasting Less to Save Money 343
From Use value and Exchange Value to Price 347
Value, Price and Power - The Influence of Prices 349
Abstractions, Prices and Commodities 350
From Grains to Money - A Movement towards the Abstract 351
The Respect for Money 355
Generations and Changes in Food Management 359
Macro-Developments in Northern Norway fostering an Economic Focus 363
From the Material to the Monetary 364
Value in a Larger Context of Values 366
Chapter 12 The Split – Alienated Households 373
Introduction 373
The Shopkeeper in Lyngen 374
From the Corner-Shop to the Supermarket 376
Weaker Social Obligations 377
The Creation of the Commercial Market 382
The Abstraction and Commodification of Food 384
The Alienated Consumer 390
Commodities, Abstractions, Wastefulness 393
Individual Ownership 400
The Failure of Market Dominance? 407
Summary 410
Chapter 13 Waste, Value and Values – The Memory of the Gift and Social Relations 413
Introduction 413
Fish for My Family and Friends 414
Redistributing the Catch 416
Households and Cultural Continuities 417
The Concept of the Gift 419
Town and Country - Social, Cultural and Geographical Ties 420
The Gift of Food as a Total Social Phenomenon 423
Different Thresholds of Disposal – Valuations through Practice 424

Gifts of Food and the Cycle of Life 429
Total Prestations 430
The Flow of Food – A Reminder that Reconnects 432
Selfish Gifts, Selfless Gifts 434
The Social and Political Potency of Gifts....................436
The Cake from the Old Mother....................438
People, Objects and the Relational - Memories of Wastefulness....................440
Token Money Maintaining Social Distance....................443
Commodities Transformed 447
Hau - The Spontaneous Gift and the Flow of Generosity 453
Generosity, Sharing, Gifting & Power 458
Local Generosity and Market Dominance 460
The Dangers of the Gift and the Dangers of the Market 461
The Gift, the Social and the Animistic....................464
Summary 466

Chapter 14 Concluding Remarks....................469

Introduction 469
My Argument....................469
Thesis Summary and Structure 470
Common Household Preferences and Traits 471
Following the Matter throughout the Food Cycle 471
The Edible and Inedible – Priorities, Borders, Entropy 472
The Valuations of Food....................473
Changing Times – Changing Values 475
Macro-Changes and Alienated Consumers 477
The Social Dimensions of Provisioning....................478
Waste Practices as Antisocial....................481
A Deeply Embedded Economic Field of Value....................482
Value Struggles - Infravalues as Metavalues....................484
The Two Packs of Milk - Being Part of Something Bigger 486
Food – The Source of Life 488
Solidarity....................489
Alienated into a False Sense of Autonomy 492
The Freedoms of the Market....................494
Surplus and Individual Ownership....................495
The Gift - Transcending Borders – Invoking Memory....................496

References **501**

Appendix **517**

Appendix A - Letter of Invitation (In Norwegian) **517**

Appendix B – Interview guide (In Norwegian) **519**

Appendix C – ”Waste Diary” (In Norwegian) **526**

Chapter 1 Introduction

A Sack of Potatoes

My neighbour Tor is a local. He was born in Tromsø, while his family hails from the nearby countryside. He is in his thirties and lives together with his partner Kaisa and their newborn son. Tor's grandparents have a cabin in the countryside in inner Troms County. During summertime when they visit Tor and Kaisa in the city, the grandparents usually bring fish they have caught as a gift. When visiting his father in Lakselvbukt, an hour's drive away from Tromsø, Tor sometimes receives loins of dried cod that his father regularly makes. Tor tells me that Kaisa and he also receive different kinds of food from his mother. In this case it is mostly food that she has bought in the local supermarkets. The conversation about these gifts came up as we went through their food-inventory together. As we sit and chat over coffee in their living room afterwards, Tor continued:

> *"And we get berries from my grandmother – cloudberries, and rhubarb and potatoes…we got a sack of potatoes. Yes, we have our own potato patch there. They [his mother and her partner] planted the potatoes, and then harvested them too. [laughs]"*

In early autumn they had a sack of potatoes delivered to their own doorstep when Tor's mother came to visit. The potatoes were wasted. Kaisa expands while discretely soothing their seven-month old baby boy:

> *Kaisa: "But what was a bit annoying with the potatoes was that we had no place to store them.*
>
> *Tor: There is floor heating in our storage room.*
>
> *Kaisa: Lots of seeds were growing on them [laughs].*
>
> *Tor: And then we planted one of them ourselves [laughs] and had a potato plant in a pot on our windowsill.*
>
> *Kaisa: There are flats in the basements of almost every house here.*

Tor: Yes. Still many have potato-cellars[1]*, but I think more and more people renovate their houses and rent them out, or sell out parts of the houses. All the houses are renovated, so it isn't prioritised, at least not where we have been.*

Kaisa: We have been around and seen it. There are basement flats in all the houses."

Firstly, this flow of food from the countryside and into city households is not an isolated event; many Tromsø households have kinship links to small-scale farms in surrounding areas like Lyngen, Senja, Malangen, or Nordreisa. A steady stream of locally harvested and produced food flows with regularity from people living in the surrounding countryside areas to their relatives, friends, colleagues etc., living in Tromsø. What is gifted, or in some cases sold, typically consists of resources caught or harvested personally, usually in the areas close to these countryside farms or cabins. This can include fish, berries, game, vegetables etc., dependent on the seasons of the year. Social relations are created, affirmed and reaffirmed through such acts.

These gifts of food are still an important part of local culture in Tromsø, and they are often gifts that do not require reciprocity. This practice is embedded in the culture and history of Northern Norway, where a high degree of self-sustenance, through a combination of fishing, small-scale farming and husbandry, has been the dominant way of life for centuries, until the 1950s. This flow of food thus represents a cultural continuity through space and time, connecting the countryside and the city as well as the past and the present. The widespread migration of people from the countryside farms to a new life in the cities in the second half of the 20th century also meant less involvement in food production for many households. So in addition to creating and maintaining specific social relations between the people involved, these gifts thus also provide reminders of the origin of food in general, while helping to maintain, both in memory and practice, a culture and way of life that was the norm for hundreds of years until the fairly recent past. Simultaneously, these gifts also provide the recipient with potential nutrition. Sharing and gifting food is one of the most basic ways of maintaining society on several levels, and of creating people.

The sack of potatoes, grown and harvested on the small, old family farm was a gift from Tor's mother, gifted not too long after the young couple had their first child. This gift of food can thus not only be seen as linking mother and son or the two households together, affirming their bond, but can also to represent something which

[1] These are cellars holding a lower temperature. This makes them suitable for storing certain kinds of food, like e.g. potatoes, carrots and other vegetables.

extends past these two households in space and time, something lasting beyond generations – a gift of reproduction. The act of gifting creates and maintains both social relations between the involved parties while also extending further, sustaining society on a larger level. Food is the material medium here, through which the socially creative action is expressed and manifested on several levels. At the same time, the food also has a materially significant potential, in the creation of individual human bodily beings, through its use value as nutrition, and collectively through maintaining kinship lines.

The city of Tromsø is the largest city in Northern Norway. It is growing quickly as it attracts many people, both from the three northernmost counties Nordland, Troms and Finnmark, and from other parts of Norway and abroad. There is currently a severe lack of housing, making the housing market very competitive. Much is down to a lack of public housing and the housing policies since the 1980's.[2] Like Tor and Kaisa, other people in the Tromsdalen neighbourhood also told me that the norm when building houses nowadays was to build flats to let in basements. Additionally, as was the case where Tor and Kaisa lived, house-owners in the neighbourhood renovated the basements of their houses and made flats to either sell or let out. Cold storage facilities were often removed in this process, as Kaisa and Tor refer to above. And with an ever-increasing range of fresh and high-quality food available in the growing number of supermarkets in the city, at increasingly lower prices measured up against average relative household income, food provisioning in bulk has decreased. With the current, almost flawless and ever-present access to fresh food in supermarkets, with modern storage technologies in every household, food provisioning is often an everyday occurrence. Practices which were part of the old self-subsistence economy, connected to the yearly cycle of seasons, like growing one's own potatoes and catching one's own fish, or like buying whole or half carcasses are less and less common. Regardless, the flow of food between the countryside and the city still remains.

In this case the gift is wasted in the end, and not without a certain sense of irony, as Tor and Kaisa now live in a renovated basement themselves. The former owner of the house had renovated the basement and sold out a section of the house to them, although I do not know specifically if this basement had been a potato cellar. The gifting of the sack of potatoes actualises an incompatibility between the previous, more seasonal, manners of provisioning in bulk and the established practices in theirs and other contemporary household. This is also related to the infrastructure and technology

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[2] Some informants hinted that there might also have been public policies suggesting people renovate parts of their houses with the aim of renting them out, but I did not find proof of this.

in Tor and Kaisa's flat. This household appears unable to cope with this kind of bulk seasonal food provisioning, as exemplified by the sack of potatoes. The fact that the sack was wasted also illustrates a perspective on value I will apply throughout, how objects carry potential use value but that this value must be realised and manifested through acts rather than seeing the value as inherent.

This empirical example is presented early to illustrate some large-scale changes in Northern Norwegian society, captured through the lens of resource management. Throughout my fieldwork I became aware that the experience of Tor and Kaisa serves as a looking-glass into several societal changes in Northern Norway and beyond, changes which are central to forging an understanding of food waste dynamics and the underlying premises for the valuations which influence food management practices today. These gifts offer a window into the dynamics of the food waste generation; in particular as food obtained through social relations have a higher threshold for being wasted in these households when compared to the bulk of their food provisioning, commodities bought in supermarkets. These gifts of food are treated differently, as they are seen as more valuable.

These seasonal gifts of locally harvested food from the countryside brought to the city dweller highlights the huge change in the local resource situation that has occurred after World War 2. A bundle of large-scale developments have had massive implications on the practices of food management in today's households: migration to the cities, changed economic structure, work specialisation, increase of women in the public work-force, an increased standard of living, large-scale industrialised food production, widespread global market infrastructures, new household technologies and changed knowledge about food, to mention a few. I also intend to show the complexity I encountered in this field, for example how informal exchanges and gifts are still ever-present in a household resource situation, dominated by formal, large-scale market-structures, and how both gifts and commodities involved in these exchanges can be fluid categories and the levels of sociality they come to represent, and thus their thresholds of disposal.

We will be discussing different dimensions of the concept of value related to food management practices, e.g. how cheaper food like rice and pasta has a lower threshold of being wasted due to its low price. Whereas during the provisioning phase, people go bargain hunting for good, cheap deals, filling up their deep-freezers. This approach often leads to excessive provisioning and in the end, unnecessary food waste.

When it comes to food, the price discourse is very dominant amongst Norwegian consumers. It is common to complain about food prices being too high. At the same time, rather than spend time and effort on managing their food more diligently, these household members continue to waste significant amounts of the food they procure. They choose to spend their time on other activities. I will also introduce the concept of entropy when analysing chaos and order in the household food inventories, but also with regards to the ever-flowing movement of foodstuff towards decay and uniformity, connecting this materiality with social priorities and everyday practices in the local households.

After this empirical introduction and brief pointers towards other emerging discussions on what drives household food waste levels, hopefully giving the reader a more hands-on idea of the topic of this thesis, it is necessary to present a broader context of the "Food-Waste" project.

The "Food-Waste" Project

It is estimated that on average between 26% (2013) to 30% (2011) of all food brought into Norwegian households is being wasted needlessly (Hanssen & Shackenda 2010, 2011, Hanssen & Møller 2013). These estimates are fairly similar to those from household studies in the UK (WARP 2006/2007, 2010, 2012) where the latest results conclude that about 22 % of purchased food and drink which could have been consumed ended up as waste. This creates 8.3 million tonnes of food waste annually.

Food waste is contributing to a whole range of environmental and social problems. It creates landfills that emit massive amounts of methane as food decomposes, fuelling global warming. Buying food and throwing it away is also a complete waste of resources - of land, energy and water, which goes into growing, processing and transporting it. In addition to the environmental, ecological and economic dimensions, of which this project is borne out, food waste is also socially and morally problematic. A large number of people are lacking food on Earth, while others needlessly waste large portions of theirs. Rough estimates claim that hunger is a problem for over 800 million people[3] in the world and that eliminating the waste of edible food could have massively reduced or even eradicated this problem (Stuart 2009). Needless food waste also increases prices for basic foodstuff like rice and grain

[3] According to FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, September 2014. http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en/ Accessed: 26. May 2015.

on the world's raw material markets making it harder for poorer countries to obtain the amounts they need (ibid.).

There are arguments that such practices of excess and waste appear embedded in modernity[4], manifesting themselves through consumers' daily practices in a multitude of contexts, while others take up a contrary position underlining the emphasis on rationality and minimising waste as a central component in capitalism (O'Brien, 2008). Stuart (2009) provides a list of reasons behind food waste on several levels in the value-chain[5], but on a household level he points out factors such as wealth, bad planning, overcautious sell-by dates, confusion towards such markings and a lack of interest in the consequences of waste as important contributors to unnecessary waste.

Food waste is closely related to several political discourses in Norway.[6] A familiar view, often linked to food prices in the EU/EEC and poverty issues, is that food should be cheap as it is a basic necessity of survival. Considering the average level of contemporary standard of living in Europe, some environmentalists differ. They present arguments that higher prices might help lower waste-levels and thus the environmental strain on the globe, considering the ever-decreasing percentage of the average household income spent on food today compared to just a few decades ago.[7] As a consequence of increased focus on contemporary environmental issues and challenges, waste related issues have caught the attention of scholars, politicians, businesses, the media and the public in general. Demands for better and broader knowledge have yielded numerous new research initiatives; of which this project is one.

Other political dimensions are related to market-dominance and oligopoly, as a few supermarket-chains are dominating the Norwegian grocery market. During my stay in Tromsø this was particularly visible as several of these actors were vying for position and market shares. Several new supermarkets were quickly popping up, providing infrastructure able to serve a city twice or three times the size of Tromsø, the high levels of food waste produced by these stores was the inevitable result. Calls for short-travelled food are also present, e.g. as local produce is marketed under the slogan "Godt Norsk!"[8] Connecting food to geography, nationality and identity in such a manner has

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[4] See e.g. Hawkins 2006 for a discussion on waste specifically, or Giddens (1991), Hetherington (2004) or Bauman (2013) for consequences of modernity on a more general level.
[5] Production, processing, distribution, retailing and consumption.
[6] The fact that the project is politically situated is discussed further in the chapter on methodology.
[7] Norwegian National Statistics – SSB: http://www.ssb.no/emner/05/02/forbruk/ Accessed: 13.01.2011
[8] "Godt Norsk!" would translate to Norwegian and Good.

links to larger political discourses related both to food safety, self-sustenance and belonging; a discourse that carries both nationalistic and traditionally oriented undertones in Norway, in addition to more recent concerns about climate change.

This dissertation is part of a larger "Food Waste"-project financed by The Norwegian Research Council under their "Food Program". The project is run by the regional research institute Østfoldforskning, in cooperation with NOFIMA (Norwegian Institute for Food research) and SIFO (National Institute for Consumer Research). The project is created in response to concerns about food waste from the food sector and on sustainable resource use in the whole value-chain. One of the main hypotheses is that a significant amount of food waste is generated in retail shops and households. Locating and quantifying food waste, and also uncovering reasons for its generation, is at the heart of the larger project. Due to the multi-faceted nature of waste as a topic, several scientific disciplines from such varied backgrounds as food and packaging engineers, economists, biologists and anthropologists are involved, endeavouring to fully grasp the reasons behind food waste, as well as to present viable solutions.[9] At this stage it is necessary to point out that I will not present any concrete policy suggestions in this dissertation, but rather provide knowledge for those who are tasked to do so.

This specific project aims to enhance current knowledge and provide new empirical insights. Still there are very few studies on food waste at household level apart from surveys based on small samples.[10] Additionally, most of these studies do not differentiate between edible and non-edible waste. This illustrates a problem we will return to, the fluid and shifting borders between the categorisation of food and waste.

My Argument

The key task in this dissertation is to uncover reasons for food waste generation on the household level. Through the study of everyday practices in households I aim to present an explanation as to how and why food waste occurs, and how household members reach decisions regarding their food management. This will be done by unmasking the underlying premises behind these decisions. I have deliberately chosen not to explicitly present suggestions as to how food waste levels can be lowered. However, I hope that this thesis can be a platform of knowledge to develop suitable actions to tackle this

[9] The relation between this module and other modules in the larger "Food Waste"-project, along with the use of mixed methods and data, is covered in the chapter on methodology.
[10] David Evans' study from the UK is a welcome exception (Evans 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

challenge. At the end of the thesis I hope the reader is left with a plausible and satisfactory explanation for why the sack of potatoes ends up getting wasted, but for one seed that became an ornamental plant on the windowsill.

My argument is that the wasteful practices I experienced can be analysed as a consequence of how food is valued. These valuations of food are expressed and realised through acts in households, and the value of food is manifested through the householder's priorities between available alternative actions. None of the households I followed rejected the ideal that wasting food is wrong on several accounts, morally, socially, economically and environmentally. Nevertheless, wastefulness was strongly prevalent in almost all of them. Such contradictions between ideal and practice were common and will be discussed.

In addition to drawing upon several contributions to value theory, I will apply a holistic perspective on household food management. I will follow the food throughout a part of the food cycle, from its entry into the household until its exit, studying the matter in a social context, where decisions are made and acts are performed.[11] Without viewing the process as purely linear, the origins of food waste can be traced back to priorities made all throughout the household food cycle, from the planning phase to provisioning, preparation and consumption, re-distribution and finally waste management.

Food related practices will be set against a contextual backdrop of continuity and change in Tromsø and, on a larger scale, Northern Norway. I argue that key issues in the current valuations of food, and practices concerning food, are a result of several interconnected large-scale developments in Norwegian society, gathering pace in the decades after World War 2 until this day. I find that these developments have made it both more economically possible and socially acceptable to needlessly waste food. Pivotal here is an improved standard of living on the whole, with increased income levels and an increasingly more access to a variety of cheap food due to the rise of industrialised, serialised food production and a sprawling market-infrastructure. In this period the region of Northern Norway has also experienced an increased centralisation of the population, labour specialisation and a decrease in adaptation through self-sustenance.

[11] This approach draws inspiration from several sources; e.g. Marcus (1995): "To Follow the Thing", Appadurai (1986): "The Social life of Things" and Lash & Urry (2007): "The Biography of the Thing". Similar approaches have also been used in the study of food previously (See e.g Gregson, Metcalfe and Crewe (2007), Cappellini (2009) and Evans (2011, 2012a, 2012b)).

An important argument is thus that the contemporary households experience a situation in their everyday lives characterised by an increased distance from large parts of the food cycle, akin to a sense of alienation (Marx 1990 [1867]), but from a consumer point of view. This distance impacts their food management practices. The first time the household members are likely to encounter the food they depend on for survival is on the supermarket shelves, before later disposing their waste in the bins outside their domicile for the municipality to remove and further manage.

The seasons of the year appear to have lost some degree of meaning, as all kinds of food are available all year round, almost around the clock. The infrastructural changes, providing an almost ever-present availability of cheap food nearby, strongly influence the current valuations of food. One of the consequences of moving away from self-sustenance is a dependency on market infrastructures of production and distribution, as the contemporary city households are generally unable to provide, produce, manage or store larger quantities of food themselves. As exemplified through the case with the sack of potatoes, this manifests itself when the harvesting season arrives due to societal and infrastructural changes, changes that are social and intellectual, as much as physical and technological. Additionally, with a larger percentage of women now working mainly outside the home, a loss of certain kinds of knowledge and skill has occurred. A decreasing amount of time is spent, on average, on food management in households

The sack of potatoes was a personal gift between close relatives, provided through local, cultural, traditional knowledge, skill and practice. The potatoes were planted, grown and harvested on the fields of the family farm. They represent kinship, belonging and a collective history. In addition to affirming social bonds, one could also argue that this gift symbolizes something lasting that transcends the individual household or person; the creation of people and the linking of generations (Godbout & Caillé 1998:50). The actualisation and scale of the socio-material aspects of food will be discussed throughout the thesis. Just as material excess in a household will influence the social value of a gift of food, the social value and importance of such a gift can influence the material practices concerning it. This exemplifies how the socio-material aspects are deeply intertwined and dynamic - contextually dependent[12]. Within such acts of gifting or exchange, a socio-material fundament of human relations, of society, is created and maintained. As we know, here the sack of potatoes was wasted, but still it was an

[12] For socio-material perspectives and neo-materialism in anthropology, see e.g. Ingold (2000) and Barad (2003).

important factor in creating something valuable; it fulfilled some of its purpose by affirming the social relations between the involved parties.

This gift of food is both socially and materially valuable, both through its potentiality as human nutrition and as a vehicle for social relations. Even if the fact that the sack of potatoes was a gift could not save it, one of the potatoes deemed inedible still provided value though its ornamental, aesthetic value as a plant on the windowsill, decorating their living room. This gift, symbolising the reproduction and kinship through time, reached its potential as a vehicle for social relations through the act of giving and receiving, but not as a provider of the reproduction and maintenance of life per se. In the current state of excess in Tromsø and Norway, I often experienced how food becomes a means to reach other ends. Its value as nutrition was not realised. But food is not just life-dependent nutrition, or a medium to confirm social relations. I was also reminded of the aesthetic value; that a potato can grow into a decorative plant, transformed into an expression of beauty.

Choosing Conceptual Tools

Before continuing with a presentation of the main theoretical concepts I draw upon in my analysis, including subsequently positioning myself and my perspectives in the larger debates in anthropology, it is useful to restate how I ended up choosing these theoretical concepts. It is necessary to emphasize the degrees of consciousness needed. All my efforts to describe objective processes in the field notwithstanding, the politically situated intent of the project itself, and subsequently the theoretical concepts that are chosen, imprint tracks in the mind of the anthropologist, both in the field and in the analysis.[13]

The entry point into the field of food waste in the households was a broad one. My mandate was to uncover causes for food waste, a wide mandate offering both an opportunity to shape the project, while inescapably also imposing a lot of decision-making upon me. After a long period of kneading this dough of multifaceted empirical material from the whole food management cycle in the households, tossing and turning it, structuring and categorising the data, a couple of themes started to stand out and pique my interest in a special way. At first, it appeared more like a whim than a concrete and focused idea. The first theme was borne out of narratives and observations about

[13] For further discussions on the political positioning of the project and related issues I refer to Chapter 4: Methodology.

gifts of food, from relatives and friends in the countryside to those living in the city. Unsurprising to those familiar with the anthropological canon, these gifts of food were treated as more valuable in the different households. The meaning and value ascribed to food obtained in this manner compared to food obtained through the established market infrastructures of the local supermarkets, spilled over into variations in food management practices. As gifts and exchanges of food proved to be an important empirical entry point, theories of gifts and gift exchange, in particular Mauss (1995 [1924]), Sahlins (1972, 1976), Gregory (1982, 1997), Godbout and Caillé (1998) and Graeber (2001, 2011, 2013 & 2014) were then applied during my analysis. The bulk of these are introduced and thoroughly discussed in relation to my empirical material in Chapter 13: "Waste, Value and Values – The Memory of the Gift and Social Relations", but are applied throughout the thesis.

These gifts of food, arriving from the regional countryside farms and the lands and waters nearby, then brought me towards questions of generational differences. Some of the households had made this journey from countryside to city in the period between the 1960's and a couple of decades afterwards. These households shared narratives about changes and continuities in their food management routines and, more importantly, the large-scale societal changes that they had experienced which framed their practices, whether market infrastructures and the accessibility of food, household technology and knowledge, food prices, or changed standards of living. Looking through the window of the everyday practices, generational differences in food management and waste levels appeared related to these large-scale societal changes in Northern Norway during the last 50 years or so. Food indeed seemed to be perceived, valued, and thus treated differently. These older households opened a door to reflect around these developments.

Subsequently, I looked into theories and concepts from anthropology and beyond which could improve my understanding of these social phenomena, especially how to operationalise and bridge the gap between practices on a household level and the large-scale societal changes which seemed to wield so much influence on these local practices – between micro and macro levels. Consequently, throughout the thesis, I discuss the relations between the households and concerns on a larger, long-term scale using Bloch & Parry (1989), and between value and values using Graeber (2001, 2011a, 2013, 2014). As an extension to that, the possibilities and limits of the concept of disembeddedness (Polanyi 2001 [1944]) are debated. My analysis of this relationship, between local practices and large-scale changes in Tromsø, is also indebted to Marx' concepts of alienation and commodification (Marx 1988 [1932], 1990 [1867]), and his

development of different concepts on value and exchange (Marx 1990 [1867] 1970 [1859]), which I also employ.

In the upcoming chapters, discussing day-to-day practices of household food and waste management throughout the food cycle (Chapter 8, 9 and 10), I also branch out slightly into the interdisciplinary where contextually relevant. Inspired by Eriksen (2011), I use the concept of entropy (Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971], Bateson 1985 [1979] & 2000 [1972]) to discuss the relationship between practice, matter, process and borders. The concept is viewed in two ways; adding to a discussion on order, chaos and categories inspired by the classic work of Mary Douglas (1966) "Purity and Danger", and additionally on the inevitable movement towards uniform matter, related to the transient nature of food towards waste (Thompson 1979). I also draw on the results, from both the survey and waste analysis conducted in the other modules of the "Food Waste"-project, throughout the thesis.

Through our interaction and my exposure to their everyday concerns, the informants did, to a large extent, formulate the focus for me (Hastrup 2004), which is in accordance with the intended approach. As such, I have approached this task from an ethnographical vantage point, attempting as much as possible to let the originality and wealth of the field speak in this zigzag relationship between theoretical concepts, structural analysis and life-world ethnography. I have thus ended up with an approach centred upon the concept of value and value-theory. Both the themes of 1) gifts of food and 2) the societal changes, experienced through the looking glass of different generational practices, had commonalities that the concept of value could help us understand better. Questions arose about how food and different kinds of food was valued and treated differently, and how these practices were socially and materially contextually dependent.

What is Waste?

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary[14], waste can be defined as 1) "the loss of something valuable that occurs because too much of it is being used or because it is being used in a way that is not necessary or effective", 2) "an action or use that results

[14] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/waste Accessed 10. March 2014.

in the unnecessary loss of something valuable", or 3) "a situation in which something valuable is not being used or is being used in a way that is not appropriate or effective"

These three definitions overlap and all point towards the concept of value and of loss. My preference is for the second definition, since it is focused on practice and action as the empirical starting point, rather than the substantial or situational aspects of waste, such as degrees of efficiency. The material and social dimensions will be addressed in analysis to unfold practices and create an increased understanding of the motivations behind actions. As I decipher local actions, I start with he act itself, and strive to describe objective processes leading to waste, processes which are undoubtedly situated practices in the field. I will then contextualise these processes on a gradually larger scale, and also in relation to other fields of local life.

Concrete practices will be the vantage point for a contextualized analysis, without predefined concepts of necessity or efficiency. The chosen definition of waste also overlaps with the key task of the larger "Food Waste"-project. It allows us to situate waste as the result of practices leading to the unnecessary loss of something valuable, in this case edible food. The definition also fits with my chosen value-theoretical approach.

General Waste Literature

Waste as a field of academic study is fairly young and conflicting explanations and interesting dilemmas tend to occur in such an exploratory phase. The discourse surrounding food waste spreads out along a spectrum, containing moralities of environmentalism or solidarity on one side, and efficiency and rational economic action on the other, e.g. studies of waste industry management. Excluding the field of archaeology, waste emerged as a specific field of study in social science in the US in the early 1970's, through the pioneering work of Rathje and Murphy (1992). Their classic study coined the term "Garbology" – The Archaeology of Garbage. The main hypothesis was that the study of garbage or waste itself yields insights into the cultures that produce it. They aimed to uncover shared cultural traits, and began studying the actual waste using a combination of archaeological and anthropological approaches. Several established myths were contested and rejected, e.g. that packaging is a major contributor to waste. Results also showed dissonance through over and underreporting. Explanations for behaviour offered by the research subjects themselves were often merely fictional reconstructions of established cultural ideals - what people think they *should* have done.

Thompsons “Rubbish Theory” (1979) also falls into the canon of waste studies. He argues that the value of objects is dynamic, and can be transformed due to minor shifts in how people view these objects; objects that become worthless and disposable (transient) can be transformed into objects of lasting and increasing value (durable) with time, as they become less common and thus scarce. Beyond a given temporal threshold, old objects generally begin to gain value, provided they are in good condition. Waste is seen as an in-between category, one that offers flexibility, even if this perspective is somewhat less valid when it comes to food, due to entropy. There are a few exceptions like e.g. wine. The typology is of interest regardless, as the categorisations influence how we act towards these objects. Borders and categories are very relevant for Thompson (ibid.) as he problematises the categorisation of objects as transient and durable. His work argues for the dynamism of categorisations, the mortality of goods and how objects gravitate towards becoming waste. We will encounter the dynamic value of food and the shifting borders between edible food and waste, both within and between households, numerous times throughout this thesis, for example within the processes of disposal and evaluations of food-inventory.

Mary Douglas draws much inspiration from the structuralist ideas of Claude Lévi-Strauss (see e.g. 1966 [1962], 1973 [1955]). Her classic, “In Purity and Danger” from 1966, examines “dirt” and “pollution” as cultural categories that are dependent on context, and how dirt or waste can pose danger to the established cultural cosmology if it is “out of place”. She places little emphasis on the material aspects. Dirt is mainly seen as a cultural anomaly – dangerous, distorting the established cultural cosmology, not in a material sense, but in a cognitive and symbolic one. In such a perspective, her concept of “matter out of place” helps identify borders, such as when food changes from being considered edible to becoming inedible, and also the exact tipping point or triggers which move it across this threshold, and sometimes back again.

More recently, Martin O’Brien (2008) has argued that societies cannot exist without waste. Based on historical quantitative data, he claims that modern consumers do not produce more waste than earlier generations in the 20th century, even if the composition of the waste has changed significantly though the last 50 years or so. The percentage of food has increased, while ash has decreased considerably. However, according to Susan Strasser’s (1999) historical analysis from the US, it seems O’Brien did not go far enough back in time to observe the thrift of yesteryears. Strasser (ibid.) argues that a generally lower level of waste was generated within households before the entry of disposable products after World War 2. In terms of waste, there is also a correlation to be expected between high or increased income and comparatively larger

amount of waste. O'Brien (2008) here puts forward the hypothesis *"Where there is wealth, there is waste."* However, while there seems to be support for such a statement there are also significant differences in the levels of food waste between equally prosperous countries. This also points towards a strong cultural dimension (Stuart 2009). Another question is if waste is more prominent amongst the wealthy in unequal societies. In addition to wealth, Stuart (ibid.) finds overcautious sell-by dates, confusion towards such markings, and bad planning or lack of interest in the consequences as important contributors to waste.

The writer and food activist Tristram Stuart's (ibid.) overarching argument in "Waste – Uncovering the Global Food Scandal" is that a lower demand, obtained by throwing away less food than currently, would benefit the planet environmentally, provide food for the starving, and also increase profitability for the businesses involved. Other waste scholars argue that practices of excess and waste appear embedded in modernity (E.g. Hawkins 2006), while others take up a contrary position, underlining that the urge towards rationality and minimising waste is a central component in capitalism (O'Brien 2008). Applying a global, ecological understanding, Eriksen (2011) underlines the strong need to include waste in more meaningful cycles. He argues that the globe is a closed system, not an infinite one – a fact which will catch up with us sooner rather than later.

Studies of Food Waste

Until recently, very little research had been done on both the magnitude of, and reasons behind, food waste[15]. However, in the last decade an increasing number of studies have been carried out. Most of them have taken place in Europe and the US and, perhaps as a logical consequence of the recent interest in food waste as a topic of research, have mainly focused on quantifying the amount and composition of food waste generated in the respective societies.[16] Still, in 2015 the overwhelming majority of the studies

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[15] Following Evans (2011) and Stuart (2009) food waste does not include residue from food which are generally not eaten, like fish-skin, bones or coffee grounds, neither does it include similar things which are disposed through the process of preparation like potato peel and other kinds of fruit or vegetable peel or skin etc. So when referring to food waste in the households throughout the thesis, I will be referring to food which at some point could have been eaten, but which is not, and which is also disposed of through the waste bin or discarded in other manners with no intention of subsequent human consumption.

[16] See e.g.: UK (WRAP 2007, Exodus 2008, WRAP 2012), US (The National Department for Resources Security 2012), Sweden (Sonesson et al. 2005, Sonesson & Angervall 2008, Consumer Organisation Sweden 2009 and Swedish Environmental Protection Agency: 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013), Finland ("Food

conducted attempt to quantify the amount and composition of food waste and look at related trends rather than uncovering underlying reasons for its generation at a household level.

The most notable exception though is the work of David Evans (2011, 2012a, 2012b) based on fieldwork in Greater Manchester, UK.[17] Evans (ibid.) sees waste not as something innate in objects, but as a consequence of how something is disposed of and looks beyond the amount and composition of food waste and into the dynamics driving it at a household level. Following this perspective, surplus matter is not necessarily waste by definition, but becomes so when it is connected to the waste-stream. This resonates well with the theoretical perspectives of Michael Thompson (1979), and David Graeber (2001, 2006, 2013 and 2014) which I will present shortly, that value, and waste, is created through action, contrary to residing in the object matter itself, although potentialities are present.

Evans (2011) also warns us against viewing waste as the whole proof of a household's food management practices. The success stories, where discarded food gets redistributed or internal household salvage operations ensure that food avoids the waste-stream, can disappear into the shades as waste is ushered into the spotlight by environmental discourses. For every experiment gone wrong, how many everyday practices are there where food indeed gets managed properly, used for leftovers etc. and thus avoids the waste stream? As such the necessity of a holistic approach becomes clear, exploring the entire food cycle in households to understand the multitude of reasons for food waste in a processual perspective.[18]

Later, in a pioneering collection of articles discussing food waste in a sociological perspective, Evans, Campbell & Murcott (2013, Eds.) take it upon themselves to map out a multitude of contemporary approaches and perspectives on waste, and to situate them, non-restrictively in terms of scholarly boundaries, investigating which discourses waste inhibit today. The collection draws attention to how the term waste is used as a convenient allegory for morally and politically situated perspectives, ranging from "the unproductive expenditure of time and money, through the alleged excesses of global

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Spill"-project, Agrifood Research Finland 2012) and in Norway (Hanssen & Olsen 2008, Syvertsen et al. 2010, Hanssen & Shackenda 2011, Hanssen & Møller 2013).

[17] Other notable exceptions are studies by Munro (1995), discussing the conceptualization of food disposal, and Cappellini (2009) analysing the domestic re-use of leftovers.

[18] As Laitala (2014) discovered in her study of textile waste there are indeed rituals of disposal when it comes to textiles too, a process involving divestment stages, not dissimilar to the one with leftovers of food.

consumer capitalism and their environmental impacts, to the fall-out and consequences of modernity"(ibid: 6). They argue for viewing waste not merely as leftovers – the redundant remnants of social life, but as a dynamic category dependent on social, economic and historical context (ibid: 7). They suggest waste is not just rejected and worthless matter that needs to be separated from the societies that produced it. Evans, Campbell & Murcott (ibid.) also question the unfazed designation of certain things as waste, often in the hands of the defining powers of municipal waste management, just as fish-skin and potato peels are defined as bio-waste for the green bag. As older relatives of one of the participating household experienced, after moving to a more densely populated area, the leftovers from their fish-dinner or the preparation of it could no longer just be left outside for the seagulls or the fox, as residual needed to be connected to the public waste streams. The municipality argued that such leftovers were considered waste and that they carried a health risk and should not be left outside.

Readers Guideline and Thesis Structure

A short guideline to the reader might be useful. After an empirical example to introduce the topic in a tangible manner, I present the project description, contextual, methodical and theoretical elements successively. Then the empirical field is unveiled, with shorter analytical excursions where fit. Finally, this is brought together in an analytical discussion in the three chapters preceding the final Chapter 14: Concluding Remarks. Here I present the main argument and my theoretical contributions, drawing on both the contextual framework and the empirical material previously presented. The chapters should thus not be seen as stand-alone arguments, but rather as making up a larger whole which is gradually brought together towards the end of the thesis. The chapters are outlined as follows:

This has been Chapter 1, "Introduction". I have presented the backdrop and scope of this project, followed by the background for my choices of theoretical and conceptual tools and in brief, the main body of the argument made in this thesis. I then offered a short survey of the past research on waste and food-waste, before closing off with an outline of the whole thesis.

Chapter 2: "Theories on Value and Waste". Here I present and discuss the concepts I use in my analysis of household food waste practices. The background and development of value-theory in social science and anthropology is laid out, leading up to

the recent work of David Graeber, upon which I substantially draw. I explain how the concept of value can be a useful tool to operationalise values and attempt to bridge the gap between the ideals and practices I experienced in the local households.

Chapter 3, “Continuity and Change in Tromsø and beyond” presents the ethnographic and thematic context that allows for a better understanding of the everyday resource management within the Tromsø households. This historical and cultural backdrop allows for a more grounded understanding of households practices and how they have developed in the second half of the twentieth century.

In Chapter 4, “Methodology”, all issues and challenges pertaining to this topic are discussed. I have outlined the reasons for my choice and organization of the data-collecting activities, how this approach held up in the field, and importantly, how my choices ended up influencing the data I uncovered and its quality. Methodological, practical and human factors all ended up shaping the sample and the data as fieldwork progressed.

In Chapter 5, “Households and Everyday Life”, the participating households are presented to provide the reader with the necessary framework to better understand their food related practices. I describe their overall approach to food management and key frameworks for understanding the households’ food management practices, e.g. size, structure, economy and cultural background.

Chapter 6, “Meals and Rituals - Menus and Diets” explores the key cultural practices and ideals that guide the everyday food management in the households. Here we examine how food, lifestyle choices and societal developments are interwoven and influence waste levels, and how food is now increasingly seen as a means to other ends. I link this development to an increased standard of living and several other large-scale changes in Northern Norwegian society. These changes have led to new preferences and practices among the last couple of generations.

Chapter 7, “Household Frameworks and Communalities”, first describes household frameworks and communalities, such as its structure, size and composition, to illustrate how these elements in the household cycle influence food management practices and waste levels. Here I also discuss gender roles and developments, looking at large-scale societal developments, like increased participation in the workforce, and subsequently explore the influence of changes in knowledge levels and in time available for food management. The overall developments in household infrastructure and

technology for food- and waste-management after World War 2 are also covered, to further explain dynamics behind food waste generation.

Chapter 8: "The Food Management Process - Practices and Analysis". After unwrapping these large-scale developments influencing the practices of everyday life, I commence with following the matter throughout the food cycle. Here I start with the planning phase, moving forward to provisioning and meal preparations, pinpointing practices and the underlying dynamics contributing to unnecessary waste.

Chapter 9, "Disposal Practices, Part I", I continue following the food cycle, analysing practices of disposal in the households to unveil the underlying dynamics. I start with the practices that take place after the initial meals, the cleaning up and the handling of leftovers. A key point is how everyday priorities tend to get in the way of initially good intentions, as individuals move between one field of endeavour to another. I also show how rituals disguise wasteful habits and thus make the disposal more culturally and morally acceptable. I have also argued that expiry dates signify an abstraction of household knowledge, with a resulting loss of sensory experiences and knowledge with which to judge the edibility of foodstuffs. Storage practices are also put under the lens through fridge and freezer rummages, and the relationship between technology, knowledge and practices of provisioning, storage and disposal is discussed.

In Chapter 10, "Disposal Practices, Part II", I follow up on discussions on the uses of storage technology, by looking at the infrastructural framework, the knowledge, mind-set and practices relating to the act of disposal itself. I discuss how the social and material dimensions of food management converge to define borders between edible and inedible or unwanted, and the management of "matter out of place". Practices of excess receive special attention, and I argue that there is a connection between wasteful local household practices and changing values in Norway on a larger scale. Here the oft presumed tension between individualized, alienated and excessive short-term household practices and more long-term collective concerns is also challenged. Throughout chapters 8, 9 and 10 I have followed the matter, analysing everyday practices that generate unnecessary food waste has been the focal point in particular, how food management decisions are taken in situ and which dynamics influence them.

Chapter 11, "The Relationship between Food, Money Value and Waste" unveils what I see as the key underlying premise of food management practices in the households throughout the food cycle – the valuation of food, which was illustrated through practice. Drawing upon different theories of value, I analyse and contextualize local food practices in the light of changes in large-scale societal factors. I argue that

several of these macro-changes converge, grounding food management practices that take place throughout the food cycle, in 1) a predominantly economic logic, as the valuations of different kinds of food in the households are closely linked to the purchasing price of food, and 2) a perspective where food has mainly become a means to reach other ends.

Connected to this development, a devaluation of the use value of food has manifested itself and acts as a key factor behind wasteful food management practices. Overall, the meaning and value food holds in the households has changed, as the larger system of value - the dominant values - have changed. A state of both physical and mental alienation is presented as an important element behind the redefinition of the value of food, and subsequently high waste levels. I argue that an increased distance between household practices and the origins of food, its production and also the waste management process, influences the valuations of food manifested through practice, and that these changed household practices are indicative of changes in local values on a larger scale – what is perceived as meaningful and valuable acts in Northern Norwegian society.

In Chapter 12, "The Split – Households Alienated from the Food Cycle", reasons behind contemporary food waste are mapped out in a larger, historical context. I draw up two historical narratives, the shopkeeper in Lyngen and the Tromsdalen corner-shop, which contextualizes changes in household food provisioning as well as societal development framing it. Then I discuss contemporary practices of food provisioning in contrast to this development. I also see exchange of food as an entry point to analysing shared values and surrounding moralities.

I argue that the composition of the relations between giver and recipient in contexts of exchange has changed, and that many of the contemporary households are separated and distant from a significant part of the food cycle, towards a state similar to alienation. I point to a changed level of sociality and an increased distance, indicating a change in values, a change that strongly influences the valuations of food and the surrounding moralities, and thus household food waste levels.

In Chapter 13, "Waste, Value and Values – The Memory of the Gift and Social Relations", I discuss the continuity and role of gift exchanges as durable contrasting value-practices that allow for critical reflections. At the same time as the formal market transactions to obtain food take place, there is an extensive flow of food from the countryside of Tromsø into the city households through other channels – gifts of food through kinship- and friend-relations that are valued differently. This brings nuance and

complexity, but vitally it serves to contextualize current local practices. For me, these exchanges presented themselves as an exception, a backdrop that enabled me to understand the subtexts behind the dominant everyday practices more clearly, and to adopt a critical reflection on these. This flow also entails a debate on the concepts of gifting versus exchange.

In Chapter 14, I draw up a summary of the thesis before finally presenting some concluding remarks. Here I discuss some of the larger frameworks that shape how food is valued today, while offering an analysis of some of these by applying a few relevant concepts, on a meta-level.

Chapter 2 Theories of Value and Waste

Introduction

Previously I briefly described the process of deciding on an analytical and theoretical approach to this topic, based on processing my empirical material. In this chapter I will present the overreaching theoretical perspectives and tools that I have chosen to use in my analysis, also positioning these within the anthropological tradition. The application, analysis and critical discussions related to nuances in these concepts, are saved for the topical chapters, as is a more detailed presentation of specific theoretical concepts on waste, value and gifts, among others.

Value in Anthropology

Up through the relatively short but shifting history of social anthropology, there have been various approaches to describe what is ultimately valuable to human beings. These include basic physiological resources like food – our empirical starting point – air, water, clothes and shelter, as well as needs related to health, personal or economic safety. Other needs are of a social character, like belonging, friendship and intimacy, and finally, esteem and self-actualisation.[19] My work to understand the dynamics behind household food management draws inspiration from various contributions to value-theory.

Value-theory, and the use of the term value within traditions of social thought, can roughly be divided into three different directions.[20] In a sociological sense, values, in plural, are conceptions of what is seen as good, proper or desirable in human life. From an economic perspective, value is decided by how desired something is, primarily by how much someone is willing to give up to obtain it (See e.g. Simmel (1978 [1907]). Semiotically, mainly inspired by the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure (1966 [1916]), value is roughly coined as meaningful difference.

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[19] This short, schematic list draws inspiration from Maslow's classical, but by now much debated, hierarchy of needs. See Maslow, A. (1943): A Theory of Human Motivation. Psychological Review, 50, 370-396.

[20] This section draws inspiration from David Graeber's summary in "Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value – The False Coin of our Own Dreams" (2001: Chapters 1 and 2) on how the concept of value has developed historically in anthropology in interaction with general social theory.

The idea of a rational, individual that aims to maximise their needs is the underlying fundament for a perspective of economic rationality. This approach has been questioned and rejected by anthropology since its infancy (See e.g. Malinowski 1922). The perspective was found to be too simplistic for the analysis of society as a whole, as numerous common practices of what was unnecessary, from a purely economic perspective, was observed. Also, in many societies the concept of individuals does not even exist according to local cosmology, pin-pointing the ethnocentricity of this perspective. These theories, based on an economic rationalism were labelled as formalism, and formalist arguments were built on individual desires being the key means of motivation. However, their attempts to explain why people maximise some things and not others come up short (Graeber 2001:12), as they struggle to explain the values that motivated the choices of these individuals and how, as a whole, their society is shaped.

At the other end of the scale, scholars were arguing for society to be viewed in a holistic manner, known as the substantivist position in Economic Anthropology. They grappled with questions related to individual people's motivations behind acts to reproduce the societies they live in. How people manage this balancing act between individual and collective concerns and motivations is still a central issue in social sciences. The economic historian Karl Polanyi is considered a key figure of the substantivist school. In his classic "The Great Transformation" (1944 [2001]) he uses the notion of embeddedness to describe the connection between economic activity and other human activities of social and political dimensions. His concept, disembedded, can be translated as removed from its original context. Hence, disembedded for Polanyi (ibid.) indicates a condition where the economic activities, while still considered part of a society, are separated from the non-economic aspects of society, operating on its own terms. Polanyi maintained that economic activity, e.g the food provisioning of a household, should be embedded in, and not separated from, other aspects of human behaviour, e.g. cosmology, politics and social organisation.[21] In my analysis I will make use of the concept of embeddedness to discuss local practices and dilemmas related to value.

In the perspective based on the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure (1966 [1916]), value is roughly coined as meaningful difference. This approach was a

[21] The concept of disembeddedness has been heavily discussed and criticised. The argument is also related to the Marxian concept of alienation (Marx 1988 [1932], 1990 [1867]), and I refer to the Chapter 11:The Relationship between Food, Money, Value and Waste for a further analysis and discussion.

major influence for structuralists such as Lévi-Strauss (1958 [1955], 1966 [1962]) or Sahlins (1972), and upon the work of Marcel Mauss (1995 [1924]). The premise for structuralists was that an underlying symbolic system structured the meaning of human activity, and understanding this system became their key mission. They see such systems of meaning as organised on the basis of languages, and meanings are based in conceptual differences. But to put it briefly, struggle with explaining creative human action taking place within these structures of meaning.

Defining value in itself, or developing a theory of value, has not received much focus in anthropology even if the term is commonly used. One notable exception is Clyde Kluckhohn's comparative project in the 1940's and -50's (Graeber 2001:2). A key idea here was not just to compare how different cultures are, in essence their different ways of perceiving the world and what is valuable, but also focusing on the moral dimension or project – seeing cultures as different ways of imagining what society ought to be like (Sutton 2004:374). Theories of value thus attempt to define what is valuable in society within given situations. Value can hold different meanings dependent on context and upon what phenomena one focuses, be it social, economic or religious. Anthropology then faces the task of combining all of these (Otto & Willerslev 2013:1).

Operationalizing Value and Values

Before going deeper into value theory, let us briefly look at how both economic value and the overarching values of a more moral character can manifest themselves empirically. With regards to food waste, this can for instance be as simple as; why do we prefer the food we do instead of other kinds? Why do practices concerning meat differ from those concerning rice, or why are people not willing to spend more of their time managing their food, but rather spend their time on other activities, with unnecessary food waste being one consequence? As I experienced, self-produced or harvested food as well as food received as gifts were treated more preciously, situations involving gifts and exchanges were seen not only as an entry point to studying the practices concerning economic value, but also the values guiding these practices at an early stage of my fieldwork.

Since values are linked to what is we perceive as good in life, moral questions of right and wrong conduct arise when what is desirable by man is placed in a larger context. We can easily imagine how what is valued and desired on an individual household level and on a larger social level can come into conflict, e.g. evading public

taxation to save money and rather sending your children to a private college, which one assumes will provide a superior education.[22] Amongst Inuits e.g., a connection between what holds value and values in society is manifested though sharing of food. If one hunter hasn't caught anything and his family is starving, the others will share with him - what I get today, you might get tomorrow (Graeber 2011:79). Value and values are interwoven, as value practices, those actions, processes and webs of relations, are both predicated on a given value system and in turn (re-)produce it (De Angelis 2007:24) - social practices executed in particular ways. In Northern Norway such cultural moral practices of sharing their catch of fish between relatives and neighbours are still common. In some households they also make extra food for dinner, just in case someone drops by. Through such practices, and those where households currently throw away up to a third of the food they provide, one gets a glimpse into the often contrasting moral underpinnings of society - its values. The relationship between these levels of scale also leads to discussions on degrees of freedom, dominance and power. We will return to this debate when discussing the relationship between individual household autonomy and market infrastructures.

The definition of waste shows us how it is connected to value, as waste refers to the unnecessary loss of something of value, usually when not used effectively or cared for properly. What is not valued will be discarded or disregarded, defined as waste, sometimes needlessly. Later we will hear how high-quality coffee, bought in a special shop for coffee, was discarded and wasted. The household members had bought an even more exclusive coffee that they craved more, thus lowering the relative value of the former coffee, opening its way to the waste bin prematurely. Bread is often wasted due to high expectations of freshness, its perceived value subsequently plummeting. This highlights how food decays with varying pace, gradually moving towards the inedible category, to be classified as waste and discarded. Its potential use value as human nutrition is intrinsically connected to its edibility. Wine, cured hams and certain cheeses will, to a certain extent, increase in value with time, before also falling victim to entropy, but in the domain of edibles, these are rare exceptions. Food is, on the whole, a highly transient matter (Thompson 1979), so transformations the opposite way, from waste to value, are not so common. Food nearing its expiry date from supermarkets are increasingly re-distributed to those in need through local initiatives or dumpster diving is not such a curiosity anymore. Someone's waste can also be considered a very valuable

[22] Seeing these two levels as separate is not useful according to Graeber (2001). We will return to the issue later in this chapter.

matter, something the size of the contemporary recycling- and waste-industry illustrates.

Anthropological Approaches to Value: Gifts, Exchange and Value Systems

Two approaches to studying value have been prevalent in anthropology. One centres on value created and recreated through processes of exchange - of people, gifts, commodities, words and actions, for example in contexts of social relations and questions regarding equality and inequality – communism and hierarchy. The other approach has focused on values in societies, the comparison and the level of compatibility of these; on values as cultural, moral world-views that guide human actions. Let us briefly recapitulate the two approaches.

Analysing various forms of gifting or exchange has proved to be a fruitful angle to conceptualize value in anthropology, certainly in comparison with the modern western forms of exchange (Otto & Willerslev 2013). One of the most influential works here is Marcel Mauss' classic "The Gift" (1995 [1924]). Mauss here argues for treating gifts as total social phenomena that can have many, and often seemingly contradictory, dimensions at the same time, e.g. selfish and altruistic, individual and shared, social and material. With the gift as his prism, he examines the institutions and relations linked to gifts in archaic societies, in an attempt to provide an explanatory picture of the larger cultural framework and context the gift is exchanged in and contributes to manifesting.[23] Mauss' work has been developed further and provided inspiration for many anthropologists[24].

The other approach is an ambitious one. It aims to identify and explain the interaction of shared values that guide human action, and then compare these across cultures. Louis Dumont's work (1977, 1986) has been influential here, attempting to draw up a theoretical framework of values and systems of value based on comparative studies.[25] He sees values[26] as linked to each other and as ranked in hierarchies (Otto and Willerslew 2013:12). Societies are seen to have key values that are viewed as encompassing (Graeber 2001:16-17), and a holistic approach is necessary to identify

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[23] We will return to discuss Mauss at length throughout the thesis, mainly in the Chapter 12: Waste, Value and Values – The Memory of the Gift and Social Relations

[24] Notably: Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963), Marshall Sahlins (1972), Annette Weiner (1976, 1992), Marilyn Strathern (1988), Chris Gregory (1982, 1997) and now also David Graeber (2001, 2009, 2013, 2014).

[25] See also Munn (1977, 1983 and 1986) Turner (1979, 1980) for other contributions to this approach.

[26] Dumont uses the term "ideas-and-values". See Dumont (1986:233, 244) for his argument.

these through comparison. The approach has communalities with the substantivist approach put forward by Polanyi (2001 [1944]) both in terms of emphasising the holistic perspective and the degrees of dominance attributed to certain values. For Polanyi, value is underpinned by values, giving economy a moral basis.[27]

Fairly recently there have been attempts within anthropology to create a theory of value through a synthesis of the two abovementioned approaches.[28] The idea is to perceive local acts of exchange as value-creating, and as manifestations of the shared values, operating in a dynamic constituting interchange. Here, shared cultural values are created and re-created through processes of exchange; practices that create value. One such attempted resurrection started off with David Graeber's "Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value" (2001). He has since elaborated and further developed his ideas (Graeber 2006, 2013, 2014). Before a presentation of Graeber's approach, we should consider briefly possible pitfalls of such an overreaching theoretical comparative apparatus in anthropology, a question that pits us straight into core questions in social scientific theory.

Willerslev (Otto & Willerslev 2013) questions the need of developing an anthropological theory of value in itself. He argues that attempts to create a general theory of value are counter-intuitive to the anthropological project. His view is that anthropology needs to be situated on the margins to be able to form and uphold some kind of corrective, a critical view on the dominant perspectives and values, and that such a perspective is driven by the diversity of its ethnography rather than attempting to construct all-encompassing theories. Some postulate that one has to be outside of the value system to recognize it (See e.g. De Angelis 2007:28). From a scientific theoretical angle it seems plausible that a general theory can be counter-intuitive, although it counters a key aim in anthropology as a discipline; identifying fundamental communalities about human nature across cultural diversities. Willerslev (ibid:4-5) warns that such a theory of value can become a statement of the obvious, that there exists a multiplicity of values in the world upon which actions are based, and that the paramount values of anthropology reside in a diversity of perspectives, with the ghost of cultural-relativism looming.

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[27] For a further elaboration of the relation between key-values and their encompassment of other values, see Robbins (2013) for a comparative discussion on the degrees of monism and pluralism in terms of values in societies.

[28] Recently, works using value-theory perspectives have emerged, like Alexander and Reno´s (2012), which examines global recycle flows, following the matter, uncovering complex moral and economical dimensions.

As defining value is also inherently about comparison, the approach taps right into the core of the anthropological project - the comparative. Value theory can be one avenue towards developing such tools of comparison. Willerslev's disciplinary foci points of diversity and the counter-perspectives of anthropology could still be maintained using value in action – acts, as the ethnographical vantage point towards the search for paramount values across cultures, without becoming bland and irrelevant towards local variation. It is a fine balance.

Action, Value and Values

David Graeber takes it upon himself to revive the concept of value (Graeber 2001, 2009, 2013, 2014) and to place the discussion of value into a context of anthropological theory. In essence Graeber is developing a theory of practice, based on a combined perspective from the theories of exchange of Mauss (1995 [1924]) and a theory of creative action that goes beyond Marx' labour theory of value (Marx 1970 [1859], 1988 [1932] & 1990 [1867]), one which focused on the worker and commodity production. In developing a perspective where the focus is on the production of value in action he also draws substantial inspiration from the works of Nancy Munn and Terence Turner. Graeber's approach is also part of a larger and highly political project which aims to develop a more socially conscious alternative to neo-liberalism[29]. He sees a theory of value - what human beings find valuable, as a useful starting point.

What people value, and consequently how they act, is part of a larger system of value – what we as humans perceive to be important in life, e.g. serving Gods, obtaining wealth, having a large family. Such large systems of value are typically rooted in a combination of ideas, drawn from religion, culture and history in that specific society. Such key-values can for instance be honesty, wealth or solidarity. The element of value thus turns on which criteria are considered meaningful, or important, in any given context compared to alternatives (Graeber 2001:223). This highlights the clear political dimension of value, as what is seen as valuable in the world reflects the dominant world-view. The ultimate stakes of politics is not the struggle to appropriate value, but the struggle to establish what value *is* (Terence Turner in Graeber 2001:88). Comparative studies of value thus have the opportunity to contribute to the important anthropological tradition of cultural critique (Marcus and Fischer 1986), as previously, from Mauss, Marx and Sahlins, to Dumont and Graeber (Otto & Willerslev 2013). Take

[29] See e.g. Graeber 2004, 2006, 2009 and 2011.

the value of an object; it can be defined by a combination of factors. E.g. the specific accumulated history of a foodstuff is an amalgam of the production, exchange and consumption phases, and this value is established in an interchange with a larger context of shared societal values (Bloch & Parry 1989)[30].

Nancy Munn's ethnography is from the island of Gawa off the Southeastern coast of New Guinea (Graeber 2001:44-47). She sees value as emerging in action, as situated in the individual capacities for action, more specifically in potencies of many kinds, for creating alliances, obligations, histories etc. These value-creating processes emerge through some form of exchange, where something material[31] can be the medium, e.g. our sack of potatoes from the introduction. A key point for Graeber (ibid.) too is that it is not in the forms themselves that the source of value resides, but in the acts. The value of something is manifested through our actions. E.g., the sack of potatoes holds several potentials of value, but they can only be released through acts. It is a material medium through which individual capacities and potentials for action are manifested – acted out: acts of exchange, re-distribution, consumption, disposal or destruction (in principle, transformation), all held up and evaluated against a larger societal context of values.

Graeber's approach is an attempt to figure out several sticking points in social theory, most importantly the relationship between structure and practice, between the collective and the individual. His suggestion for one possible way out,

> *"Starting from what I call the "Heracleitian tradition," one that sees what seem to us to be fixed objects as patterns of motion, and what seem to be fixed 'social structures' as patternings of action."* (2001:xii)

This dialectical perspective is rooted in a Hegelian tradition where any action becomes meaningful when integrated within a larger system of actions – the relation between value and values.[32] The view is that humanity, that individuals create themselves through interacting with the world, with elements that are in constant motion, and thus it would be better to refer only to tendencies, to patterns, stemming from this

[30] Bloch & Parry's argument here is fairly similar to the concept of an 'imagined totality' (Graeber 2001, 2013) which we will present shortly.
[31] Here we could add sounds, as in communication through language (Godbout and Caillé 1998:8).
[32] This perspective has similarities to Barth's processual and generative approach to culture. See e.g. Barth (1987): "*Cosmologies in the Making* – A Generative Approach to cultural variation in Inner New Guinea.", Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

dialectic.[33] A crucial point here is that structures are not something which exists prior to action, and ultimately that shared values, the imagined totality one consults when deciding what to do, are identical with the process of their own construction. Individual value creating acts, for example the shared value of generosity is created and manifested through individual acts of generosity, such as the local redistribution of excess fish. We will see such examples later as Ingrid or other local household members redistribute fish, berries, meat etc. to relatives and friends.

Value and the larger sphere of shared values, the cosmology, is continuously maintained, confirmed and manifested (Remme 2012:12). Through individual day-to-day practices values are created and recreated (Graeber 2001:70), and the feedback between these practices and the shared larger system of values, of society, are ongoing and of a dynamic kind. Through interacting with a world that is in constant motion, patterns of action are created. Both the past experiences and future potentials guide practices. If food is seen as edible or waste, its value is manifested through practice, through conserving, consuming, redistributing or acts of salvage or disposal. The sphere of the individual household unit and the sphere consisting of the shared values of the larger social group (Bloch & Parry 1989) are mutually constitutive of each other.

The Material and Social

Maintaining a perspective on food practices as manifestations of value, as value-creating actions central to the larger process of the creating of people, the benefit of following the matter in a holistic perspective becomes clearer. Nevertheless, here one should remain wary of not falling into a historical materialist perspective, but rather treat the social and the material as interwoven and not split, in the vein of socio-materialist perspectives (E.g., Ingold 2000, Latour 1993) indebted to Spinoza (1955). For Graeber (2001:54) there is no split between Marxian material infrastructures and ideological superstructures, but rather there is a focus on action where both these entities meet (Graeber 2013:223). The production of food and shelter demands thinking. Art and literature are also material processes involving pens, paper, wood, paint, rocks etc., not just paintings, sculptures or texts as symbols and abstractions detached from time and space. In this perspective, the focus is on the writing and

[33] In relation to the preceding five points, this dialectic perspective is fundamental to the relationship between individual value creating acts (Point 1) and the relation to the audience, the imagined totality (Point 2).

reading of this text. It is written, distributed, and read, using material resources *and* intellectual ones.

One example is how giving food creates alliances and obligations, and can extend one's power in space and time. If you receive something in return for the food at a later stage, it is not the value of the food itself you receive, but the value of the act of giving it in the first place (Graeber 2001:45). Fetishism (Marx 1990 [1867]) occurs when we assume that the value comes from the medium rather than from our actions. Within this valuable act of giving, expressed through the material medium of the food, the potentiality of food as human nutrition also resides. Its use value as human nutrition can be released through another act: that of consumption. The value of food is not intrinsic, as it is realised in consumption and not before, even if the stakes in the provisioning phase as a field of endeavour or game can invoke sentiments of object fetish. Imagined as it is beforehand, the actual value of food emerges in action (Graeber 2001). For instance, food holds transformative potential on several levels, material as much as social. Consider the most common use of foodstuffs, as materially it holds the potential of becoming nutrition for human beings; it can be transformed, its value realised through its consumption, rendering sensations, sustaining life, and also becoming a part of the human body, changing its physicality, its energy. Through acts of production, redistribution, consumption or wasting food, different forms of, for example, social value, are also realised, as suggested by Mauss (1995 [1924]). The social value comes into being through acts of exchange. It creates both people and social relations; people who are the ultimate value, according to Graeber (2001). The gift of the sack of potatoes can be interpreted as a component in such a process. This gift is part of the production of people, of the on-going processes of social and material transformation. It is part of the cyclical processes where households are established, children are born, raised, taught, socialised. Then they break out to forge their own families, and their parents grow older and die.

Through its potential as human nutrition, the potatoes also hold a latent socio-material value on both the individual and social level between the involved parties, strengthening their relationship. The potatoes can feed individuals; create people, who in this case are extensions of the giver due to their kinship relation. The potatoes also have a potential economic value that can be realised through an act of exchange, a socio-material one if redistributed further and so forth. And finally, what was left when the potatoes were rendered inedible was a potential for aesthetic value. The last salvaged potato provides another kind of value, realised through the act of planting and nurturing it into a potato-plant, kept on the windowsill, as decoration.

This shows how the gift theory of Mauss and an elaboration of Marx' theory of value provides a useful empirical entry point. Graeber (2001, 2013) draws on several of the critical political economic concepts of Marx, but most notably on a reworking and expansion of Marx' labour theory of value (Marx 1990 [1867]). He argues that value emerges a result of human creative action in a general, wider sense than the material, production-oriented Marxian perspective. Inspired by Mauss (1995 [1924]), exchanges are seen as value creating acts, creating and recreating social relations, while also operating as a prism into the core values of a society. The approach also functions as an empirical vantage point to transcend the socio-material dichotomy. Mauss is also an inspiration for Graeber in his attempt to create alternatives to capitalism, as he taps into Mauss' comparative ethnographical sources and political perspectives (Graeber 2001:xiii).

Potentials, Mediums, Acts

The complexity of these fundamental ontological questions, and in particular questioning the previously influential dichotomy of mind and body or social and material, has gained increasing attention in social sciences for a few decades. In this analysis I will be drawing on some contributions which transcend this dichotomy, especially in the analysis of waste and thresholds of disposal, notably the works of Bateson (1985 [1979], 2000 [1972]) and Georgescu-Roegen (1986 [1971]) on the principle of entropy.[34] Here I am not viewing materials as having metaphysical agency or creative power of their own (DeLanda 2006), but rather viewing materials as holding numerous potentials that change with time and context. I don't see the process of entropy, be it in foods movement towards inedibility and uniform matter, or the aging and death of man, to be akin to metaphysical agency, but rather a power which renders all objects and humans dynamic, as part of a constantly flowing motion. This also ties in with the Heracleitian tradition that Graeber advocates (Graeber 2001), briefly mentioned earlier, seeing what are seemingly fixed objects as patterns of motion, and social structures as patterns of action. Acts create these patterns, as well as the powers that guide these patterns. And one should take this into account when looking to understand how these patterns come into being, all while acknowledging that perhaps we cannot *fully* do so, in the vein of Bhaskar (e.g. 1979, 1986) and Vygotsky (1978), as

[34] Science and Technology studies (STS) and Actor Network Theory (ANT) are also inspiring attempts to open up this dichotomy by exploring the relationship between human and nature using new concepts and perspectives[34]. Decentring the human is an important premise in these approaches, both theoretically and methodologically.

we can define the world we observe based on their potentials and capacities (Graeber 2001:52-53), as far as we can comprehend.

The capacities and potentials of natural surroundings, of material objects, set the stage and partially dictate the alternatives courses available for human, social creative action – actions shaped by and taking place in interaction with these socio-material surroundings. Humans are made out of matter, initially created and raised through the actions of other humans. Then we maintain our own lives through our own actions when old enough to cope. This takes place in a constant dialectical relationship with the other dynamic matters of nature, including other humans and non-humans.

The Five Elements of Graeber's Value Theory

Graeber draws up the five elements constituting the basis of what he hopes might become the ethnographic theory of value (2013:223-235)[35]. This is done on the back of Marx and Engels' four moments in *The German Ideology* (1970:48-50 [1846]), where they suggested that the production of objects was simultaneously the production of people and social relations, and is additionally heavily inspired by Terrence Turner (Graeber 2001:58).

A: Producing People through Value-Creating Acts

Human beings recreate themselves and each other in the process of acting on the world. This is a broad expansion of the Marxian labour theory of value. It focuses on human labour as the defining quality of value:

> *"Rather than having to choose between the desirability of objects and the importance of human relations, one can now see both as refractions of the same thing. Commodities have to be produced (and yes, they also have to be moved around, exchanged and consumed), social relations have to be created and maintained; all of this requires an investment of human time and energy, intelligence, concern. If one sees value as a matter of the relative distribution of* that*, then one has a common denominator. One invests one's energy in those things one considers most important, or most meaningful." (Graeber 2001:45)*

[35] I will make use of these five elements occasionally in analysis. I rely more on Graeber's initial perspectives, but these more recent ideas are presented here as they represent a further development of his thinking.

“Value becomes the way people represent the importance of their own actions to themselves; normally as reflected in one or another socially recognized form. But it is not the forms themselves which are the source of value.” (ibid: 47)

For Graeber something’s the value of something is thus established through action. It is decided in a dialectic between an empirical and an imagined level where one’s own actions and a reflection around them and their potential meaning in a larger context of values meet; different alternative meaningful actions are weighted up against each other and a choice is made. Through this project of mutual creation, shared values are made and remade collectively through action (Graeber 2013:222). He sums up this idea as a materialism that sees society arising from creative action, but creative action as something that can never be separated from its concrete, material medium (ibid.54). The focus of this creative action is the creation of social relations and the creation of people (2001:54, 2013:223).

Considering this approach in the light of the works of Marx and Mauss, Graeber (2001:227) summarises the two positions complementary potential. To adopt a critical perspective on practices concerning food, to evaluate them, is usually to place them within a larger social totality where they, for Marxists, are seen to play an intrinsic role in the production and reproduction of certain forms of inequality, alienation or injustice. The Maussian would here rather point out the importance of the presence of communistic, generous practices within the contexts of societies entrenched in capitalism, small or large, in situations where people gather to perform common tasks according to their capacities or requirements, without the overarching need to balance the accounts (Graeber 2014:67-70).

The Marxian perspective forces us to acknowledge that even though such generosity exists, it is lodged within the dominant un-egalitarian structures of a deeply embedded capitalism. But on the contrary, it is precisely the presence of such communistic, largely unselfish acts, like gifts between close relatives, that makes it possible to see these larger structures as unjust (Graeber 2001:227). Critical insights from feminist social scientists have made it evident that actions of nurture, care, education are all crucial to producing social relations and people, not to mention enabling the production of objects through labour in a classical Marxian sense (Graeber 2006:71). Perhaps the Eastern-European beggars often spotted on Norwegian street-corners fill the role as the uncomfortable reminder of such an unjust state of current affairs, as many Norwegian municipalities take steps to have them removed from our

pavements. The opening story about the sack of potatoes is another such a reminder.

B: Marx' *Capital* as a Work of Symbolic Analysis

Terence Turner (Graeber 2001:67) states that value is the way in which an individual actor's actions take on meaning for the actor herself, by being incorporated into a larger social whole. The importance of our own acts becomes real to us through a socially recognisable form, a medium that can be both material and/or symbolic, or acts on the material world. One can use language, e.g. by engaging in dialogue or through words of compassion, or one can help an old neighbour shovelling snow, or picking berries for your old grandmother who is not capable anymore. Gifts of food are another medium. Some of these socially recognisable forms can be compared. They are commensurable, like money, while others are not, e.g. unique heirlooms or diplomas (Graeber 2013:225). In addition to being a tool with multiple advantages, Marx (1990 [1867]) pointed out that money is important because it turns into a symbol that embodies labour. Money goes beyond regular fetishism, as it becomes the very embodiment of value, the ultimate object of desire (Graeber 2001:66-67, 2013: 225-226), obtaining money becomes the aim of work.

In Capitalism, money thus becomes the object of desire that motivates the act. It becomes the representation *and* recognition of actions - both the motive *and* the objectified goal of human creative actions. When money becomes the embodiment of the value it represents, this further strengthens money's importance as a symbol. It becomes the measurement of the importance of certain forms of human actions. Subsequently, acts that are paid become more important than those who are not, those paid well become more important than those paid less. The individual worker will judge the importance and value of their work based on the wages they receive. This is integrated in a market system, of labour, wages, money and goods. What happens is akin to what takes place when price becomes a measurement of the value of food. For example how luxuries are desired because they are expensive, like expensive, gourmet coffee is perceived to have, rightly or wrongly, a superior taste, and hence, value, compared to other kinds of coffee.[36] This part might appear overly focused on money as a symbolic and material medium of value, but in a capitalist wage-economy, the role of money as an object of desire is a key mechanism that underpins the use of money and price as a yardstick of value, the same is true of food. This intermediary, this medium of

[36] We will discuss a case with this exact example in the Chapter 11.

value, thus becomes the desired object, and the pursuit of money is then mistaken as the goal of human creative action, instead of creating people, maintaining life and social relations.

C: Imaginary Totalities – Society as the Arena for the Realisation of Value

Value is primarily seen as social[37], and thus it is realised through actions with an audience, something which also implies comparison.

> *"Value, I'll suggest, can best be seen in this light as the way in which actions become meaningful to the actor by being incorporated in some larger, social totality—even if in many cases the totality in question exists primarily in the actor's imagination."* (Graeber 2001:xii)

The alternative actions that we find meaningful in a given situation are compared to each other in our imagination, through a public recognition on some level, real or imaginary (Graeber 2001:78, 2013:226). Graeber here draws on Terence Turner and suggests that this imaginary totality is what society is to the actor. This imagined totality, this audience, is made out of the opinions of everyone whose opinion matters to you, present or not:

> *"In fact, one might go so far as to say that while from an analytical perspective, "society" is a notoriously fluid, open-ended set of processes, from the perspective of the actors it is much more easily defined: "society" simply consists of that potential audience, of everyone whose opinion of you matters in some way, as opposed to those whose opinion of you that you would never think about at all."* (Graeber 2001:76)

The more complex the society or fuzzy its boundaries[38], the more such imaginary arenas there are for the realisation of value. These are often in competition with each other, creating dilemmas, claiming preference, and highlighting the hierarchical aspect in how these values relate to each other. This includes how they are ranked or related to each other (Dumont 1977, 1986). Dumont here presents the concept of core values, of which societies usually are said to have two or three. These values encompass the other values of a society, and rank at the top of a hierarchy of values.

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[37] See Graeber (2001:76, 260) for an elaboration on solitary versus social values.

[38] Graeber (2013:236-238) discusses the problematic notion of society, here in the shape of an imagined totality of value domains, both with regards to its boundaries, or rather lack of such in contemporary context, and also the meshwork which makes up the contrasting and overlapping values of this imagined totality.

In everyday life, such competing imaginary arenas emerge through dilemmas, such as between eating or disposing of the oldest, driest loaf of bread, the desire for the taste of fresh bread, your perceived right to enjoy life, a concern for your economic situation, and your environmental consciousness telling you not to take food for granted, because you were taught so when growing up, and of raising your children in the correct manner if they are present. Here we could critically reflect: which imagined totality are you considering and communicating with when you are extremely hungry? Is it instinctive, or is it an imagined totality, an audience, telling you that you have to eat or you will become so weak that you might die? Is the deep physiological feeling of hunger and this audience inseparable?

D: Cosmologies and Fields – Managing Contradictions and Multiplicity

The next step relates to how such dilemmas are managed. Graeber (2013:229-233) also argues for different levels of value, and the relationship between them can be of a complex nature. In debating this interchange between types of values, Graeber is grappling with similar questions as Dumont (1977, 1986). In addition, there are levels of scale. Bloch & Parry (1989) discuss the mutual dependency and constitution between short-term household spheres and more long-term, large-scale shared spheres. There is an ideological definition of values *(metavalues)* and a domestic and practical level made out of several values, dependent on which field of endeavour, which value one is concerned with obtaining (*infravalues)*. But how are individuals able to move back and forth between these different value fields with such apparent ease?[39] This would appear to be a case of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962), such as the gap between intention and practice, which I experienced when it came to food waste in the households. How are these concerns managed, or even balanced to an acceptable extent?

Such contradictory actions are best explained by viewing the different fields as games, according to Graeber (2013:229). These games are defined in time and space, by context, and actors go in and out of different fields of endeavour; fields which have different plots, rules and goals, as each of them can be seen as one individual system of value (ibid.).[40] In many of the households I followed, they perceived the value of food as quite relative to its price, regarding cheap food as having low value. This was typically

[39] Here we could add; how do these values and hierarchies evolve and change?
[40] Graeber here uses the famous Stanford Prison Experiments as an example of such a game. (Zimbardo, P., Haney, C., & Banks, C. (1973): *Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison.* International Journal of Criminology and Penology, 69-97).

done without considering the actual use value of the food in question (Marx 1990 [1867]), or even considering why they often focussed on buying cheap food on special offers when provisioning, even if these acts can appear contradictory. Getting a good deal was important on the one hand, but cheap food was also treated as less valuable. If we follow Graeber's approach, we are here dealing with different fields of endeavour with different stakes and rules.

Additionally, a person does not have to believe that these fields are real or that they represent the natural order of the cosmos. You don't have to believe that the real value of food is defined by its price, but you are drawn into this pursuit of a certain form of value as you learn to accept the terms of the field you attend. The field could be organised completely differently, but through a process of ideological naturalisation, people take the arrangement for granted (ibid. 230).[41] The key is that the purpose and goal of the endeavour is attained - what is considered valuable. Then the universe comes into being around this value. Graeber (ibid.) argues that this is what makes it easy for actors to switch back and forth between different fields of endeavour with contradictory goals without profound feelings of unease.

E: Metavalues and Infravalues

Lastly, the question is how these different value-fields relate to one another, from the economic, to the environmental, to the ethical or physiological. How can concerns on different scales, like family and society, or in different fields, like economy or religion, be managed? Graeber (2013:233) does not suggest ranking these values, rather he raises the question of what kind of values are needed to pursue *metavalues*. He labels these prerequisites *infravalues*. These are not ends in themselves, like the values of happiness or procreation, but prerequisites for, or means to be able to pursue, those forms of value that are socially realised in imagined or real arenas, as previously explained. *Infravalues* can e.g. be food security, physical safety, sociality, cooperation etc.

Often *infravalues* can be transformed into *metavalues* as a result of political ideology, e.g. be it a turn in a neo-liberalist direction or an environmentalist one. Graeber (ibid: 234) goes on to exemplify the political angles; market efficiency is not an end in itself, but a means into achieving something else is an *infravalue* which gets turned into a *metavalue* in a neo-liberalist ideology. A means is changed into a criterion,

[41] This ideological naturalisation effect has similarities to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (see e.g. 1977, 1990), although it differs, as it does not underline economic value as its vantage point.

as resources are then distributed according to degrees of market efficiency, leading to a re-definition of which values to pursue. This is the result of the politics of value, the struggle for what is seen as valuable in society, as value and values are actually diametrically swapped, often through a process of naturalisation.

Creating Values

According to this theoretical approach, individual actions create and maintain the shared values of society. However, how does this interchange between shared values on a larger societal scale, between the ideals of this imagined totality, this audience, and the individuals everyday actions said to be value-creating take place? How are the values of a society created and recreated through individual actions, both mundane and spectacular? The sack of potatoes from the introduction illustrates an act of gifting that can represent multiple kinds of value. The potatoes hold the potential of supporting the further existence of the individual household that receives it as nutrition. This gift also affirms the social relations between the households. As the potatoes are a personal gift between close relatives when the family expands, it also represents something that transgresses the individual and the individual household. Simultaneously, this act of gifting constitutes shared values such as generosity, solidarity, belonging, and local-cultural traditions. In this context, the unnecessary waste of this gift of food illustrates the current excess.

This act of gifting is an example of an individual value-creating act that bridges different scales and generations. The sack is not an heirloom in itself, but it still carries elements of a cultural inheritance. A shared history and relation to the geographical location - a Northern Norwegian way of life, of self-sustenance, are still present locally as important shared values. People create value not just based on imagined futures, but also based on imagined pasts. (Sutton 2004:376). The act represents the value of kinship and in maintaining humankind - elements which surpasses the individual household in both time and space. It also represents continuity on a local, historical, cultural level. While it is likely to be a sincere gift without any conscious expectations of a return, favours or considerations in the future are still likely. Together with similar acts, these represent and recreate patterns of action. They create common expectations for conduct, shared values. These can become part of the norms and expectations in this particular field of endeavour, and also a part of one's consciousness; one's imagined totality (Graeber 2013) when one considers different alternative actions in this field in

the future. We could say that these expectations and norms belong to one's larger sphere of shared values, in the vein of Bloch & Parry (1989).

The Crux – The Struggle between Fields of Value

The larger totality, the overarching cosmology consisting of the *metavalues* will only reveal itself through certain rituals and games, and this is where Graeber (2013) argues that society comes into being, as the shared ideals are exposed, through ritualised practices such as food management, or through significant gifts like the sack of potatoes. Here the primary concern is not that the gift is wasted in the end, even if it would be perceived as wrong and something you would not want the giver to know. The main goal in the field of endeavour of this gift-giving act appears to be creating and re-creating social relations between family members. This is manifested though the act of gifting, conducted through a material medium. This act relates both to the production of people and of social relations. With that in mind, the act can be considered to reveal a *metavalue* (Graeber ibid. 233-234). The value placed on family, kinship and local culture, and the reproduction of this and of humankind is manifested. Concerning the handling of leftovers, we will later see how a common ritual of storing them in the fridge for a few days before disposing of them can also serve as a manifestation of the local presence of the ideal of avoiding unnecessary food waste.

The case about the sack of potatoes is illustrative of the changed local ways of living, and the changed perspectives and valuations on food, in summary – changed *metavalues*. Through this case we experience how the past and the present collide, and the transformation society has experienced is pinpointed. A value struggle in contemporary society manifests itself; key reasons behind household food waste stand out. Throughout the thesis, I will use my empirical material to argue that what is *regarded* as the *metavalues,* what society ought to be like, in these Tromsø households has changed, and that this is reflected in the household practices we encounter throughout their resource management process.

I argue that food has gone from holding value through its multiple potentials, from being a necessity for human survival, a mean to sustain life, to being re-valued. It has been re-valued mainly into a mean to reach other ends, such as expressions of self-realisation, identity and competence, or to obtain gourmet sensations or healthy, good-looking bodies. In this process, the high levels of food waste in the households has become naturalised, if not fully acceptable in critical discourse, as indulgent, even excessive. Consumption has increasingly been championed as a criterion for making a

good life possible in contemporary Tromsø. The moral and political underpinnings of this Ph.D.-project are borne out of this development - the premise that the current dominant practices can endanger the planet and the future production of human beings.

Summary

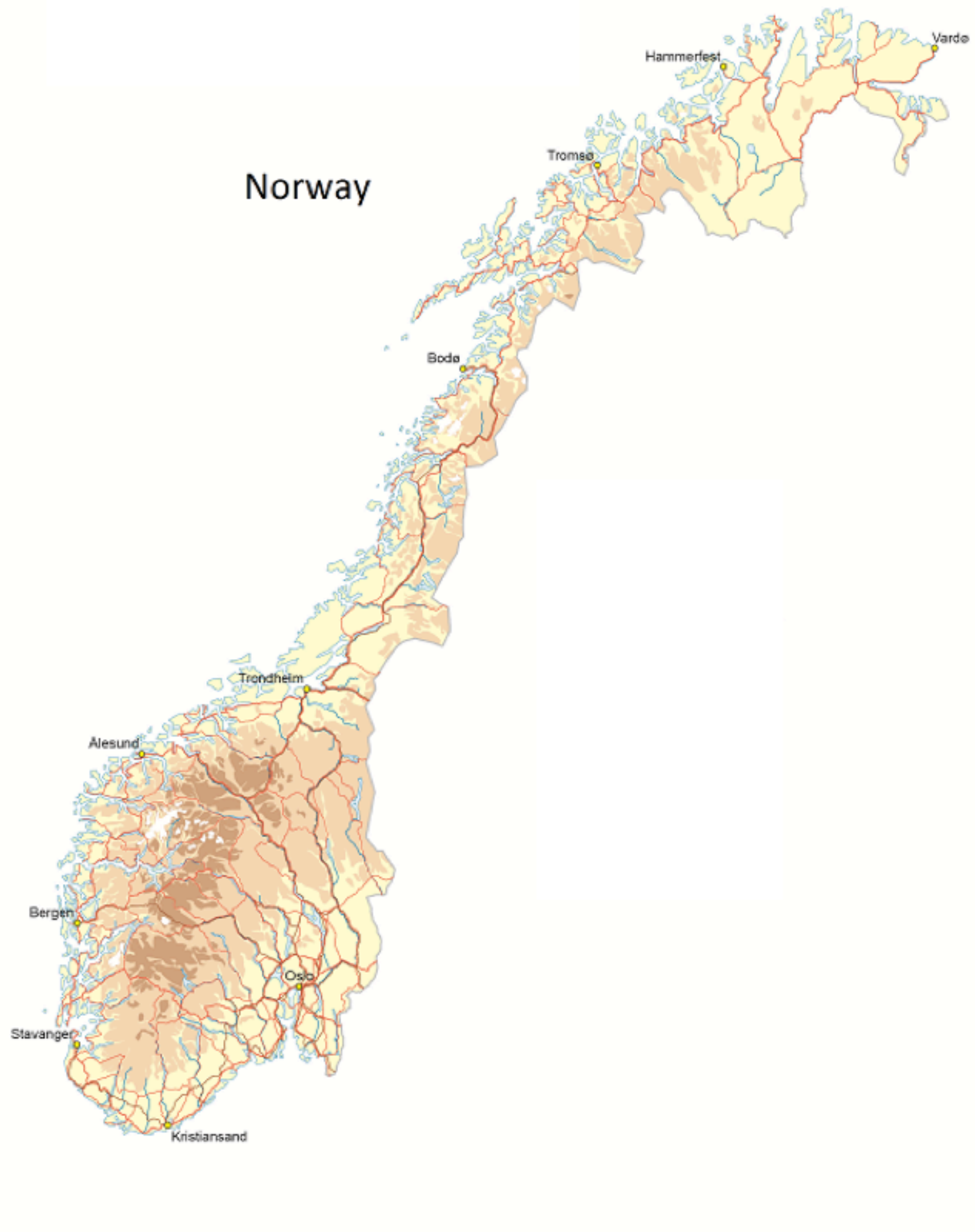
In this chapter I have focussed on presenting anthropological perspectives on value, as well as the theoretical and analytical approach I will apply. Starting in the anthropological past, avoiding falling too deep into the detailed epistemological underpinnings, I have also discussed a few nuances related to such an approach. Value is seen as established in the acts in this perspective, and some key-topics related to this approach have been addressed, while referring to empirical examples from the household food management process to follow later in the thesis. The dynamic interchanges between individual practices and the establishment of patterns of action that influence behaviour, typically called structures, will be analysed in some of these key-topics. These dynamics can for instance be the intersection and relations between social and material aspects of value, the power-relations between different fields of value and how these interact with and change the values of society dialectically. More in-depth, detailed theories are presented together with the analytical cases in the topical chapters.

Chapter 3 History, Change & Continuity - Resource Management in Tromsø and Beyond

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present ethnographic and thematic context that allows for a better understanding of the resource management practices in the Tromsø households I have studied. This backdrop allows for a more grounded understanding of the reasons for food ending up being wasted needlessly in these households. Many of the households in the city have migrated from more remote areas of Troms County, or from Nordland and Finnmark to the city of Tromsø. These uprootings mostly appear to be motivated by factors such as finding work or obtaining an education, and are linked to larger scale socio-economic developments in Northern Norway and beyond (Brox (1972 [1966]) and 1984). These migration patterns have been particularly strong since the 1960's and onwards. The differences in age in the households partaking in this study, many of whom have moved from the rural areas of Northern Norway and into Tromsø, confirm that this migration flow is still very much ongoing.

I will be discussing how the households have adapted to new surroundings and contemporary issues, and investigate the changes in food management practices in particular. The local household practices will be viewed in the light of the large-scale economic, social and cultural developments after World War 2. Here I will also commence the groundwork on an argument that these developments have contributed to making current households increasingly removed from the food cycle as a whole – food that they are dependent on for their continuing survival. I find that this development has contributed to increased food waste levels in the households.

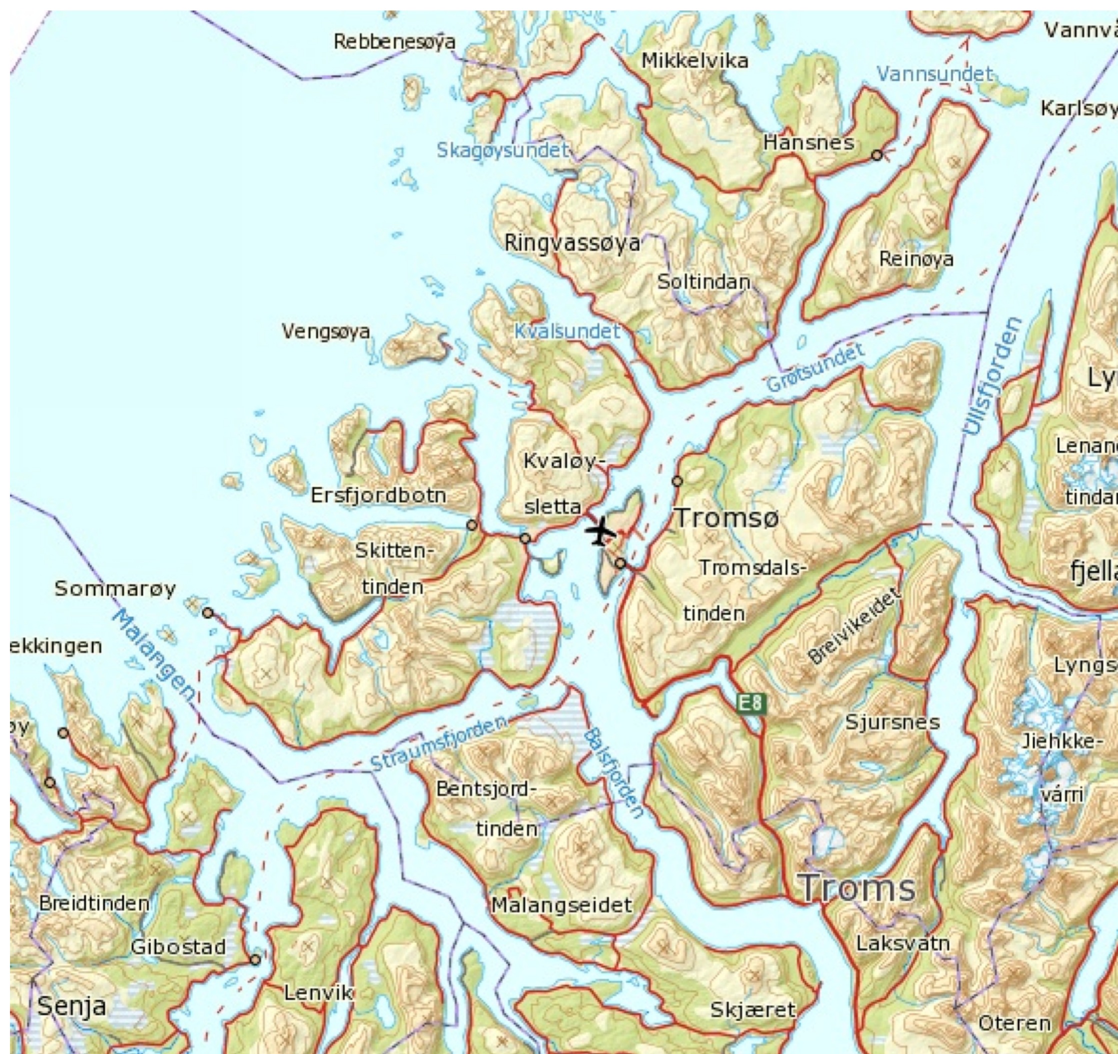


(Source: Kartverket. www.norgeskart.no)

Tromsø

The municipality of Tromsø is 2566 km2, but over 80% of the inhabitants in the municipality live within the city of Tromsø itself. The city centre of Tromsø is located on the eastern side of Tromsøya, but the city covers most of the island and spreads out past Tromsøya, on the mainland and along the eastern shores of Kvaløya. In addition to

Tromsøya, the municipality also includes Kvaløya and the southern parts of the islands Ringvassøya, Reinøya and Rebbenesøya, as well as large areas on the mainland. The neighbouring municipalities are, roughly and in a clockwise order, Karlsøy to the north, Lyngen to the east, Storfjord to the southeast, Balsfjord to the south and Lenvik to the Southwest. Municipality-borders are marked in the map below with transparent solid lines that are also dotted. (The red dotted lines on the map indicate ferry routes.)



Map of Tromsø municipality, Norway (Source: Kartverket. www.norgeskart.no)

Today, Tromsø is the largest city in Northern Norway. Throughout the last four decades, several factors have contributed to a continuous flow of people moving in from the surrounding areas. Centralization has been significant in the region, and Tromsø has grown rapidly the last decade, with an increase in population of about 15.6 % between 2004 and 2014, compared to 6.2 % for Troms County as a whole.

Tromsø is currently has 73 480[42] inhabitants. There are traces of settlements in the area going back 10 000 years, and Sami settlements have been present all over the area currently defined as Tromsø municipality. The region of Northern Troms was referred to as a border region between Norse and Sami populations during the late Iron Age[43]. The city's history can be traced back to 1200 A.D. but it remained relatively small up until the 19th century, as the trade monopoly held by Bergen was lifted and Tromsø was granted city status in 1794, with freedom to trade. Foreign trade with various catches from the Arctic region then increased, and the establishment of administrative functions further propelled Tromsø´s growth. In 1807 Tromsø had less than 100 inhabitants, while in 1830 this number had grown to about 1 200. In recent times, the city growth was at its most intensive during a period from the mid 1960's to the mid 1970's, which also brought along the building of bridges linking Tromsøya, where the centre of the city resides, with the mainland (1960) and Kvaløya (1974), in addition to the airport at Langnes (1964). A second period of growth was experienced from the 1990's onwards, a tendency which continues. The city has grown the last five years by 1.8% (2012), 1.7% (2013), 1.5% (2014) 1.1% (2015) and 1.4% in 2016.

The centre of the city is located on Tromsøya, a 21.7 km2 large island in the sound between Kvaløya and the mainland, now connected by both bridge and tunnel to the mainland, and by bridge to Kvaløya. Tromsøya is fairly flat, with the highest point at 159 meters above sea level, compared to the mountainous surroundings with several peaks rising more than 1000 meters above sea level. Generally, the rest of the surrounding settlements included in the city of Tromsø are spread out along the rather narrow coastlines found between these mountains and the sea. The main suburbs outside of Tromsøya are Kvaløysletta, Kaldfjord and Eidkjosen on Kvaløya, and Tromsdalen, Tomasjord and Kroken on the mainland.

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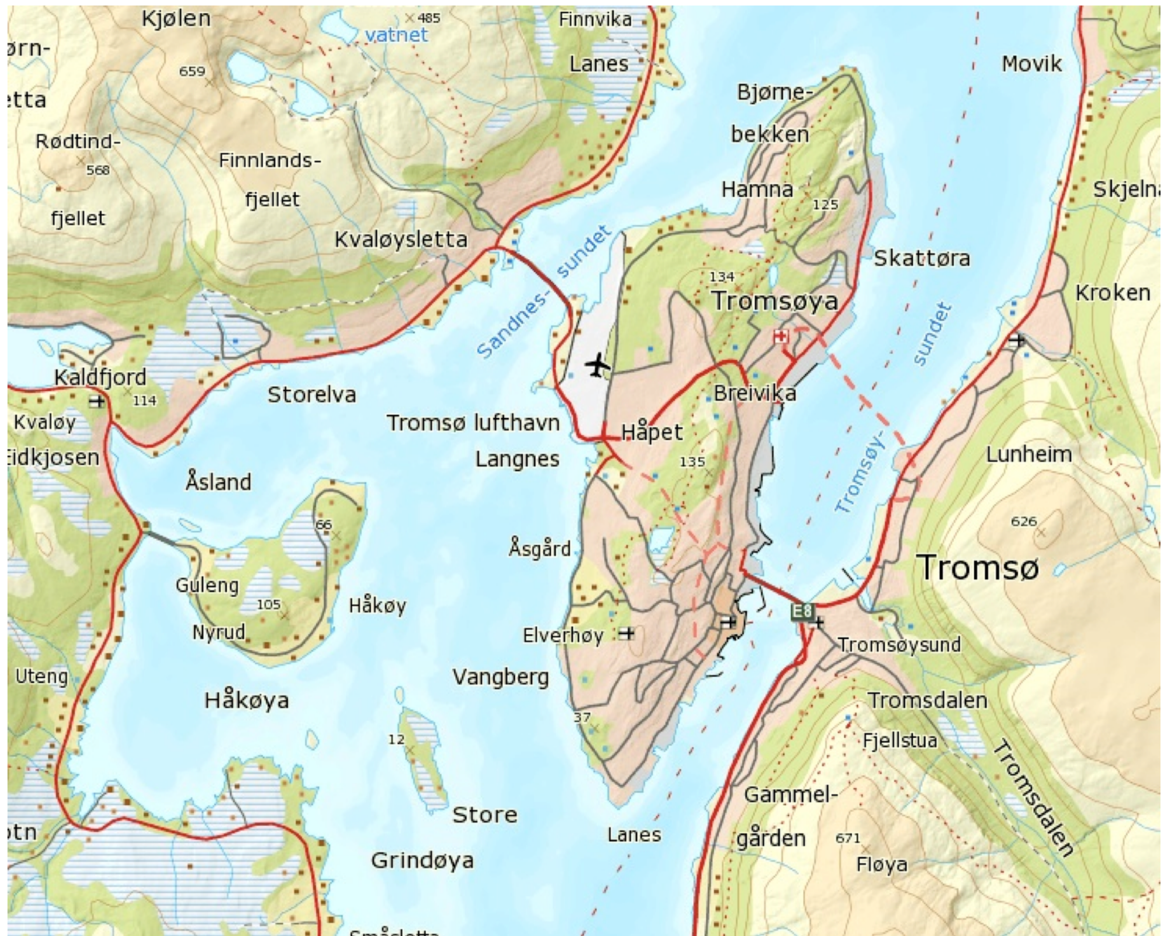
[42] The statistical material for this part is based on statistics from Statistics Norway (SSB): http://www.ssb.no/emner/02/02/folkendrhist/tabeller/tab/1902.html Accessed: 20th February 2017.

[43] NOU 2007: 14 Samisk naturbruk og rettssituasjon fra Hedmark til Troms. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2007-14/id584312/sec13 Accessed: 20. February 2017.



(The city of Tromsø. Source: Kartverket. www.norgeskart.no)

Climate and Weather

In terms of seasons of the year, meteorologists in Norway define these on the basis of daily average-temperatures. This means that the seasons can fluctuate according to calendar dates. By this definition, summer starts when the daily average temperature has been above 10 degrees Celsius for seven days, and similarly, winter starts when the daily average temperature has been below 0 degrees Celsius for seven days. Spring and autumn starts when the daily average rises above 0 degrees Celsius or falls below 10 degrees Celsius respectively.[44] Following this definition, based on normal temperatures based on data from the last 30-year period the Norwegian Meteorological Institute uses; the winter in Tromsø is generally about five months long and starts the 10th of

[44] https://metlex.met.no/wiki/Hovedside Accessed: 18th June 2014.

November and lasts until 11th of April. Spring then lasts until 23rd of June, while the summers are fairly short and last just until 25th of August when autumn usually begins.

Situated in the Arctic Circle, at 69 degrees latitude, Tromsø has an average temperature of 2.5 degrees Celsius based on the 30-year period from 1961-1990. In 2013 temperature varied between -13.0 degrees Celsius at its lowest and 28.3 at its highest, based upon daily average temperatures. The monthly averages range between 5 below (Jan-Feb) and 12 degrees above Celsius (Jul-Aug). According to the Köppen Climate Classification system, Tromsø lies in an arctic zone but the temperature averages, especially during winters, places the city more in a sub-arctic climate zone. The measured yearly normal precipitation in Tromsø is 1031 mm per year, with precipitation occurring on 220 days in 2012. This is fairly similar to the levels in other large coastal cities like Oslo, Stavanger and Bodø, but less than half of the measured yearly normal in Bergen which is 2250 mm.[45]

The climate in the coastal city of Tromsø differs to the inner regions of Troms County. Inland, you will in general experience warmer and dryer summers, but also colder and dryer winters with more stable temperatures and precipitation.[46] In terms of daylight, the city also has stark contrasts between the seasons of the year. For a two-month period from November until January, the sun does not rise above the horizon. Similarly the sun does not set during the summer months, from late May and for two months afterwards. The midnight sun is also a factor that raises the summer temperatures in the region.

Tromsø as a City in Northern Norway

An economic and commercial modernization has taken place in both Northern Norway and in Norway as a whole, and at an exponential rate, especially after World War 2. This development in Northern Norway has been fuelled by the effects, intended and unintended, of national policies and legislation, in addition to technological and infrastructural developments on a wider scale. This development has occurred gradually, more or less hand-in-hand with the changes in people's social preferences and aspirations. For the last 50 years, many publications have offered their versions of the developments in Northern Norway, and with the increasing regional developments across the borders in the North and governmental focus on economic development in

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[45] Statistics Norway: http://www.ssb.no/a/aarbok/tab/tab-024.html. Accessed: 12th June 2014.
[46] http://snl.no/Troms/klima Accessed: 12th June 2014.

the Barents region this looks set to continue[47]. There is a large collection of literature which has put the region, its developments, modernisation and where it is headed, under the looking glass, notable examples would include Brox 1972 [1966] & 1984, Eriksen (1996), Thomassen and Lorås (1997) and Jentoft, Nergård and Røvik (2011).

The still ongoing development of oil and gas based industries, in addition to a newly acquired focus on mineral-based resources, increased in intensity after the millennium. With current developments in this resource-rich region, with the participation of international parties, the topic is still likely to attract interests in years to come. The future of Northern Norway is discussed around many kitchen tables in the local households, and on municipal, county and national political arenas, as well as regional ones such as the Arctic Council, and of course international ones like the European Union. In addition to resource development and management, there are factors like the focus on global and local climate challenges, as well as a strong focus on indigenous peoples rights with regards to ownership and influence over the management of these resources. To summarize, there are many dimensions to consider and numerous stakeholders are self-identifying, while access to the vast resources of Northern Norway and the future of the region is debated.

Coupled with the gradual decrease in economically viable small-scale fishing opportunities in Northern Norway, a key element in household subsistence and way of life in the region, the socio-economic developments in the period after World War 2 have contributed to a migration into larger towns and cities in the region, like Alta, Bodø and Tromsø.[48] This centralisation process was aided significantly by national policies, leaving many of the smaller and previously lively towns and villages in the post-war 1950s and 1960s with decreasing population numbers and an increasing average age.[49] With the establishment of key institutions in Tromsø, such as the university (1968) and the regional university hospital (1991), the migration of skilled labour and youth to the city of Tromsø has further increased, with people from other parts of Norway and beyond also migrating to the city. These key-institutions still attract a highly educated workforce in addition to students, who now make up an estimated 10 000. This workforce contrasts the previous regional ties to more traditional industries of fishing

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[47] The Barents-region consists of the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the parts of Northern-Russia west of the Ural Mountains, including Novaja Zemlja.

[48] See e.g. Torbjørn Trondsen, Peter Ørebech (2012):Rettsøkonomi for fornybare ressurser - Teori og empiri, med særlig vekt på forvaltning av fiskeressurser. Universitetsforlaget:Oslo

[49] See e.g. Aarsæther, Nils (2010): Eit omdanna Nord-Norge. Sosiologisk Årbok 2010, 3-4. Novus Forlag:Oslo

and the related refinement of marine resources, which has a long history in the city and in coastal Norway overall. Nowadays, 86.4 % of the workforce in Tromsø is employed in services, in part due to the city's status as a regional centre for trade, education and administration. The biggest industrial employers are those related to the refining of marine resources, and the local brewery, which in 2013 moved its production line to the neighbouring municipality, Balsfjord. Tromsø harbour is still an important port for the delivery of fish in Troms County. The local shipyard is still operational and an important industrial employer, and the two local newspapers Nordlys and iTromsø are also important employers in the city.[50] It is common for workers living in neighbouring municipalities to commute to Tromsø for work. In 2016, 12.7 % (9509 people) of the population in Tromsø municipality are immigrants and Norwegian born citizens with immigrant parents.[51]

There is a significant population of Sami living in the city[52], as well as Kven people[53]. The amount of literature on Sami population in Tromsø, or even in general, is strikingly sparse. The recent "City Sami" (Nyseth & Pedersen 2015) is a welcome addition, discussing Sami populations in Scandinavian cities. This lack, also apparent in the majority of social science literature about Northern Norway predating the 1980s, is perhaps another result of the harsh assimilation policies of the Norwegian State against the Sami during most of the 20th century. During my stay a very heated political debate about whether Tromsø municipality should be included in the official Sami language area took place. It showed how the wounds from these processes are still very much present and felt today.

The share of the population in Tromsø educated above upper secondary school has increased from 29% to 35% in the period from 2001 to 2010; a development on par with national averages. In terms of income distribution Tromsø has the most equal distribution amongst the ten largest cities in Norway, this in a country which itself has a relatively equal income distribution compared to most countries. The share of poor in

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[50] http://snl.no/Troms%C3%B8%2Fn%C3%A6ringsliv. Thorsnæs, Geir. (2009, 15th February). Accessed: 9th May 2014

[51] https://www.ssb.no/kommunefakta/tromso Accessed: 22. February 2017.

[52] According to Sami Statistics, the amount of Sami globally, nationally and per municipality is not known due to different factors – See: http://www.sami-statistics.info/default.asp?id=58 Accessed: 11th May 2014. Estimates can be made using the electorate roll from the Sami Parliament Elections, with eligible voters in Tromsø municipality registered at 1186 for the 2013 election. Source: Valgmanntall kommunefordeling 2015 Accessed: 22. February 2017.

[53] The number of Kven people in total, and in Tromsø, is hard to define, as there is no common definition as to what constitutes a Kven today. Estimates range from 10-15 000 people up towards 50-60 000. http://snl.no/kvener Accessed: 6. July 2014.

Tromsø, measured as those earning lower than 50% (OECD-limit) or lower than 60% (EU-limit) of median registered income, was at 4% and 8.7%. National averages were at 4.5% and 9.5% respectively. Keep in mind that Norway is a wealthy country, enjoying a high standard of living. According to statistics from the World Bank[54], Norway has a GDP per capita of 99.636 USD, which ranks as second highest in the world, behind Luxemburg.

Another factor influencing the socio-economic situation in Tromsø is the significant rise in housing prices in the city, a consequence of the high migration to the city and the insufficient development of new housing in the municipality to meet this demand. This is reflected in the price increase, from an average of 7000 NOK square meter in 1990, to 27 000 NOK per square meter in 2011.[55] In 2013, Tromsø led the national statistics with the highest increase in housing prices with about 6%.[56] This has led to a housing shortage in the city, certainly for those who are poor. A common consequence is that both students who have been accepted to local educational institutions and people who have found work in the area are left with little choice than to look elsewhere. They cannot find affordable housing, or even housing at all.

Us and Them – Social Stratification in the North

Traditionally perceived as a backwards region with fishing, farming and mining being the main economic activities, the region of Northern Norway and its inhabitants has been on the butt end of many a joke in Norway. Inhabitants of the region have been throughout history, and even still, branded as lazy, stupid, unhygienic, backwards. They are also the victims of exotifications, as rugged, stubborn, crafty, sexually frivolous, straight-talking, colourful and good storytellers. These are stereotypes the locals sometimes live up to, use or reinvent with playfulness and ingenuity (See e.g. Edvartsen 1997), deliberately confusing outsiders who are not familiar with this local code, reclaiming the stereotype in their own way.

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[54] http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_2012+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=desc Accessed: 18th June 2014.

[55] The statistics on the socio-economic situation in Tromsø in this part is from: Tromsø Kommune: Levekår I Tromsø. Hvordan står det til, egentlig? Accessed: 16th June 2014. http://www.tromso.kommune.no/levekaarsanalysen-behandlet.5035510-110070.html

[56] http://eiendomnorge.no/boligprisstatistikken/ Accessed: 16th July 2014.

A familiar Northern Norwegian stereotype with negative connotations is "søring", directly translated as "southerner." From my observations, this is not simply a term based on geography as in referring to people from Southern Norway, but it mostly refers to people from Southeastern parts of Norway, and particularly the areas in and around Oslo. After obtaining friendly relations with locals in Tromsø, it was interesting discussing if I was "søring" or not. With myself originating from Western Norway, I was sometimes told I was a "søring", other times not. If I asked directly if I was one, the locals would tell me that "No, no! A "søring" is from Eastern Norway". At least that is what they did when I was present. Perhaps to express an inclusive nature, I was then typically told that it was not just geography that decided if you were a "søring", it was just as much about mentality. Feeling a bit reluctant to include myself in this stigmatized group, in the end I said to myself: "Of course you are "a søring". Don't fool yourself."

Even if there was little doubt in my case, the term appears to be somewhat contextually dependent. Geographical origin and your behaviour appear to decide who is included in the term or not. Dialects can also be a defining factor and enter the equation. Stereotypically southerners can be labelled as soft and spineless. The stereotypes about southern softness can be mirrored in what is expressed in a common northern expression: "Vi står han av". This directly translates as "we will see him off", and refers to an ability to deal with adversity, borne out of the history of poverty and tough weather conditions in Northern Norway. The saying is rooted in the experiences by anglers at sea when facing tough weather conditions, factors beyond your control, and how the northerners will prevail regardless of the harsher natural conditions in the region or other challenges they meet.

The term "søring" is also likely to have some resonance due to the historical discrimination and prejudice against Northern Norwegians in the Oslo-region, where ads for rooms or apartments to let would often be signed off with "No Northerners!" as people from Northern Norway had a reputation for being unreliable and uncivilized. The term also has connections to the power-relations between the centre and periphery, as people in the region of Northern Norway re-produce stories about decisions being taken down south, with little concern for the people in the North. A narrative about how what is valuable in Norway is created in the north, through the riches of natural resources, is also common. Similar narratives can be heard regularly in Western Norway. This narrative also has a historical background and can been linked to the traditional industry of fishing, where the fish would be caught up north, and then transported to southern cities like Trondheim and Bergen to be sold on due to cities in the south holding trade monopolies. Bergen held the monopoly for the trade with valuable cod, and Tromsø

grew after being granted status as a "kjøpstad" (trading city) in 1794, attracting merchants and their families. Such a perspective claiming exploitation and colonization of the North also has resonance today, in particular when it comes to fish, oil, natural gas and minerals.

During our conversations, some informants, like Anders (male, 38), would claim that they had a closer relationship to nature and natural resources here in the Northern parts compared to elsewhere in Norway. The explanation was that they had to live more according to nature's terms, in tune with the seasons and the weather due to the harsher natural conditions. In addition, older informants like Ingrid (female, 61) would often be quick to claim that people of today lacked knowledge about food, about its longevity or its origin. They expressed that people today had become cut off from food and food-production and as Ingrid put it, "today, they don't even know where the food comes from". Since the industrialisation of selected parts of the region increased after with World War 2, an increased distance a split is widening, even if the distance to the past and past ways of living was also perceived to be shorter in the northern parts of the country, as indicated by the older household members I followed having grown up on quite self-sustained small-scale combined farms. In most other parts of Norway, this way of life would lie farther into the past.

Cultural stereotypes can also be actualized and expressed in terms of preferences for food. Simply speaking, the "søring" would be more picky and sophisticated, whereas the rugged and tough northerner would "eat everything, everywhere", to quote Kåre (male, 40). During a typical informal visit to Jon and Gry's flat, Gry (female, 50, and born in Troms County) shared some recent experiences from her workplace as we sat around their living room table, drinking coffee. Her story serves as a reflection of how Northerners like to portray themselves, presented through the image of the southerners and their preferences.

On and off, Gry has worked as a chef at a regional cultural institution. The staff and the people visiting for work travel from all over the country. She tells me that most of the people who came to work there were pleased with the food they were served during their stays. Still, she said she could not help noticing a small group of people in their 20's who had lots of demands regarding the food which was served to them there. They wanted other kinds of food; café latte, hotter and spicier food etc. One of the people in this group also approached her and explained how easy it was to make one foreign dish: "It is just to throw in a bit of this, a bit of that etc." Gry said she was talking so fast that she could not follow. They wanted spicier food, so Gry told me that the main

chef travelled all around the county to get hold of the ingredients in the different immigrant shops, to Bardufoss, Finnsnes, Senja and to Tromsø. In Oslo, the same ingredients could have been gathered in a couple of hours. This was proper round-trip in comparison, which also took much time considering the differences in distances. Gry commented: “You would think they thought they had arrived in a small Italian town where they had all these things. Perhaps they go out often and are used to all kinds?”

One of the visiting workers made a comment when they only had regular coffee there, and not Café Latte or Espresso. Gry satirically mimics the Eastern Norwegian dialect of the young woman and recounts: “I live just above a coffee-bar, so every morning I just walk down there and have an “ice-coffee” or ...” Gry couldn’t remember what more the young woman referred to, probably something she didn’t know, she said. Gry also mentioned that they had other preferences even if there were 12 different kinds of muesli and cereal. The chef also bought in special foodstuffs for a vegetarian, who almost thought she was being served meat. She told the ones working in the kitchen that it tasted almost like meat. But no, Gry then told her that they had bought these foodstuffs for her as well on the large roundtrip they did. Gry told me that perhaps the woman didn’t expect so sophisticated things here up north, so her expectations might have been more limited due to the surroundings, as she experienced a positive surprise. Gry also told me that they got hold of two or three small coffee machines, which were then placed in the canteen, and also in the dormitories where the visiting workers slept. The coffee-machines had to be fetched from “the civilization”, and not just the canteen.

Gry tells me that she found their expectations strange: “You would think they had all grown up with common Norwegian diet. We have the same supermarket chains.” Gry is both older and from a different part of Norway, and through this statement she projects what she is used to onto the visiting workers, just as they projected the expectations form their regular surroundings onto the countryside they visited. The level of cultural complexity and options in terms of food are clearly different in the city of Oslo compared to the countryside of Troms. The young workers in their 20’s have probably been used to eating what Gry might see as exotic and international dishes for their whole lives. The big-city dwellers are used to other cultural influences locally, and also looking elsewhere for inspiration, and are in that sense closer to the European continent and an international orientation.

Another time she was working there with another batch of visiting workers, Gry tells me how there were some English people there who asked if they didn’t have brown

or grey tea, and not just black tea: "Even if there was a large chest there with many different kinds of tea. So we made sure we got hold of that for breakfast. We had to have it." The expectations towards the ranges of food available between locals and visitors differed. Gry continues:

> *"They also wanted «Oslo-Salad» - I made my own dressing from oil, wine-vinegar and onions. Yes, they called it «Oslo-Salad» and said: "Gry, can't you make that «Oslo-Salad» for us?" We had to make many kinds of dressings. Is it aioli it is called? And guacamole and those kind of things."*

As the conversation draws to a close, Gry emphasizes that it was only a small group that came forward with such demands, but that the others were mostly happy with the food. She then tells me about the previous chef who worked there:

> *"The other cook who worked there, he quit. He was a damn good cook, an older man, but he couldn't stand it anymore. He got complaints that he made too heavy food, so heavy that people got sleepy. He used to make proper and traditional Northern-Norwegian countryside food in a large pot. Nowadays, they do all kinds of things for those who arrive there."*

In a sense, the city dwellers arrive in the Northern countryside with other expectations and experiences, and they are used to a different kind of proximity and availability in terms of food and ingredients. Expecting the same to be available in the remote countryside of Troms County might be a bit out of touch, even if large parts of the Norwegian population do not have first-hand experience of life in Northern Norway. At least the young workers in Gry's story didn't see Northern Norway as the backwards place reminiscent of older stereotypes.

Societal Change in Northern Norway

While the members of the oldest households I followed, like Erika and Roger, and Ingrid and Fredrik, have all grown up in nearby areas like Vesterålen, Reisa and Lyngen, they are now well accustomed to life in the city. Having lived in the city for approximately three to four decades the environment and daily life of the farmer and angler they grew up with are now only chapters in a story about the past. This is a past some of my informants tend to romanticize about when we chat about historical practices of resource management, not only those who have experienced it first-hand, but also those having listened with eagerness to the stories of their elder relatives when growing up. With this in mind, it is important to note that some of the traditional practices of

food management are still maintained, whereas others have been left behind. We will discuss this later in the chapter.

Due to these recent migration flows in the last parts of the 20th century, many of the city households still have kinship links to small farms in the surrounding areas like Lyngen, Balsfjord, Malangen or Nordreisa, but also further away in Nordland, Finnmark or across the borders to the northern parts of Finland and Sweden. Today, many of these previous farms are not used for farming, except as cottages or summerhouses often shared between family members with relatives hailing from the same farm. In some cases there are relatives who still partially work on these farms or live there. Due to this remaining link, household members in Tromsø often have parents or siblings who either were or still are, directly involved in food production of some kind, most commonly fishing.

Now in their late 50's early 60's, Erika and Roger, and Ingrid and Fredrik are part of a large generational group that left the old Northern Norway behind, a process which was peaking during the 1960's and 70's, and which has continued since. Through their migration to the city, they left the customary ways of a larger self-sustainability and with it the distance to the sources of food and its production increased. This generation can, in a sense, be seen as pioneers, having gone through a liminal experience between countryside and city, between different modes of resource management. I will present examples of their gradual adaptation of new practices as they familiarize themselves with the wider range of opportunities in the new, increasingly culturally complex urban surroundings.

Nevertheless, the connection between the city dwellers and the local countryside areas is still maintained today, partially through a well-known informal economy with food as the main vehicle. With regularity, food is gifted between relatives and friends, chiefly from those living on the countryside and to the city dwellers. Such practices also maintain the cultural and historical links to traditional practices of householding. It is also a local practice, illustrating something forgotten or hidden behind the daily household routines of food provisioning, namely the dependency of city areas on rural ones, whether close by or afar in foreign lands. On the surface, this can appear quite a banal point, but an important reminder. Food is generally grown, caught, raised or harvested in the countrysides of the world, not in the cities.

Looking at the statistical material concerning food production, 1.8 % (2008) and 1.3% (2012) of the workforce in Tromsø have "Farming, Forestry and Fishing"[57] as their main employment, compared to 9.5 % (2008) and 7.7% (2012) in the rest of Troms County, excluding the major cities of Tromsø and Harstad. For Norway overall, the share is 2.1% (2008) and 1.6% (2012). So even if Tromsø is still a major port for delivery of fish and other marine food-resources, there are very few of the inhabitants of Tromsø working in farming and fishing. The food-related industry in the city is mostly confined to the refining of raw materials originating from the surrounding areas.

It is worth noting that even today the informal economy appears to be extensive.[58] The statistics above obviously do not include these exchanges, and the size of the informal economy in the region is one of the points succinctly made by Ottar Brox (1972 [1966], 1984) in his analysis of and response to the governmental development plans for Northern Norway from 1951 and onwards. Statistics from 1939 provided by "Studieselskapet for Nord Norsk Næringsliv" (The Association for Northern Norwegian Commerce) in 1948 (ibid:9) claimed that Northern Norway only provided 6.2 % of the nations' GDP while consisting of 12 % of the nations' inhabitants. In addition to what was seen as a low productivity rate per capita, the seeming lack of employment was also a major worry. Governmental plans to counter this problem gradually took shape, with an aim of shifting the regional focus away from farming, fishing and other current mainstay activities, towards industry, shipping, and trade, to bring higher profitability. Here Brox (ibid.) also argued that the workforce in the region was very flexible with strong seasonal variations, often combining a multitude of activities like farming, fishing and husbandry with different kinds of seasonal wage-labour, like construction or food refining (See also Nilsen 1990). The statistical material that provided the basis for this economic restructuring plan struggled to account for such diverse and fragmented forms of activity, not to mention informal work.

Historically, the farmers, anglers, harvesters and herders would travel to nearby small towns, selling their produce in the market squares. In most Norwegian cities this common practice then decreased at the end of the 20th century and almost disappeared, however, it did not completely vanish. The town-square markets still take place on a small-scale in Tromsø. Such markets have indeed become increasingly popular, as local farmers, reindeer-herders, fishermen and others come into the city,

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[57] This category also includes forestry, but it was the closest category available in Statistics Norway which included the growing, raising, harvesting etc. of foodstuffs and raw materials which later are move along into the food industry of refining.
[58] A point also discussed in Chapter 13.

selling their latest local produce, refined or not; vegetables and berries, fish, shrimps, jam, honey, etc. Ready-made meals are also on sale, for instance a variety of Asian dishes. Not all items on offer are of the edible kind, as you get arts and crafts such as jewellery, souvenirs and sweaters, from all over the world, and also reindeer hides and local Sami-souvenirs and craft. Just as food flows between relatives, these small-scale flows of food to the city square also represent a cultural continuity that confirms the tie between the city households and the surroundings countryside areas, and also between the current and more traditional ways of living. Balsfjorden, Lakselvdalen, Lakselvbukt, Vannøya and Arnøya are just a few of many places in the surrounding countryside areas, most of them less than an hour away by car, which supply food to city households with their generous relatives or friends as couriers, or by selling produce at the town square.

In an historical context, fish and other local resources were shipped out from Northern Norwegian ports like Tromsø, Svolvær and Narvik and sent southwards, most commonly to Trondheim and Bergen for sale. Some traders also sailed north and conducted their business locally in Northern Norway before returning south. All along the Norwegian coast, a long and rich history of such trade exists. Related to this history is a local anti-authoritarian reflex, still very much present, as I experienced how locals with conviction claim that the region is being exploited by the south. There is a feeling present that Northern Norway is de-facto like a colony, and that the majority of the value from the vast natural resources of the north ends up in the south, where the national government resides.

The flow of food between local residents and their friends, relatives and colleagues exists parallel to the local farmers markets at the town squares, and to the large-scale flows of foodstuffs of corporations and companies that supply the local supermarkets and stores. Along the same roads, sea-lanes and airports, food from local, national as well as global sources is transported to the local supermarkets and shops. These flows of resources obviously contain different levels of scale and infrastructural complexity and involvement. The link between city and countryside is not as visible now, perhaps since foodstuffs are chiefly provided through a complex infrastructural web of industry, markets, logistics, and outlets. With the truly global food market that today supplies the supermarkets in the western countries, distances can appear to have diminished, or even to be invisible to the households in the cities. A growing market infrastructure has made it quite effortless to obtain an increasing range of food at our own convenience (see e.g. Lien 1987). The development of new practices of resource acquisition, from subsistence farming and fishing, to today's markets and technological infrastructure supporting supermarket shopping, has naturally influenced social

relations and local food practices; some have been radically altered, some remain fairly unchanged. The small markets in the city-square of Tromsø and the flow of foodstuffs from the countryside into the city households are useful reminders of the origin of food. Regardless, city households today are increasingly detached from the origins of the foodstuffs they acquire at their local supermarkets. I found this visible in several of the households of study, and it will be discussed in detail throughout this thesis.

Governmental Policies and Regional Developments

The migration and centralization processes taking place in Northern Norway and the changes in the economic activities of local households were brought along by conscious national policies. Throughout the 1950's and 60's, governmental policies like the "Northern Norway-Plan" from 1952 (Brox 1972 [1966], 1984), aimed to scale-up both farming and fishing to make it more productive. Combined with policies of establishing industrial activity (mining, shipbuilding, industrialised refining of fish etc.) in suitable cities, towns and villages all over Northern Norway, an attempted urbanization and industrialization of the region gradually took shape. The motivation for these policies was multi-dimensional; a region brimming with largely untapped natural resources, post-war rebuilding of a region ravaged by war and German scorched earth strategies and the geo-political importance of a presence in the context of a Soviet threat during the Cold War (Aarsæther 2014). Additionally, there was the aforementioned overtly simplistic statistical analysis claiming the region's lag in productivity per capita (Brox [1972] 1966). These combined policies contributed to many households upping sticks and moving to the more densely populated areas of the region, becoming full-time wage labourers. The ones choosing to move were often those lacking adequate land or resources of self-subsistence on the countryside, in addition to those owning larger fishing boats, according to Brox (1972:64-65 [1966]). Brox here claims both these groups would indeed experience an increased standard of living in the more populated areas compared to their previous life in the countryside region. Tromsø was not included in these plans to become such an industrial cornerstone, perhaps as it was mainly a city of trade related to fishing and perceived to be without the fundamental resources necessary to become part of this industrial revolution in the frontier of Northern Norway.

Migration, Adaptation and Values and Practices of Sustenance

The oldest households in this study have taken part in the migration, and are now in their late 50s, early 60s. But even many of the younger households I followed had also moved to Tromsø from surrounding areas in the region or from other parts of Norway to study or work. Jon and Gry, Ellen and Ivar, Stine and Kaisa all belong to this group, as they are not originally from the Tromsø area.

Both Ingrid and Fredrik and Erika and Roger established themselves in the city during the 1970s and they still live in their detached houses, even though their children are now adults and had moved out. Their backgrounds are fairly similar, coming from small farms where one of their parents had a direct connection with food production, usually through fishing, often combined with small-scale farming and animal husbandry, with partial wage labour on the side. The wage labour was often limited to specific seasonal activities where extra hands were in demand, e.g. fishing, road-building etc. This approach is called "kombinasjonsbruk", which roughly translates to combined-farming, referring to the combination of methods for sustaining livelihood (E.g. Paine 1957 & 1965, Brox 1972 [1966] & 1984, Rudie 1980 and Nilsen 1990). This way of life was common all along costal Norway up until a couple of decades after World War 2, when the processes of industrial change and centralisation accelerated.

There are arguments for such ideals of austerity and the related self-sustainability and autonomy being influential historically. Going back, class differences are not very pronounced in Norway, even in comparison with countries like Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland who have much shared history with Norway (Vike, Lidén, Lien 2001). Large parts of Norway were ecologically marginal when it came to opportunities for self-subsistence farming, but Norway still offered a reasonable availability of land and resources for small-scale settlement and combined farming. A sparsely populated country and large geographical distances also meant that people often lived their lives without much interaction with the political authorities. Norwegian households could thus develop a social, economic and political autonomy that differed from their European counterparts, and to an extent, their Nordic neighbours.

Generally, hard work, austerity and modesty in terms of expenditure were ideals that very much resonated in the lives of poverty that were the norm in Northern Norway. The concept of thrift (e.g. Strasser 1999, Miller 1998) can also be connected to such a culture of modesty, where making the most out of the resources you had at your disposal was an important and necessary skill in the local households, and also a way of expressing care and love (Miller 1998). It is plausible that a synthesis of factors, like the

local ecological and economical intangibles and cultural and religious ideals, guided many of the local practices and substantially influenced their resource management. Here it can be argued that the economic situation in Northern Norway, common resource management practices and cultural and religious ideals have mutually influenced each other. The religious dimensions here are to an extent rooted in or enhanced by ideals from the Protestant faith, Læstadianism, Methodists, Pentecostals or other more conservative free-churches with a marked presence in Troms County and the northern region in general. During the 19th century a wave consisting of new religious communities, mostly grounded in conservative and pietistic denominations of Protestantism swept across Norway, with the Læstadianism being especially successful in gaining a foothold in the north. Læstadianismen established itself in Norway in the 1840's, and still holds a certain influence in church life in Northern Norway, from Tysfjord, Ofoten and up through Troms and Finnmark [59], and in such places as Kvaløya, Skjærvøy and Lyngen. In the studies of Lillevoll (1982) and Bleie & Lillevoll (2010) of farmers from Lyngen in Troms County, it is argued that principal values of Læstadianism provided a seamless overlap between the religious values of Christ as a shepherd and the local Læstadian families as shepherds of nature and the resources in the sea and on land in Lyngen.

Before the arrival of Læstadianism, the puritan ideas from Lutheran Protestantism would enhance an already strong and established culture of autonomy where one was responsible only unto God. Self-sustenance and survival were central components – to manage on your own - "å klare seg sjøl" in Norwegian. Bleie and Lillevoll (2010:26-27) discuss such a discourse of survival skills with reference to another local emic concept "å bærges", which appears to hold a similar meaning to "å klare seg sjøl", an expression which has resonance in the studied households too. Bleie and LIllevoll (ibid.) define "å bærges" as a complex morally grounded concept of ensuring ones survival in challenging surroundings through modest living, hard labour and foresight (ibid.); a concept containing adaptation, resilience and knowledge. To manage one's own life was here also intrinsically linked with one's ability to manage one's own property (Vike, Lidén, Lien 2001:20:21), and to the religious concept of predestination. If a person was able to manage and progress in material terms, this was proof of salvation and being one of God's chosen ones (Bleie & Lillevoll 2010:27), a perspective also known from the classical writings of Max Weber (2002 [1905]). Prudence, modesty and

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[59] http://snl.no/l%C3%A6stadianere Accessed: 20th June 2014.

asceticism were central values to obtain salvation in this regard. As a local expression about adaptation practices enabling a household to survive and to manage, it can be argued that per se the expression “å bærges” would have little in common with an excessive accumulation of material wealth and capital as a an indicator of progress or predestination. Perhaps “å berges” could rather be interpreted to be within the boundaries of the morally acceptable economic activity of a household as postulated by Aristotle (1981), trading to cover basic needs rather than for monetary gain. In this case, it is possible that the interpretation and content of the concept “å bærges” or “å klare seg sjøl” might have been altered along with an increased standard of living, which brought a different dynamism locally between the concerns of the collective and the individual concerns of the household (Bloch & Parry 1998).

Even if these ideals, promoted by Protestantism or more conservative and recent offspring like Læstadianism, provide a good fit for local challenges of self-subsistence and poverty, brought to the table by a harsh natural environment and social environment, the adaptation skills and practices of local households in these marginal ecological areas of Northern Norway obviously predate such religiously founded moralities. A diversity of indigenous Sami adaptation practices obviously pre-existed these Christian moralities in the region as well. As herders, hunters, gatherers, herders and fishers, they survived through a combined approach and their own religious beliefs, cultural ideals and diverse skills. The Sami verb "birget" means "to be able to manage" (amongst other things) is similar to "å bærges". Interestingly the related Sami word "birgejupmi" refers to a combination of the material and the immaterial – what is necessary for the maintenance of life. This includes both skills and knowledge and material resources (Joks 2015:5).[60] Eradication of traditional Sami religion was also part of the attempted assimilation of the Sami, attempts to remove culture, language - their way of life. Their religion was a nature religion based on a combination of the shamanistic and animistic elements.[61]

It is fair to assume that these ideals and subsequent practices from religious influences have reinforced existing cultural values of autonomy and self-sustenance through such things as hard work or meticulous resource management. When attempting to manage one’s household in such harsh and demanding natural surroundings, having a god on your side would obviously be for the better. This

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[60] https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/md/vedlegg/klima/klimatilpasning/underlagsrapporter/samiske_naeringer_og_klima_19032010.pdf Accessed: 22. February 2017.

[61] https://snl.no/samisk_religion Accessed: 22. February 2017.

historical backdrop points towards multiple sources of motivation and influence as to how to maintain a good life on the margins in Northern Norway.

A Frontier of Self- Subsistence Households

Brox (1984:18-30) also draws a parallel between Northern Norway and the US; he sees the region as a frontier in the period from 1800-1950, where opportunities were available and arose for those who had few opportunities elsewhere. Rossvær (2009) also follows up this frontier-perspective from his work in Sørvær in Finnmark, arguing that the industrialisation of Northern Norway, as a commons, is a violation of a natural order. He suggests that the global industrial activity stands in contrast to the commons as an unlimited Sami, or at least pre-Norwegian, sustainable universe.

The frontier perspective hinges on the possibilities to settle on small pieces of land that were without permanent settlements in Northern Norway, as not all land was subject to the concept of private ownership common in more fertile, forgiving and bountiful areas. There was a strong Sami presence in the area, but their social organisation and use of the land offers a flexibility that might have kept conflict levels low during the height of colonisation. Their traditional organisational unit was the "siida" - small-scale, democratic communal entities of various sizes where teams of hunters would source resources together, living nomadic - following the resources dependent on seasons, offering a different perspective on the use of nature, adaptation, of ownership and access to areas and resources. Further colonisation of the region meant that Sami were forced from areas previously used seasonally, also forcing them to adapt a more niche-based approach towards sustenance, meaning a gradual loss of autonomy, of access to land and water[62]. In Northern Norway, and all across Sápmi today, questions of rights of use to land and water and related clashes of interest are still highly relevant and politically potent. This is particularly pronounced in relation to resource extraction, e.g. mining, fishing, windmill-parks, drilling for oil and gas, or in governmental regulations restricting traditional Sami ways of life, e.g. river fishing or reindeer herding.

For immigrants, a new life in these harsh climatic conditions was made possible mostly due to the abundance of fish, a resource which was originally available for all to harvest. Thus a life of small-scale self-subsistence was possible, with few opportunities

[62] https://snl.no/samenes_historie Accessed: 22. February 2017.

for surplus production, due to a lack of money to obtain the necessary technology and the limitations in workhands due to the household cycles (Rudie 1980). These factors also contributed to fairly egalitarian households in the region. Brox (1984) here maintains that the egalitarianism, in practice, comes from the northern regions, rather than the more centralised, Southern Norway. Brox (ibid:207) goes on to argue that this now has changed, and governmental policies have transformed this *region of commons* into a colony which acts as a safety valve for the mismanagement of Norwegian governments and for the benefits of sector interests. A claim for regaining local control over the riches of the region and to stand up against the central powers "down south" has never died down in Northern Norway. This resistance has recently also gained more attention with the expansion of the extraction operations of multi-national companies, not least as the profits of such activities are to end up far from where the resource is extracted. The resources like fish, oil, gas and minerals are perceived locally to belong to those who live in the region, which also clashes with the dominant paradigm of modern capitalism and the free flow of goods, services, capital and people, subsequent to Norwegian membership in the European Economic Area (EEA). These developments have also put local politicians, especially those in the remoter areas of the region, under great pressure. They face the challenge of raising income to offer local services to an aging population and offering work locally, while also maintaining a degree of sustainability over time, observing environmental concerns, showing sensitivity to indigenous rights and avoiding exploitation of resources.

The challenging local, natural conditions and the deep-rooted cultural traditions for fitting adaptation patterns, resulting in egalitarian self-subsistence household economies, has been influential. This has perhaps even more than religious ideals of modesty and temperance, shaped a respect for the riches stemming from the local, common food trays; the ocean, fjords, lakes and rivers, or the land-based riches of the fields, woods and plains. As we will experience throughout the analysis, these traditions of a past way of life are not discarded. Even for some of the citizens of Tromsø today, in a contemporary realm of abundance, are arguably rooted in the same traditions of self-subsistence, affecting the everyday practices of some of the households.

As mentioned, the households of Ingrid and Fredrik and Erika and Roger have both partaken in a similar migration as Brox (1972 [1966], 1984) described. They have moved from the more rural outskirts into Tromsø, although I am not privy to detailed information about their access to land or fishing resources or infrastructure in the places they left behind. Clearly, a wide range of factors influence decisions such as increased demands and expectations of education, health services, range of goods and services

and social life and divertissement. Brox (ibid.) argues that the choices made by these households are mainly based on the economic resource situation of the different households, influenced by public, social and economic policies, and their degree of happiness with their current situation of their independent planned economic activity. Brox believes few of the Northern Norwegian households with an adequate resource surplus at that time would leave behind a life of self-subsistence for a life of wage-labourer in the city.

Lorås (2002:206) finds that amongst the combined farmers of Northern Norway the status of wage-labour would only gradually increase, in tune with the industrialization and increased dependency upon monetary means. In the 1950's and 60's food was generally more expensive to buy in the stores in relative prices, and converting the food one produced into money to purchase other kinds of food was not a good economical strategy. [63] Conversion by the means of one's own household was the best alternative, i.e. refining and making food themselves rather than selling raw materials and buying food through the commercial market (Brox 1972:63 [1966]). Money was scarcer than labour, so to speak. In addition, it made sense for the households to produce fishcakes[64] themselves, perhaps also partially out of habit. With the increasing industrialization of the food market, accelerating post World War 2 (See e.g. Evans, Campbell, Murcott 2013:14-16), and the growing market infrastructures, this balance changed. Income increased and prices of industrially produced food decreased. Gradually, making fishcakes was not the best alternative from a purely economic perspective. Traditionally there was still the factor of social status attached to offering food bought in the store for guests to consider. These days there are a multitude of motivations at play which deciding the alternative of homemade and shop-bought fishcakes is seen as most meaningful (Graeber 2001) for the households in the given situation. This is likely to fluctuate with changing macro-developments. A cocktail of contextually dependent factors influence the decision of making your own or purchasing ready-made products. Factors can for instance be: resource availability, the current economic situation, prices of fishcakes in local supermarkets, the social occasion of the meal, the importance of expressions of competence and social status, a perceived superior taste of the alternatives, feelings of mastery and satisfaction of making food from scratch, an environmental motivation of short-travelled food, not to mention health motivated agendas of controlling the content of food and the body. The

[63] See e.g. Brox (1972:62-63 [1966])
[64] Fishcakes are similar to a small hamburger, but made from fish.

perceived time available is also an important factor, and the willingness to invest it in homely food production.

The element of embodied habits and routines (Bourdieu 1977, 1990) should certainly also not be discounted regarding food management and meals. We will return to further discuss and develop this argument. Here we should however keep in mind that Brox' (1972 [1966]) argument about the resistance against wage-labour versus self-subsistence in Northern Norway relies strongly on economic motivations regarding household adaptation practices and profitability. Lorås (2002) draws his empirical material from Helgeland in the southern parts of Northern Norway. While accepting Brox' (1972 [1966]) economically focused conclusions, he argues for a need to also take into account the cultural and traditional aspects, not least autonomy; the freedom to decide over one's own time and work as I have already briefly contextualised historically above. Lorås (2002) finds that these factors are also necessary to understand the regional resistance to wage-labour amongst the self-subsistence farmers that took part after World War 2 and to analyse this relation between self-subsistence and wage-labour. Having one's own economically autonomous household was deemed important, though it was not expressed through the availability of money. For rural households lacking land this was different. They aimed to establish their own autonomous households through seeking wage-labour in the more urban areas of the region. Migration to the urban areas was seen as a possibility to obtain a similar kind of autonomy, even if a lack of land and resources in the rural areas was not actually a limitation (Brox 1972 [1966]). These migrants escaped the patron-ship and dependency as seasonal labourers, lending their hands to other local households with more resources, opting to become wage-labourers under other employers in towns and cities, like Tromsø.

Maintaining a high degree of self-subsistence was both profitable and in accordance with inherited ideals (Lorås 2002:209) as well as taught ones, at least until the dependency on monetary income grew later in the 20th century.[65] We can exemplify this development partially by referring to the household's own self-provisioning and production of foodstuffs versus the provisioning of both refined foodstuffs and raw materials, by monetary means and through the increasingly present market and distributary infrastructures.

[65] For a more extensive argument around this development of monetary dependency and how it gradually took place with the influence of public policies, see Brox (1972:72-85. [1966])

In narratives and interviews from several of the households I followed, fish, fishcakes and other locally produced foodstuffs were said to be something you didn't buy traditionally, and was thus not available in all local shops and supermarkets until the 1970's. Following Lorås' conclusion above (ibid.), it would be interesting to know if the actual demand for the mass-produced versions of what was traditionally a local, home-made foodstuff like fishcakes, remained for a while after it became economically profitable to buy fishcakes rather than make them. Perhaps making the fishcakes themselves rather than buying them remained, for a period of time, the most meaningful alternative in a larger perspective for the households. It is also timely to mention that some household members still claim they have never have bought fish in the local supermarkets of Tromsø, but I am not able to offer a tangible explanation, or explain the factors forming the basis of such decisions between cultural, social, or economic motivations.

As the dependency and demand for monetary income increased towards the end of the 1950's and onwards for the next decade or two[66], less time was spent on the farm. Now, the temporal demands of wage-labour elsewhere conflicts with the seasonal and daily demands of farming, fishing and animal husbandry. The activity at the rural farms in the region was gradually reduced, with the result being a spiralling dependency on monetary income and market infrastructures. Eventually it made little sense for the families to keep a house in the rural areas only as a domicile for wives and children when they didn't have animals or land to farm there anymore. The man in the household often worked in the more urban areas like Tromsø, Narvik, Harstad or Finnsnes, so the families then moved there as well when it became viable (Brox 1972:71 [1966]). This briefly describes some of the developments in local adaptation practices. Typical households went from being, chiefly, self-subsistence combined farmers, via part-time seasonal work hunting and gathering, building infrastructure or for working for local industry towards a life as full-time wage-labourers and consumers in the city. Now basic needs for nutrition are cared for via the infrastructures of an industrialised food-market with local as well as international supply lines.

Practices of barter were mostly replaced by pure monetary exchanges several decades ago. Still, further changes in household resource management are ongoing in Northern Norway. This movement is characterized by centralisation of farming and

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[66] Brox (1972 [1966]) argues that this development is a direct consequence of the governmental policies in The Northern Norway Plan put into work from 1952 and onwards, but this is not the place to debate that point further.

fishing activities, an increase in scale of farms and fishing boats, or a decrease in required labour or management. Today it is not uncommon for farmers or anglers in Norway to rent out their farm- or grazing-land, their hunting rights or their fishing quotas. In this manner, rather than hunt, fish or work the land themselves, locals who own the rights to harvest skip this step, and opt for the direct acquisition of general-purpose money - a financialisation. They leave the production to others, often larger, entities. This is of course a rather familiar story for local communities both near and afar, faced with the interests of industrial development, be them public or private or, as outlined by Brox (1972 [1966]), governmental agricultural of fishing policies guiding the region through regulation, subsidies and other policy measures. For example, as the logging industry expanded government officials attempted to 'civilise' (in the terms of the government officials) the Chewong of Malaysia (Howell 2011), who they wanted to become cash-croppers. More locally in Northern Norway, there are numerous examples where Norwegian governmental programs offer re-education in addition to financial rewards for farmers, fishermen, reindeer-herders etc. This help in choosing another career often occurs in the face of industrial expansion and related conflicts of interest. As mentioned above, conflicts between mining industry and local anglers, farmers and reindeer-herders are currently a hot topic in Northern Norway[67].

Improved Standard of Living

Our topic of food waste is closely related to several political discourses in Norway. A familiar debate in Norwegian mass media is centred on pricing, and it is often linked to the level of food prices in the EU/EEA and a discourse on affordability. The common arguments are that food is perceived as more expensive in Norway compared to the other countries, and should be cheaper as it is a basic necessity. However, only Luxembourg and The Netherlands have lower food prices than Norway measured against the GDP. [68] Environmentalists have a different perspective, and there are debates concerning the effect of increased food prices on food waste levels and possible decrease in the environmental strain on the globe. Still, it is estimated that the average

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67 See e.g. The Nussir mining company's explorations in Kvalsund Municipality in Finnmark and conflicts with local Sami reindeer-herders and anglers due to the environmental consequences. http://www.nrk.no/nordnytt/regjeringen-sier-ja-til-nussir-1.11617771 Accessed: 15. May 2014. Another example is conflicts of a similar kind in Kautokeino in Finnmark. http://www.nrk.no/sapmi/kautokeino-sier-nei-til-gruve-1.11420378 Accessed: 15. May 2014.
68 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/household_budget_surveys/Data/database Accessed. 12. December 2013.

Norwegian household wastes more than 30% of all the food they bring into their household[69], averaging 51 kilos annually.

But how did we get here? From the start of the Oil Boom in the early 1970's, a radical increase in standard of living has taken place in Norway. In a very short amount of time, a large majority of Norwegian households have experienced a totally changed economic, technological and infrastructural situation, establishing completely new frameworks for the valuation and management of household resources, including food. The general welfare level and standard of living for Norwegians has increased dramatically the last decades, with an increase in GDP per capita of 180 % in the period 1970 to 2007.[70]. In addition to this development, the percentage of the average household income spent on food has been steadily decreasing from over 40% in 1958 to about 11.8% in 2012. [71]. This decrease in food prices is linked to the growing industrialisation of the food sector (See e.g. Evans, Campbell, Murcott 2013:14-16) and the subsequent distribution of industrially produced food as well as an increasingly global food market. A development taking place during the same period as combined farmers (Brox' (1972 [1966], Nilsen 1990) of Northern Norway are increasingly moving towards a larger portion of wage labour as a source of income.

The meat consumption per household has also doubled in terms of energy consumed between 1970 and 2010[72], indicating that the consumption has shifted from a more potato and fish-based diet towards meat-products that are more energy consuming to produce. Several of the households also mention a development in diet, from a fish-based one towards consuming more meat. Meat was typically previously reserved for Sundays, according to my informants.

Macro-factors contributing to a completely different everyday resource environment for the households to operate in include the urbanisation of the region, the change in economic activity and structure, the increased standard of living, the growth of an ever-developing supermarket infrastructure, and improved food management and storage technology.. This constitutes an explanatory contextual backdrop for analysing the current household food practices. These macro-

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69 The average level of food waste from households in Norway (Hanssen & Shakenda 2011, Hanssen & Møller 2013)
70 Statistics Norway: http://www.ssb.no/emner/05/02/forbruk/ Accessed: 23. June 2014.
71 Statistics Norway: http://www.ssb.no/emner/05/02/forbruk/ Accessed: 23. June 2014.
72 Statistics Norway: : http://ssb.no/natur-og-miljo/artikler-og-publikasjoner/miljodimensjonen-ved-maten-under-lupen Accessed: 23. June 2014.

developments have ensured easier access to cheaper foodstuffs for almost all Norwegian households, a positive achievement of substantial proportions. It does however appear that our practices are not yet attuned to handling such riches without wasting significant portions of it.

The Value of Money and Food

Ingrid and Fredrik gave me their own personal story and reflected upon the development they have witnessed since the decades after World War 2. It is a familiar post-war narrative about prosperity and an increased standard of living, seen against the backdrop of an upbringing of relative poverty. Their story is illustrative of the typical development in standard of living for many of the households in the area. This is reflected in the country as a whole, which experienced an improved economy, and gained new perspectives on the value of food, as the changes in practices, knowledge and concerns regarding food probably occurred gradually and simultaneously. Over a coffee in their living room, we started talking about contemporary levels of food waste. By this time they were already quite familiar with my project and were happy to present their own experiences of life in Norway. Fredrik then goes back in time and tells me about the time he started working in The North Sea, right after he finished school, early in the 1960's:

> *Fredrik: "It was a Golden Age, and we earned a lot. The children don't know what money is, what they are worth.*
> *Ingrid: That isn't their fault.*
> *Fredrik: No, it is the development in society. It is not good."*

The upbringing of Ingrid and Fredrik gives them a different outlook on the prosperity they have experienced compared to the younger generation. On the whole, the younger households I followed have not personally been exposed to poverty, a lack of food or been without a wide range of choice in the stores. Ingrid and Fredrik point towards the current situation as one of wealth, excess and a taken for granted-ness, but they nevertheless refuse to be judgmental towards the young, rather placing the blame on larger societal changes.[73]

Ingeborg and Svein are born roughly a decade later and are about 50 years old. They tell a similar story, with similar underpinnings, about the development in standards

73 We will return to discuss the issue of individual and collective responsibility in the conclusion.

of living they have experienced. As with Ingrid and Fredrik, they have also been brought up to treat food carefully and value it highly. Ingeborg comes from a poor home where dinner was certainly not to be expected every day. But contrary to the household of Ingrid and Fredrik, they have not adopted the practices of food management they grew up with as children, even if they do agree with the frugal and austere ideals of food management from that time. They waste significant amounts of food. In the main interview held in their living room, we are discussing the reasons for unnecessary food waste in general and the atmosphere is relaxed and open as usual:

> *Svein: "We are living in a kind of welfare society, where we got to have that little extra…where we aren't so good at limiting our desires, and then we throw away a lot, just because we can't manage to pay attention and…*
> *Ant: Why don't we pay attention?*
> *Svein: Because we have too much…"*

Ingeborg and Svein are also likely to be talking about themselves on this occasion. Svein then goes on to illustrate the development and increase in standard of living by quoting the changes in the dinner menu; what used to be Sunday dinner earlier, has now become typical on weekdays.

> *Svein: "Now you can eat Sunday dinner every day…Sunday used to be the highlight, with a nice dinner. Pork Chops and Sauerkraut.*
> *Ant: What did you eat during the week then?*
> *Svein: It was lots of fish. Much of it we caught ourselves as well."*

Such narratives present the economic, cultural and social development, illustrated by the national statistical data, as a movement towards a situation where food as a basic human need is increasingly taken for granted. This may be due to increased income levels, easier access and lower relative prices, a few key changes contributing to its abundance. However, it is necessary to reflect critically on such narratives and morally charged generalisations cast from one generation to the next. Romanticised views of the past often come to the fore through critical contemporary discourses, as past ways are interpreted in the light of contemporary values and struggles. Through observing and investigating rather objective processes that have taken place on a larger societal scale (the rise in relative income levels, the increasingly lower proportion of household income spent on food, the increased availability of an ever increasing range of foodstuffs locally, and increasing levels of waste of edible food) it is pertinent to argue that the valuations placed on food today differs.

Food is now accessible in a completely different manner and scale. The unnecessary waste levels today are nevertheless high, and an argument can be made that a taken for granted-ness has festered. Such a development owes much to socio-economic changes, along with changes in technology and infrastructure, such as the availability of refrigerators and freezers for individual households; influential factors in shaping the role of the modern consumer. It is no wonder the younger generations, like the children of these older households, haven't adopted the same food management practices as previous generations. Even though they experienced more frugal food management practices and obtained knowledge first hand and were taught to treat food as very valuable when they grew up, and still perpetrate this as an ideal, their actual practices differ. The modest and careful ways of food management of the post World War 2 generation does not appear to have been adopted by most of the younger households I followed. Here the practices of Svein and Ingeborg, Georg and Josefine, Tor and Kaisa, and Ellen and Ivar spring to mind. Their age spans from about 50 down towards the mid 20's. These households grew up in different economic situations, surrounded by competing cultural perspectives of what is valuable and important in life.[74]

The Emergence of a Global Food Market

Ingrid and Fredrik share stories of how established seasonal practices, like buying a carcass, are left behind after moving to Tromsø. Potatoes are not bought in bulk anymore and many houses have been refurbished with old potato-cellars or cold storage and utility rooms being replaced by small basement apartments.

Both a result of, and contributing further to the increased standard of living, is the establishment of market infrastructures like supermarkets in every neighbourhood offering an ever-wider range of products from a global food market around the clock. With such availability, the seasons of the year can appear distant, with seemingly everything from everywhere available all year around - a point we will return to. As Ingrid and Fredrik told me once during a chat, meat gets dry when stored for a while, so nowadays they would rather just buy fresh meat when they need compared to buying

[74] How influential the different factors linked to life phases are on the waste levels, e.g. through the variations in the availability of time for food management is in relation to the macro-societal changes I have mentioned above is unfortunately not possible for me to discern based on my own data-material.

seasonally, in bulk, like in earlier years. Their store is close by and fresh meat is always in stock. Still, there is both continuity and change in these new infrastructural surroundings, as they maintain some past practices, buying other foodstuffs in bulk when they are on offer, sometimes combined with home-production. It can be argued that infrastructure changes alter people's perceptions. This is further discussed in chapters 12 and 13.

The Boat from Paradise

> *Fredrik: "We had these boats with fruit every autumn, when the fishing season was over, they sailed south. Then we got lots of fruit, because this way it was much cheaper than in the stores. These were boats from the south arriving. My father had a boat, so this was in…1956-57. They were down in Volda[75] at a motor factory there that made engines named "Volda". They were fitted there, so when they were done with that in September, they went South past Stadt and in to Nordfjord first, because the sister of an aunt of mine lived there. They had a fruit-farm. So they arrived back home with…the whole of Lyngseidet got free fruit. So that was remarkable!*
>
> *Ingrid: I cannot remember that we had fruit. At Christmas, we did. Then we had apples. Oranges too, I think. I can recall the smell of oranges in the house. Apart from that there wasn't much fruit to be had."*

This dialogue is part of a conversation I had with Ingrid and Fredrik over coffee in their living room after I had come by to pick up the waste diary they had previously agreed to fill out. As we sat there, we chatted about differences in food compared to when they grew up, the discussion turned towards the increased availability of food from other parts of the world. Ingrid then got very emotional:

> *"Imagine in the stores today. You arrive down there (referring to the large Spar supermarket five minutes away). Very nice store we have. You get to the vegetable section, the fruit. There are all kinds! You don't know what the fruit is called anymore. What it tastes like. There is a book there, a book! You have to look in the book to find out what the fruit is called. What it can be used for. What it tastes like. Because you don't have a clue! Sometimes I buy an exotic fruit, just to taste."*

[75] Volda is a town in Møre og Romsdal county, Western Norway.

Fredrik: "You get mountain trout from South America, from Chile, fished in lakes 4 000 meters above sea level, packed and carried on horseback from the Andes and down to the coast to a freezing facility. Then it is supposed to be frozen until it reaches the store here in Tomasjord. Do you think it is a waste of natural resources..haha! That is not short-travelled food that!"

In an admittedly overly linear fashion, the above narrative from Ingrid and Fredrik can illustrate the gradual arrival of a global food market to the Tromsø households. First, the arrival of boats from the south carrying fruit otherwise unavailable locally to most people (certainly not in such amounts) in the 1950's, to the exotic and unfamiliar fruits in the local supermarkets today. Add to that the alternatives to the locally available fish, the lower priced alternatives of trout from Peru, delivered by a globalised food-market.

The goods arrive before the knowledge, with a book to explain to the local shoppers the characteristics of the commodity, since it is an exotic fruit from elsewhere, likely to be unknown to many. These fruits and vegetables are grown and harvested far away, and the consumers in the local Tromsø households are far removed from the environment where these foodstuffs are grown and harvested. At first, they obviously have little knowledge about the origin, taste or usage of these new resources on offer.

The historical narratives above can illustrate the rising prosperity of Norway and the emergence of a globalised food-market. In a sense, the development resembles an increasing manner of having access to anything, anytime, anywhere, which can indicate the prosperity and excess that is increasingly possible, much due to the economic situation of the average Norwegian households. In a global food market with huge differences in standards of living, i.e. between Norway and the poorer countries like Peru, Kenya, Dominican Republic etc. where these vegetables and fruits are grown, it is possible to offer these far-travelled foodstuffs for sale at affordable prices.

I find that Ingrid's reference to the book in the vegetable and fruit section indicates not only the range on offer, but also a sense of having grown out of touch with the food in their supermarkets, both in terms of geographical and mental distance. As I will argue (mainly in Chapter 13), the commodification and serialised production process of foodstuffs and the lack of involvement in major parts of the food cycle contribute to increasingly alienated consumers (Marx 1988 [1932]). The global dimensions and distances of the contemporary food market enhance this even further. Another consequence of the ever-increasing ranges on offer in the local supermarkets is a change in expectations. Standards move towards expecting ever-wider ranges of options in terms of quality, freshness and quantity at all times. Conversely, exposure to

new foodstuffs has also changed the status of food which was previously not considered fit for human consumption. For instance, "ufesk" [76] was traditionally discarded by anglers in Northern Norway. Now it is caught and sold as delicacies.[77] Increased knowledge about familiar or new resources, by the book or through experiences, can change the perception and usage.

With the current spending power of the average households the possibilities for excess are certainly on offer. Even locally accessible food, like trout and lamb, is transported from the High-Andes or the plains of New Zealand to their local supermarket. The origin of the food in supermarkets appears not to be reflected upon much during the daily food provisioning runs. The continuous access of wide ranges of food in neighbourhood supermarkets also masks the dependency the population in cities like Tromsø have on the areas the food originates from, whether it is Northern Troms, Southern Norway, Ukraine or the highlands of Peru. The natural premises, the technological infrastructure, the knowledge, tradition and practical skill and craft necessary to acquire and produce food is, on the whole, located outside the city limits, not to mention the people involved. The households are increasingly separated from the originating context of food, often lacking the knowledge and the experience of the practices of gathering, catching, harvesting, and where and when it took place, and of refining the food in question. Fish is caught further from land by large industrialized trawlers, before much of the catch is shipped to China for fileting before the return to the local supermarket freezers. The geographical distances appear diminished as the lamb on offer in the local supermarkets might just as well come from New Zealand and the trout from the Andes, as from local producers. The infrastructure of a truly globalized food market can in addition to offering seemingly unlimited supplies to prosperous countries like Norway, even make the seasons of the year disappear in terms of availability through the contemporary food markets.

Through the narratives from the past about the lives on the combined farms on the countryside, I have also presented perspectives on how these households had to relate to the seasonal aspects of food production and provisioning, as food was harvested when in season, and received in bulk, rather than in the portion packaged size at one's personal convenience. These narratives are presented with the aim of contextualising the current practices of the city dwellers better. Practices of yesteryear

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[76] "Ufesk" is an old and familiar term in Northern Norway that translates directly as non-fish. It refers to kinds of fish that were typically not considered fit for human consumption.

[77] The change regarding these kinds of fish is discussed in the chapter "Food Practices"

on the countryside farms where the generation of Erika and Roger, and Ingrid and Fredrik grew up, took place not only in different times, even if only a few decades ago, but also within different temporal perspectives when it came to food management. With supermarkets of today, more short-term food provisioning practices, on a meal-to-meal basis, are perfectly practicable.

Some cultural continuity remains, providing a timely reminder of the origin of food, highlighting the relationship between city and countryside, and the historical and cultural roots and way of life. The flow of food between relatives and friends is one such example, most often flowing straight from the farmer, angler, gatherer or hunter themselves, to relatives and friends of the households. Receiving food directly from the source in this manner, several steps in the value-chain are skipped or managed personally. This bypasses the industrial phases of food production and refinement, the distribution of the wholesaler and supermarket supply. The direct contact with the source unveils what is often hidden and forgotten by many of these consumers during the household's typical food provisioning at the local supermarkets; namely the origin of their food. Through this flow the contact with the seasons of the year, the natural surroundings and the people providing it, reflections on what might appear to be distant ways of life during daily chores can re-surface. Even though shopping for local food at the city square can be just an occasional curiosity (it's certainly not where the households would go to provide the bulk of their food), it provides another tangible reminder of the origin of the food and the relationship between city and countryside and their typical roles in food production. We will discuss later how reconnecting with the originating context might be one important factor to reduce waste levels of edible food, as it provides a more holistic perspective associated with the cycles of nature and the intrinsic values of food.

While discussing the emergence of a more globalised food market, is also important to keep in mind that food from afar (such as flour, sugar, syrup and coffee), also figured in the diet of the local households on the combined farms of the region in the early 20th century, even if they were in principle quite self-subsistent households or small household groups. The tempo, scale and range of the flows of food and additionally, the availability of it today to a broader range of households, are however on a wholly different scale.

Changing Seasons

Another consequence of an increasingly global food market and the obfuscation of geographical distance is how the seasons of the year are rendered less important. There are always strawberries for sale in the local supermarkets, as there is always harvesting season some place, be it outdoors or in greenhouses. Concerning food, the seasons of the year thus lose some of their meaning through the market availability. The bulk provisioning of resources according to local seasons decreases as the goods in question are always available. The global food-market and the increased availability thus change local food management and consumption practices. An increased choice of cheap and readily available foodstuffs appears to be largely positive, but, as I will show later, the alienation and the increased distances brought on by the global, industrialised food-market contribute to unnecessary food waste in the local households. These wasteful practices are manifestations of changed valuations of food, valuations that hinge on changed values in local society on a larger scale (Graeber 2001). Later, I will also show how food now often takes up the role of a means to reach other ends, as its inherent value as potential nutrition for survival has slid into the background in the contemporary excessive context. A gradual move away from the focus on the inherent value of commodities towards exchange value and price as means of valuation is also a key point in Marx´ theories on value (1990 [1867]). We will also discuss how different regimes of value are vying for dominance using various approaches from value theory (e.g. Polanyi (2001 [1944]), Dumont (1977, 1986) Marx (1990 [1867]) and Graeber 2013), as empirical data point towards an economic mind-set and values having a strong influence on local household practices.

If we compare the contemporary resource situation in terms of the accessibility of food for households, and the infrastructure of production and distribution making it possible, with the adaptation practices of combined farming in the local countryside environments in Northern Norway in the past, it certainly appears to be a giant leap from one world to a completely different one in just a few decades. The current timeframes surrounding household resource management certainly appear a stark contrast to the narratives of the countryside life. Previously the seasonal aspects of planning and food production meant what was harvested was received in bulk, , while in the city more short-term food provisioning occurs from the bounties of a low price, global food market.

As we will see throughout the empirical chapters, the timeframes have changed, and with increased access and standard of living, different societal values emerge. Hand

in hand the valuations of food also changes (Graeber 2001, 2013). The loss of seasonal variations through this ever-present availability offers the possibility to experience every season of the year in a day, or even in one meal. The diversity offered by the natural seasons of the year can seem distant, as the time perspective on provisioning and taste can be shortened to such a day-to-day, or even, meal-to-meal orientation. The current possibility of provisioning on a meal-to-meal basis vastly differs from a daily life consisting of conserved food resources that had been grown, caught or harvested in bulk. The fulfilment of almost every instant "foodly" desire and fetish is within grasp, even for the typical middle-class Norwegian household. The image of the excessive and wasteful modern consumer emerges, which would not be problematic or morally questionable per se, if it wasn't for negative consequences such as related environmental problems, world famine or inequality. The continuous access and the shorter temporal, season-less perspective appear to amplify disposability and subsequent wasteful household practices.

Some practices connected to the seasons and the yearly cycle have truly changed after the migration to the city. This has occurred in interplay with the infrastructural changes in production and distribution. Local small-scale farmers or anglers had to plan from one season to the next, harvesting animal fodder for the winter, keeping hold of animal excrements to use as fertiliser for next year's crop, or making sure you had enough in food in stock to last until the next seasonal crop. For the household members, living in the city as modern full-time wage-labourers, work is usually structured on a fixed daily schedule with monthly pay. On the farms, the work-process would normally stretch over several seasons and the reward of the potato crop could be several months away. But here, the schedule was decided by the seasons, not the clock. Today foodstuffs from all over the world are available at any time of the year in local Tromsø supermarkets. There are fewer seasons to be experienced through food, so to speak. You can harvest almost anything every afternoon in the supermarket. It is always harvest season somewhere on the globe or in the greenhouse. The reward was further away in time on the farm, and perhaps this, along with the personal labour put into its production was also a factor which made food more precious, valuated differently. Later we will revisit the argument of different valuations and of how personal involvement in the food cycle connects to variations in food practices and thresholds of disposal of food.

There seems to be little seasonal variation in the stores, only when the produce is in season locally do offers of fresh lamb's meat, Norwegian strawberries, asparagus or plums stand out. It is truly a global food-market. Compared to only a few decades ago

when many produced their own food, or got it from surrounding farms or regions. The contrast is striking. This development has also given inspiration to countering concepts such as "local produce" or "short-travelled food."

In the city, seasonal variations related to food are indeed vanishing quickly, weakening the household's link to the natural environments; a link which was more evident with local seasonal products being available only at certain times of the year. One consequence is that many Norwegian consumers now expect to find everything at any time in the local supermarkets and complain when the store is out of stock[78], or resort to hoarding when rumours of shortages in supply occur. One could argue that the world-view of many households has changed as they have become increasingly detached from nature, but still their expectations towards nature's continuous, all-year output have increased in tune with their standard of living.

I argue that food is now being seen as less valuable in itself, with less focus on the inherent value of food[79]. In Marianne Lien's study "From Boknafish to Pizza", from Båtsfjord in Finnmark (1987), she also argues that during the 1980's, changes in food habits, like the introduction of new dishes and preferences, occurred at the same time as social changes took place. Many of the housewives also took on work outside the home, so the traditional household roles changed, as did the routines of meals and diets and the availability and role of knowledge and skill related to food management.[80] These changes took place much due to larger societal developments in Northern Norway, where the opportunities for the local women to obtain status and reputation expanded. Women were not just limited to the role of the housewife anymore and were increasingly involved in other arenas as well. Lien (ibid.) also describes an increased availability and a wider range of foodstuffs in local stores, increasing the possibilities for culinary variation and social differentiation, findings that resonate well with the narratives the older households shared with me. Lien also points out both the strong habitual element in food management and diet (ibid. 216), and how food management and diet are strongly habitual and deeply embedded in other social, cultural and material contexts.

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[78] During 2011, there was a lack of butter in many Norwegian supermarkets as diets with low-carb content gained popularity nationally as a way to lose weight. Stocks were depleted and there were huge outcries when people didn't get their butter. It was not like the supermarkets lacked alternative spreads or oils, but expectations today are high. There were also newspaper articles about customers fighting over the last loafs of bread in Norwegian Supermarket during a strike, also in 2011.
[79] This Marxian concept will be discussed thoroughly in Chapter 11.
[80] See e.g. Sennett (2009) discussions about the decline of the skill society.

What people value, and as a consequence how they often act, is thus part of a larger system of value (Graeber 2001, 2013). In addition to the ecological, material environment, such a system of value has its fundament in a combination of ideas from religion, culture and history within a specific society, for instance honesty, wealth, solidarity, sustainability, indulgence, individualism etc. The element of value thus turns on which criteria are considered meaningful, or important, in any given context (Graeber 2001:223), compared to the alternatives. For instance, Ingrid and Erika might buy food in bulk based on a combination of habituated practice. The cultural traditions of their upbringing and an economic motivation of making the most out of their resources are likely a strong influence, whereas Georg and Josefine will not bulk buy food based on an economic motivation, but might do so to obtain superior raw-materials likely to offer superior taste experiences or as part of an act of lifestyle consumption. This may be a more central motivation to them. Svein and Ingeborg are quite impulsive and not too keen on planning, but they might also occasionally buy meat in bulk if they remember to do so when lamb is in season. We will dig further into such motivations and practices and analyse as we move forward.

Summary

Initially in this chapter, I presented a geographic, demographic and socio-economic context and historical background for my field of study – Tromsø in Northern Norway. My intention is to equip the reader with a suitable map, providing an overview of the local topography; an ecological as much as cultural and historical map for the upcoming journey through the Northern Norwegian social landscape. I also wanted to situate Tromsø ethnographically and historically to better frame the developments in the local household resource situation, enabling the reader to better understand the more recent everyday practices with this in mind. I also looked at the larger scale processes behind the centralisation of Northern Norway and the migration to the city of Tromsø. Here I drew up a backdrop where an increased standard of living and social change unfolds, hand in hand with societal changes on many levels as increased local resource availability emerges due to a constant stream of technological, industrial and market developments on local, regional, national and international scales.

Influenced by these developments, I lay down the foundations for a forthcoming argument that the majority of the larger food cycle has become something increasingly distant for the average Northern Norwegian household. With migration from the rural farms of the region described previously in this chapter, I argue that the change from a

self-subsistence culture towards a new life as a consumer of increasingly far-travelled products has strong impact on both the societal values and the local valuations of food, amongst other things. It is my belief that the larger macro-societal changes I describe in this chapter manifested through local practices indicate an increased distance between the households and the larger part of the food cycle. I will argue that this contributes to increased levels of food waste in the households, framed within a context of a general increase in food availability and increased standard of living, among other factors. We will revisit this argument throughout the thesis.

Chapter 4 Methodology

Introduction

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this Ph.D. project is part of a larger project on Food Waste. My contribution aims to provide descriptive information about the everyday practices in Norwegian households. More specifically, the task was to conduct fieldwork to map out the explanatory reasons and dynamics behind the current wasteful food management practices documented in both the survey and waste analysis from other project modules. The implications on the research design at the behest of the larger “Food waste”-project were limited. Beyond a fairly broad research question and a few practical matters, such as the geographical location, the number of households to study or the composition of the sample (in terms of age, domicile, household size etc.) there were no concrete pre-set conditions. The project application accepted by the Norwegian Research Council had left this module with a wide mandate, so I did not have detailed preferences and guidelines defined by the project management at Østfoldforskning. This gave me the opportunity to shape a suitable research design myself, as long as it could provide plausible answers to the research topic.

A few key reasons for the size of this chapter need mentioning. In addition to presenting relevant methodological topics occurring during the actual fieldwork and related, relevant empirical material, key topics are: 1) Questions related to doing fieldwork in your own culture, 2) The moral and political dimension of the topic of food waste, 3) The question of access to perhaps the perhaps last private sphere in a modern, urban setting - the home, and additionally, a combination of 2) and 3), also 4) The mixed methodological approach of the larger "Food Waste" project which this is a part of.

Methodological Context

Before continuing with my entry into the field in Tromsø, a brief section on how this qualitative study is methodologically situated in the context of the larger project. The organisation of the project has implications as it provides me with solid secondary quantitative data that can act as a backdrop to contextualize my own findings and provide hypothesizes and topics to examine further. Through these studies I also have data on the distribution of waste levels along key demographic variables and also about

the foodstuffs wasted. My findings can hopefully provide insight into more explanatory household dynamics behind the data from other modules. Such a large-scale, representative sample also somewhat alleviates even further the need for a larger sample size in my own fieldwork.

The "Food Waste"-project was created in response to the concern about food waste from the food sector as a whole and sustainable use of resources. Due to the multi-faceted nature of the topic, several scientific disciplines from three different institutions are involved, aiming to fully grasp the scale of and reasons behind food waste, as well as to present viable solutions. A state of the art triangulation of methods and a cross- disciplinary approach with assigned research teams is used. The different modules are: 1) A survey done twice a year amongst a representative number of Norwegian households. 2) An analysis of household waste from 200 households in two different locations on a different scale (Fredrikstad and Ål in Hallingdal), with the aim of quantifying amounts and categorizing waste with a focus on food waste in particular. 3) Development of better packaging techniques to extend longevity of certain foodstuffs with a short lifespan. And finally, 4) my own Ph.D.-study aiming to uncover the underlying processes influencing food waste generation in households through an ethnographic fieldwork in Tromsø.

In this methodological context, the idea was that the quantitative survey results, the waste analysis and data from my ethnographic fieldwork would complement and strengthen each other, with my ethnographic analysis producing a deeper and more complete picture of food waste as a phenomenon. For instance, the quantitative surveys indicate a correlation between the amount of food waste and age – the people over 60 years old generate least food waste, where as people between 25 and 39 years old appear to generate the most out of the constituencies studied. The quantitative data do not provide an answer to why this might be or how, but they provide a hypothesis for me as a qualitative researcher to look into, as I attempt to map out possible reasons behind the correlation found though the survey and offer possible explanations, as well as ideas for further research by looking into resource management dynamics in the households. For instance, interviews or observational data could reveal if the older informants have more knowledge about correct storage of food, or if they have more pronounced cultural values towards austerity and so on.

Doing Fieldwork in Tromsø

The city of Tromsø was chosen as the location of my fieldwork due to multiple reasons. It was a medium-sized city, and thus suitable in terms of variation along the variables we judged as most relevant to the project as a whole, namely variation across generations, socio-economic class and household structure and size. Just as important, Tromsø also contrasts the geographical locations chosen. The other on-site research activities in the larger "Food Waste"-project take place in the Southeastern part of Norway. This gave us a degree of geographical and cultural variation within Norway as well.

There are also cultural arguments for picking a field site in the region of Northern Norway, as the general openness and directness in communication of the population was expected to make initial contact with locals less problematic. I cannot speak with certainty about this in a comparative manner, but only mention that establishing contact and being included in several households turned out to be fairly unproblematic, even considering the urban, middle-class context and the sensitivity of the topic. My trustworthy personality as an anthropologist in the field, with a genuine capacity to establish contact with a wide range of people of different ages and backgrounds might also have played a part. One's personality remains, for better or for worse in such a personal endeavour like anthropological fieldwork, along with one's body (Okely 2012).

I spent approximately ten months doing fieldwork in Tromsø, from primo May 2011 until ultimo February 2012, with a three-week break after Christmas. After finishing my fieldwork, I extended my stay in Tromsø in agreement with my employer, and thus became a Tromsø resident. This could be perceived as going somewhat native, I suppose. This also gave me valuable opportunity to stay in touch with the households and to consult them for verifications or additional information when necessary throughout the writing phase.

Initially, I had planned to live within Prestvannet neighbourhood on Tromsøya, but this proved difficult due to the shortage of housing in the city. The neighborhood was chosen as a field-site due to a quite heterogeneous population in terms of age, family structure, types of domicile and socio-economic class. But prior to my arrival in Tromsø, I had to settle for a small cellar-apartment in a detached house in Tromsdalen. As I was bringing my dog with me, I did not have a lot of choice in a city already experiencing a severe lack of housing. The house was sectioned, and served as the home for four different households. Regardless of these initial pragmatic alterations, the aim of obtaining rich and complex data, widely distributed along the above-mentioned key variables still had to be maintained. This deviation from the original plan called for a

heightened level of consciousness in the selection process during recruitment of the sample. A choice of a more easily definable area, like a small village or an association of elderly environmentalists, would be an oversimplification regardless, as the connections stretching past the geographical proximity would quickly become visible in the households of contemporary Norway.[81]

I was hoping to use my presence in the neighbourhood in Tromsdalen to recruit households. By ensuring that I was visible on a daily basis during the initial period, a bit of familiarity with my dog and me helped me establish contacts and to blend into the local community through my role as a neighbour (Wadel 1991). As I was on my daily walks with my dog in the local streets and paths, I took initiatives to say "hi" or to strike up informal chats with people I met when the occasion seemed fit. The formal recruitment process[82] started in August, about three months after my arrival. Several of the households I contacted remarked that they had seen me around and some asked about my dog and what breed it was. Then we got acquainted. To some extent, the attempts to be visible and to enter the role as a neighbour had already paid off, even if I was open about my intentions of studying the practices of local households. In the local Tromsdalen neighbourhood, I managed to recruit four households who took part in the project. More on the recruitment process later.

Initial Contact and Presentation

When meeting and greeting locals in Tromsø for the first time, they wouldn't ask who I was, but rather what I was doing in Tromsø. What I did seemed key, not necessarily who I knew or didn't know, where I lived or where I was from. In Tromsø, I was met by an including atmosphere created by the generous people there. In this manner, the locals I met fitted me into categories of their own preference and priority.

So what did I do in Tromsø? I presented myself as a researcher who was in Tromsø to "investigate different reasons behind why people throw away so much food today". At this point, I often got follow up questions or comments. It was necessary to be more specific, e.g. that I was only looking at waste on the household level, not supermarkets, to explain whom I was working for, or what my academic field was. The general sentiment I experienced from the people I met was that they perceived food

[81] For discussions on anthropological fieldwork and discussions on space and place see e.g. Gupta & Ferguson (1997), Olwig & Hastrup (1997), Coleman and Collins (2006).
[82] This process will be discussed later in the chapter.

waste to be a very important topic of study and most people were very happy that someone was working to tackle what they saw as worrying developments. Based on this, the quite contrarian and personal gut reaction - “I waste nothing”, a statement I was met with many times upon presenting myself and my research, becomes even more interesting both analytically and methodologically. This communality, along with the very positive responses towards studying wasteful household behaviour, might reflect certain local cultural ideals against wasteful food management and perhaps situated the study as morally significant right from the start. I saw this as a quick and poignant empirical confirmation that moral fields engulf the practices of wasting food.

As many of the people I met expressed degrees of shame when we talked about how much food was wasted in Norway today, I attempted to tone down and distance myself from a role as a moral authority or judge (See e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:77-78) on the topic of food waste. On these occasions, I would emphasize to my informants that I also wasted food. This was not to express in a sense that I was also “one of them”, but rather in manner that even if I knew much about the issue and this had raised my consciousness around food waste as a social, economic and environmental problem, I still wasted food needlessly. In this regard, my informants would also openly express that they experienced an increased awareness towards the topic. This arrived through their gradually increased involvement in activities concerning food management that we carried out together.

Nevertheless, just as Marianne Lien (1989:27) was ascribed the label “the nutritional lady” even before arriving in Båtsfjord, Finnmark for her fieldwork there, I was labelled as “the waste guy” or “that fellow who is investigating waste”. One quite unavoidable consequence was that, along with my profession as an anthropologist and a researcher, “the waste guy” was a label that positions me as an expert on the topic of food and waste. Being ascribed such a status can make people reluctant to open up and share their personal experiences and practices, particularly, if they saw me as a moral judge over their household management practices. A careful monitoring of the certain identities or ascribed characteristics given in the field, both operating individually and those ascribed through rapport and association, was necessary (See e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:110-111). I will return to discuss this in depth later in the chapter.

Access to the Field

When I arrived in Tromsø, late April in 2011, I didn't know anyone who lived there. The only remote acquaintance I had in the city was Jon, who I used to room with when I was in the army in Northern Norway in 1990, over 20 years earlier. Prior to my arrival, I got in touch with Jon over the Internet. He gave me his phone number and told me to get in touch as soon as I had arrived. After the initial couple of days in Tromsø were spent on sorting out practical matters like getting furniture and finding my way around town, I got in touch with him. Both Jon and his girlfriend Gry welcomed me with open arms. They were both an essential support, especially in the early stages of my fieldwork. Most importantly, they made me feel very welcome in a new city. They always had time for a chat. They invited me to meals, introduced me to all their friends and family, making it possible for me to get a flying start in terms of recruiting participants for the study and getting to know the city and Northern Norwegian ways of life. Additionally, Jon and Gry also made up one of the households in my study and would generously spend their time on the different research related activities I initiated. They would also discuss the topic of food, food waste or local ethnographical or historical issues whenever I wanted. In a sense, they almost became a foster family, one where I could spend time almost at my own convenience.

At times, their household also acted as a soundboard for my thoughts and preliminary analysis. I could discuss ideas I had with them freely. Jon also worked in a local supermarket, and shared insights into how a supermarket was run, how they handled their stock, and naturally, how their food waste came to be and was handled. In that respect, he was a very valuable topical conversational partner. Their assistance in the more practical matters arising in the field was also very appreciated, like which local mechanic to contact when my car needed mending, or to kindly look after my dog for a weekend or two when I was away travelling. Undoubtedly very generous people, their will to accommodate me was quite likely also influenced by the amount of spare-time they had. They both held part-time jobs when I arrived and preferred to stay home quite a lot and socialize there. I was thus able to participate in food-related activities to a much larger extent than I had expected in advance. In the other households, my involvement was almost exclusively structured by set appointments.

Choosing Households

The 13 households I ended up with were selected based on a combination of pre-defined criteria and practical challenges encountered in the field. The pre-defined plan was to have a heterogeneous sample in terms of age, gender, life-phase, family size and structure, socio-economic class. This decision was based on a belief that such sample could provide data of a richness and complexity that would offer opportunities to grasp the variety of different dynamics behind food waste generation that would unfold. These criteria were similar to those David Evans (2011, 2012a, 2012b) used in his study of the topic in Manchester, UK.

Initially, I had also planned to have a minimum of 15 different households. Notwithstanding my privileged position of being part of a larger project providing me with the opportunity to draw on highly valuable quantitative data, there were two specific factors that contributed to a slightly lower sample number than planned. Local people I struck up conversation with in social settings where it seemed fit generally responded very openly and positively when I presented my project. Several times people initially expressed interest to take part in the project at the outset, but a fair share was not able to find the time or did not prioritize to participate in the end. Constraining factors appeared more to be born out of a busy everyday life, finding time and scheduling activities where I could tag along, rather than a lack of willingness to partake in actual activities. The fact that only two households with young children took part is an indication of such constraints, as I initially had two additional households with young children who had agreed to take part, but who never responded to my further inquiries. After sending them a couple of reminders, I decided to move on. With four other households I got a bit further. Even with a very flexible and patient approach on my part, with weeks or even a month between planned activities, these households only ended up participating in one or perhaps two activities. Here I also chose to move on after having unsuccessfully tried to arrange activities with these households two or three times. I decided to focus on the households who could fit the activities into their schedule without too much pestering from the eager anthropologist. Such experiences of jostling for access to field-sites are not uncommon for anthropologists doing fieldwork in western, urban settings. The access to the field and informants' lives can become more sporadic and with stories how families struggle to even find time for each other, it should come as no surprise that the time to grant a prying anthropologist is limited. Besides, many food management activities take place in people's homes, arenas that are somewhat private, and where traditional ethnographic research can be challenging (Gregson, Metcalfe & Crewe 2007, and Pink 2004).

Accordingly, I had to schedule appointments in advance for most households, certainly when it came to more structured and formal interviews and food management activities. The activities I wanted to take part in needed to be coordinated in accordance with household needs and wants, e.g. shopping trips, meals or fridge or freezer clear-outs. Clearly, I had plenty of time, while some of the households did not. This was especially the case for households with small children, single households with many social commitments or those with very demanding jobs who e.g. travelled a lot. A good deal of patience was required, so a certain cultural and social sensitivity was needed to handle the balance between not becoming too passive and becoming a nuisance that pushes people away, intruding and imposing myself into the lives of locals who had kindly accepted to take part without compensation. On the plus side, I could also get as much time on my own as I wanted. I was the one who initiated common activities, even if the households had been given the option to contact me whenever they wanted so that I could take part in their food management activities. Hence, I did actually wield a fair amount of control on the level of involvement and activity over the households who did fully take part, as I could just retreat back to my flat or workspace when desired.

The other factor which lead to the slight downscaling of the sample size, and which made it easier to accept, was that I quickly discovered the large amount of rich data I got from the households that participated fully. After concluding only the first two planned activities with about half of the households, I was a bit taken back by the complexity and multiple connections that the data material offered. I was not going to be short of material to work with. However, one weakness in the data material stemming from this adjustment is that some of the households have not taken part in all the planned activities, activities that covered the whole food cycle, from the planning of provisioning to the disposal phase. Thankfully, about ¾ of the participating households stayed the course. Consequently, my idea of maintaining a holistic investigative approach towards the food management cycle was not compromised and could be carried out almost according to plan.

As a result, the final sample is the product of a multitude of factors. Some were practical and changed as the fieldwork developed; others were considered and pre-defined, factors that I maintained. Willingness to take part in the project is clearly a given prerequisite, and during the selection of households, the willingness to open up their homes and the eagerness to share their view and their information on household practices on the topic was implicit in this. Any potential informant had to show this kind of motivation, and to be open to partake in the research activities I planned to conduct. Pre-defined factors influencing the selection process were age, gender, life-phase,

family size and structure and socio-economic class, so called "observer identified categories" (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:50), but with a few of them also similar to "member identified", ones of an emic nature. I also initially had geography down as a defining factor, but had to compromise due to a combination of a lack of variation in the households and a moderate interest to participate in my neighbourhood. After a couple of rounds with leaflets and subsequent door knocking, I downgraded my ambitions regarding this criterion.

Additionally, I was conscious of including households that appeared to be relatively wasteful and others towards the less wasteful end of the scale. Clearly, with so many factors to consider, in the end the sample is nowhere near as comprehensive as I could have wished. But there are limits to how much one researcher can cover, and the sample did certainly turn out to be diverse, which was the overall aim. Thankfully, I also had the secondary survey data for support. This shows that in an ethnographic study of a subject of a dynamic nature, like food management, the fieldworker has to do his research and sampling in real time in the field, selecting the households that will provide the information needed (Bernhard 2011:155). This is a part of the adaptation process to a local environment.

How the Households were recruited

I mainly used two techniques to recruit household. One was informal, and the other formal. The first couple of months' time after my arrival in Tromsø, I worked to extend my informal social network. This was mostly done through Jon, being my only acquaintance in Tromsø prior to my arrival. I used snowballing as a technique to recruit a few households in the beginning (See e.g. Bernhard 2011:147-149), which basically meant either talking to people I met through Jon and Gry about the project to gauge their interest and suitability, or to ask Jon and Gry if they knew others who they reckoned would be willing and able to take part. In addition to using their networks, I also used the daily social interaction with my neighbours to gauge their interest in the project and attractiveness as informants. Two households were recruited this way. But as was to be expected, I found that this left me with unsatisfactory variation in the sample composition. The people I was introduced to through Jon's network of friends and relatives led to my potential sample being too narrow. This was especially the case when it came to age, socio-economic background and household composition, a common problem associated with the snowballing-method (Bernard 2011:148).

Some of these people appeared to have limited interest in taking part in my project or didn't appear to me as verbal, observant or sufficiently open to sharing their views. I also discussed other potential participants with the households I had already recruited. Together we then made attempts to find some new households that could complement the current sample, with potential interest and openness as underlying criteria. Without actually ceding control of the recruitment process, letting informants take part in this manner can undoubtedly be a double-edged sword. Nevertheless, I was able to profit from the knowledge the current households had about these potential participants, and also from the current households being familiar of my project.

On the 12th of May, about three weeks after my arrival, Jon took matters a bit too much into his own hands. He attempted to recruit new households on his own. He wanted to help out, and told me that had passed the introductory letter I had given him on to a relative. He did this even though I had already told him that I wanted him to leave that part to me, and that I wanted to meet potential informants first. I also told him that I would be happy if he could introduce me to potential informants. The next day already, I received a text from him that he was hanging out with some friends: "I am on the road with your info-sheet, trying to get things going. He he!" This situation is somewhat similar to what Bernhard (2011:148-149) would describe as respondent driven sampling, except that it was not initiated by the anthropologist. I replied to Jon that it was positive that he was so engaged in the topic and my project. I didn't want to quell his initiatives so soon after entering the field and getting re-acquainted with him, even if I wanted to guide the recruitment process myself.

Jon is a friend, but was indeed also a key-informant, especially during the early stages of my fieldwork, even if he cannot be seen as a gatekeeper (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:74-79). Nor can his abovementioned initiatives be interpreted as attempts to exercise control over the access to the field in any kind of way. Nevertheless, he certainly did influence whom I got in touch with during the early stages through when and where he brought me along and whom he introduced me to. But thankfully, quite soon I was in a position where I did not have to rely solely on one key-informant for further access to the field. Jon's initiative could also be the result of my apparent inactivity. I recall a couple of occasions when Jon commented on my apparent idleness, after which I explained that there was really no rush. But rather than not being treated seriously by the locals as Hammersley & Atkinson mention (ibid: 78) as a possible risk in such cases, this is one possible explanation for his independent recruitment drive mentioned above. The favourable report I had struck up with Jon and Gry was very rewarding, but after experiencing a moderate success with the snowballing

method mostly through their network of relatives and friends, I moved on to a more formal recruitment approach. This was also something I originally had in mind, ensuring that the sample would cover the key variables.

A meticulous and systemic approach is required through the recruitment process, but coincidences will nevertheless influence. Being in the right place at the right time for instance. Anders accidentally sat down in the free seat next to me in a local bar on a packed night. We then got chatting, and by chance he then became an invaluable informant through his rich stories of both current and past local ethnography. Ingrid and Fredrik's participation was also accidental. The initial contact was made as I was looking to buy a washing machine, finding their advertisement on the Internet. It was only after my patience and persistent following-up that they actually became informants, as the household had been very busy at the time due to illness in the family and hospital visits. They became an invaluable source of information, not least due to their openness and generosity in vividly sharing both current and past experiences.

As I had been, and still was, conscious about being visible in my neighbourhood in Tromsdalen, I was easily recognizable as someone new who had moved into what appeared to be a relatively stable neighbourhood. To kick off the formal recruitment, I made a few posters and put them up at the local supermarket. I got no response to these the first few days. Afterwards, I noticed that they had been removed, most likely by the supermarket staff. There was no assigned space for announcements, notes and similar, something which is quite common to have near the entrance at local supermarkets. I then pinned my hope to a direct approach being more fruitful. I made a letter[83] that I distributed in the mailboxes of household's in the neighbourhood. A few days later, I followed up by knocking on the doors of these households, presenting myself and asking if they were curious to hear more about my project as possible participants. In addition to recruiting three new households, I also got confirmed that my strategy to be visible in the neighbourhood had worked, as several of the households mentioned that they had indeed noticed me as a new presence in their neighbourhood.

In the letter I chose to present the topic of study as openly as possible. I wrote explicitly that I was studying all kinds of reasons for food being wasted in the households, food which at some point could have been eaten, but was not. I was acutely aware of the moral dimensions of the topic. But rather than presenting the topic in a

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[83] See Appendix.

broader and less morally situated manner e.g. as focusing on all kinds of different food practices in households, I chose this approach. A more vague topical presentation would probably have opened up a path for me to initiate similar kinds of investigative activities to those I conducted, but in terms of research ethics and informed consent the route I chose was also preferable. I suspect that this bluntness might have pushed some households away, but then again, a fundamental criterion for participation was a willingness to open up and share. The preliminary concerns regarding the sensitivity of the topic of waste (Hawkins 2006) turned out not to be a pronounced issue amongst the participating households. Looking at the level of openness and self-critique displayed by them through the data I received; I believe that the decision was a good one.

Issues Concerning the Sample

Before moving on, there are a few weaknesses regarding the sample that need to be discussed. Applying a combination of snowballing and a more formal recruitment process, I also ceded some control over the sample of households that participated. This is to a degree inevitable, unless one wants to spend an extended period of time searching for households to cover all preferred criteria. Nevertheless, with a study of less than 15 households there are clearly variables in the sample and combinations of criteria which one cannot expect to cover fully. Thankfully, I did also have the survey data from the larger project to lean on.

First of all, households who already have a special interest or are sympathetic towards the topic of study, e.g. are environmentally conscious or are interested in food, were more likely to take part. “Oh, yes I think there is far too much food wasted”, or “Yes, that is a topic which concerns me” were comments made when I did my round of door knocking in the neighbourhood. Both these households chose to participate. If some of the households that declined taking part are not concerned about or interested in the topic, it is not surprising that spending their spare time on participation did not appeal. Due to the environmental aspects I mentioned in the introductory letter, so-called experts or those with an above average interest in food or environmental issues might be slightly over-represented. But I do think that these are at spread out on both ends of the age-scale, resulting in them bringing different kinds of expert-knowledge to our table. Some of this knowledge was borne out of an increased awareness around food and environmental issues. This was chiefly the case amongst some of the younger households. For the older households the expertise seemed connected to their status as

householders of the previous generations, and also having experienced a more strict resource management regime when they grew up.

There are also two clear lacks in the sample of households. The first is in terms of ethnic origin, as no households of a different ethnic origin than Norwegian took part. The only possible exception is households of partial Saami or Kven origin, which is very common in the region. In any case, Saami or Kven origin was not expressed openly by any of the informants as a trait of their identity, nor was the topic raised by me.[84] The second lack is one of poor households who are on the margin or below the poverty line. I would have preferred to have a couple of poor households taking part, not least since one hypothesis was that economic factors would have significant impact on food waste levels. I did follow households who were wholly dependent on benefits for a substantial period and another household with children where only one out of two adults was fully employed in a moderately paid job. I also had one young student couple in the sample. After attempts to correct this, I had to concede that households who were really poor weren't so accessible to me. I also had limited time available to correct this. During systematisation of the data at a later stage, I only found indications that there were different kinds of food being wasted dependent on their apparent economic standing, but that all households I followed wasted significant amounts of food regardless of income levels. These indications correlate with the results from the surveys from the larger "Food Waste"-project (Hanssen & Shakenda 2010, 2011, Hanssen & Møller 2013).

With basis in local cultural ideals, households struggling economically are not very likely to want to expose such shortcomings. Not having enough money to make ends meet, or struggling to provide the food you would like to offer to your family or children, is a social stigma. I also discussed this lack of poor households with colleagues in the larger "Food Waste"-project, and regardless of stigma, we agreed in retrospect that I should have tried to recruit single parents with two children or more, to see if that had given us a different viewpoint and contrasting data.

A pertinent question I have briefly touched upon is if the number of households studied should have been higher. With the outlined demographic, socio-economic and more specific topical variables already mentioned, the household sample can appear rather small at first glance. However, some of the other household studies investigating food and resource management that I have benefitted from have also landed on

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[84] In this regard there is potential for further studies to shed light on some of the explanations for food waste offered in this thesis, especially concerning food management in Sami or Kven families who are involved in more traditional manners of food production and linking this to the arguments on how alienation and increased distance contributes to waste.

between 10 and 20 households (E.g. Lien 1987, Døving 2003, Evans 2012a and Jacobsen 2013). Methodological literature also point towards a similar sample size, and I quote Bernhard (2011:154): "There is growing evidence that 10-20 knowledgeable people are enough to uncover and understand the core categories in any well-defined cultural domain or study of lived experience." This, Bernhard says (ibid.) with support of other researchers in ethnographic methodology, is of course good news for ethnographers. Then there are basic practical factors that can be limiting. But even with only one person to conduct the research, and with a fixed period of time available for fieldwork in grant-funded Ph.D.-projects like this one, the solution I landed on was satisfactory both from a practical and scientific perspective. As previously pointed out, the aim of the research design was directed towards obtaining richness in the data, a multitude of reasons and dynamics leading to food waste in the households, not to represent a larger population on any scale. The external validity and reliability of the sample beyond these households was not a goal, nor a possibility for this work. This aspect is covered by other modules in the larger "Food Waste"-project through surveys and waste-analysis, representative of the national population and adjusted for probabilities of error.

When I was door-knocking during the recruitment process, I experienced that at least two of the men in their 50's who answered the door said they had to talk to their wives first, as I asked if they were interested in taking part. They commented: "she is the one dealing with that". On closer inspection, and after conducting interviews and activities together with these households, it turned out that these men who had initially distanced themselves from the food management of the households were just as involved as their wives. The more equal distribution of food management tasks across gender would, in contrast to the kitchen-access problems that Døving (2003) experienced in his study from Southeastern Norway, resonate with my experiences and interpretations of my own gender not being a limiting factor in terms of access or the sharing information about food management. In Døving's (2003) case, household management practices were very gender specific. In Tromsø they appeared to me not to be overly pronounced, with the exception of occasional female displays of shame related to wastefulness. This is discussed in the topical chapters.

Gender can be a problematic factor when it comes to studying local phenomena that have a history of being distributed on the basis of gender, like food management has in Norway[85]. Gender will always be present in some way or another, more or less in

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[85] The gender specific roles in household management and the historical development of these are discussed in chapter 7.

the foreground, contextually dependent. It is an intangible issue which influences what you can be exposed to, and it is a factor in negotiation processes of which arenas you are allowed entrance to, what topics are discussed and what knowledge is shared in your presence. Gender is also a central factor in defining what is public and what is private, and thus influences my role and positioning in the field. Gender is dynamic, flexible and present in the ethnographic field. Gender has also not been actualised much within research on food waste; a fairly new field of research, one where the research is situated within the institutional sector, dominated by a discourse of resource management and consumption.

I also mention my age briefly as a factor in terms of access into the different households, in particular with regards to "hanging out". But in addition to age and gender, class and ethnicity are also central role defining variables for the ethnographer in the field. As mentioned, the city of Tromsø is according to Statistics Norway the city in Norway with the most egalitarian distribution of income. And as my class background was similar, it did not seem to be actualised as a defining or limiting factor as I approached the working- and middle-class households of my sample. As none of the households was openly of another ethnic background, my ethnic origin as Norwegian is unlikely to have caused any ill concerns.

On the whole, gender differences were surprisingly unpronounced in the households I followed, with the exception of a third of the households, both young and old. I am surprised that it didn't become more relevant during my fieldwork, especially considering the topic of food and household management. This also points towards possible future research avenues, perhaps with a focus on the foreground-background dynamics of gender as a factor. This has also led to a reflection on possible limitations in my data in terms of gender. However, these might be limitations that I myself am not in a position to verify. It is difficult for me as a man to judge what I would have gotten access to or not if I was a woman. I cannot be certain if the household members would have shared different kinds of information with me if I were a woman, in a different age, class-background or ethnicity. But I did not get the impression that gendered aspects were under- or over-communicated in my presence, nor did I experience overt exclusion from specific arenas or relevant topics of conversation. This does not exclude the possibility that modern ideals of gender equality could have influenced practices in my presence, e.g. in attempts to manage impressions conveyed to me. Perhaps it would be different versions of a fairly similar truth or kinds of knowledge that I was exposed to. Regardless, I found only low degrees of clearly defined divisions of labour based on gender, but rather ones decided by habits, practical issues or personal skills and

knowledge. The pragmatically grounded distribution of everyday household tasks I experienced during fieldwork transgressed clear gender boundaries, with some exceptions. Who performed the required tasks of food management appeared to be dependent on who had time, energy and desire to perform them. This observation supports the before-mentioned argument but does not validate it.

Methods of Data-collection

Throughout my fieldwork, the data-material was collected by a combination of methods[86]. Activities of the systematic kind were formal interviews, shopping-trips, waste-diaries and fridge- and freezer-rummages. In addition, I obtained information through participant observation and informal conversations, both with members of the households and other more random acquaintances familiar with my project. I will walk you through these activities in the approximate order they took place, but first a few words on how the research design emerged[87].

Households were chosen as the principal unit of observation, investigation and analysis,[88] and in this regard I am deeply indebted to David Evans' pioneering study of household food waste (Evans 2011, 2012a, 2012b). Evans conducted his study in a suburban setting in Manchester, UK. His work provided me with several inspirational ideas and pillars that made up the research design of my own work.

During fieldwork, we anthropologists participate in people's daily lives over time, to watch what happens, to listen, to ask questions. We strive to study, whatever our research topics are, a topic as it happens, where it happens. In a modern, urban context, obtaining access to take part in such everyday situations can pose an extra challenge that requires finely tuned interpersonal skills. In the urban households in Norway, most of the food management takes place within the private homes of people and not in a publicly accessible locality. The home is one of the few private areas left. Consequently, doing research inside people's homes can pose a challenge, as this would mean intruding a quite private sphere (Evans 2012a:43), not to mention that food related practices could take place at any time of day. Due to this, not to mention issues of

[86] Very regretfully, most of the photo material I gathered during fieldwork was lost in a hard-disk crash during the writing phase.
[87] The choice of research design is indebted to the work of David Evans who entered the field in the UK only two years prior to my own fieldwork with an identical research question to answer, and also with an urban context as the field of study. Evans generously shared his experiences on the design with me after returning from the field, which was of great help to my own work.
[88] The household concept is discussed in Chapter 5.

practicality and logistics due to time constraints and the fact that households live in individual domiciles rather than shared ones, I was more likely to be visiting households, rather than be living together with them (Evans 2012) [89.] This is also a consequence of the desire to study these domestic practices in their own context; one of everyday life (Gronow & Warde 2001 eds., Miller 2001). It has thus been argued that ethnography in the homes of people will often be of a multi-sited nature (See e.g. Marcus 1995). As a result, presence can become very time consuming and limit the number of households one person can hope to follow.

I found that the large and quite unspecified research task I was given called for a broad vantage point and a holistic perspective. Methodologically, I decided that it was necessary to follow the food[90], from its entry until its exit from the household, and any kind of interactions food was involved in with regards to both people and surrounding infrastructure and nature. This challenge constituted a need to participate in a myriad of situations over time. It was thus clear that a multi-faceted and multi-sited data collection was necessary to follow the food through processes related to household food management.

When coming up with a research design, there were challenges I had to counter in addition to answering the research question itself: 1) The issue of obtaining access to social interactions in what was perceived to be fairly private and morally laden arenas, and 2) How to obtain good quality data from the whole of the food cycle, from planning and provisioning to the disposal phase. I opted for a gradual movement towards the more private arenas of the households, making sure that their interest and willingness to take part in several activities remained. Based on this, I made the decisions on how to structure the data-collecting activities. I followed what I saw as a natural social process where both the households and I got to know each other first, obtaining some familiarity and gaining a degree of trust from the household members (Bernhard 2011:277). Secondly, I also arranged the order of the data-collecting activities on the basis of what I saw as socially proper behaviour, gradually approaching the more private arenas and sensitive topics, both spatially and morally.

A "going-along" approach was applied (Kusenbach 2003). This meant that I was asking questions and observing in the actual context of household food management,

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[89] Access to the households and choice of activities to collect data will be discussed more in detail later in this chapter.

[90] This approach draws inspiration from several sources; e.g. Marcus (1995) "To Follow the Thing", Appadurai (1986) "The Social life of Things" and Lash & Lury (2007): "Global Cultural Industries: The Mediation of Things". Similar approaches have also been used in the study of food previously. See e.g Gregson, Metcalfe, Crewe (2007), Cappellini (2009), Evans (2011, 2012a, 2012b), following the matter through various contexts.

during acts that the informants would do regardless of my presence (e.g. shopping, un-packing, cooking). The intention was that this approach would help increase the validity of the data, bridging the gap between more formal interview situations and participant observation, even if combining interview data and observational data helps negate their individual methodological weaknesses. When being able to "go-along" in these everyday situations, this also helped me unlock the discrepancies between what the informants said they did and actually did. Later when systematizing my material according to topical and contextual categories, I was able to cross-reference findings obtained through these different methods, aiding the validity and reliability of the material. I will return to the challenges related to the differences between the participant observational data and data from the more formal interviews and activities later in this chapter.

This dynamic and multi-faceted approach was also a good fit with the emphasis on studying food management within the actual context it takes place (See e.g. Warde 2005, Miller 2001), bringing me closer to the practices in situ, rather than having to rely on the oral (re-)presentations of my informants. I had to follow the doings, just as much as sayings (Schatzki 1996). For instance, when conducting shopping trips, fridge- and freezer-rummages (Pink 2004), and on two occasion's clear-outs, I got closer to the doings of my informants, just as I did when going-along during the shopping runs. On these occasions, I witnessed dialogue between the household members, taking place during on-going action and decision-making in the relevant context. However, before any data-collection took place, we had an introductory conversation where I briefed the households about the project. I went through the aim of the project, relevant issues on research ethics and the level of activity I had in mind. I also answered any questions they had. The conversations were based on the introductory letter they received[91]. During the talk I obtained their consent to participate as informants.

The first scheduled activity did not take part in the domicile. It was a shopping trip, and I had asked them if I could come along the next time they were going food shopping. And as a rule, the final activity in this gradual process would be the fridge- and freezer-rummage or clear-out, which I interpreted as a more private and revealing setting, one where the moral dimension of wastefulness was likely to surface in an inescapable manner. This approach provided a common, gradual familiarity between the households and me, and also with the project – a process that flowed in a manner that also appeared natural socially.

[91] See Appendix.

The differences between the households where I was able to participate more naturally due to my personal report with the members, and the ones where I had to make fixed appointments every time I wanted to meet, was also a pertinent factor in this process. It was not necessary to be so alert towards any social faux pas in the ones where I had obtained a more contextually fitting role towards the participatory end of the scale, and here I could proceed more rapidly towards the more morally laden discourses and arenas.

The fixed activities included me going along with the informants through as much of the food management cycle as possible (See e.g. Kusenbach 2003). Such an approach is also in accordance with need to contextualise the food waste practices of everyday life in the larger processes of food management in the households. Inspired by the work of Miller (2001), Warde (2005), Pink (2004) and Evans (2011, 2012a, 2012b), I chose to initiate activities which allowed me to collect data from the whole cycle in almost all the participating households: planning and making preparations for shopping, shopping-trips, un-packing, organizing, re-packing, preserving and storage of food, the preparation of meals, the meals and subsequent cleaning up and the management of leftovers, the uses of technology, and the disposal of waste and recycling practices.

The Shopping Trips

The first scheduled activity took part outside of the domicile. I asked if I could come along the next time household members were going food shopping. They would then call me or send me an SMS the day they were going, telling me where and when. I would usually meet them outside the supermarket and join, telling them to just talk between themselves like they usually did, but also to tell me what kind of considerations and decisions they were taking. During these trips I was mostly listening and keeping my eyes open, with only the occasional question or follow up query. These trips usually took part after regular work-hours, between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. If it felt appropriate, I would sometimes join in during the unpacking and storing upon returning to their domicile.

When making such appointments, I did not get to come along on the more spontaneous kind of shopping trips, with a couple of exceptions together with Jon. This might have influenced my empirical material, and perhaps have tilted the impression I got towards the more planned and organised end of the scale of food provisioning. However, this might have been balanced out slightly as I also went along with those who shopped almost daily after work in a not too planned manner.

The Formal Interviews

I chose to conduct formal interviews early on during the fieldwork for several reasons. One was to make sure I obtained a basic understanding of local discourses around food management at an early stage. The interviews also gave me an opportunity to identify fields of interest quite early, with the possibility to follow up with more specific queries, giving me time to ponder the suitable methodological approach to dig further into these fields. Another key reason was for the household members to get to know the project better, including the whole range of different topics it consisted of. More importantly, it laid the groundwork in building a report, enabling them to become comfortable enough in my company to invite me into their home at a later stage. Consequently, it appeared most appropriate that the first data-collecting activity in their home was held in a formal, pre-scheduled manner, before developing better relations would open up the possibilities for more informal activities. The formal interview was thus the second step following the shopping-trip, as I bided my time in approaching the potentially more sensitive arenas.

The first formal interview series were conducted between August and November, and 13 households took part. I had prepared an interview guide[92] that covered the following: Basic household information, the neighbourhood, the whole food management cycle, seasonal variation, food management knowledge and uses of related technology. The interview guide was fairly extensive, but my idea was to not follow it strictly. I had an exploratory approach in mind and I was eager for the informants to lead the conversation in the direction they found interesting after a topic had been introduced. On the whole, I ended up following this guide loosely, but using the topical probing questions I had at hand when it suited.

Informants reacted differently to the interview setting, but mostly the conversations went along freely without too much probing being necessary. Even though I had met them previously and had conducted different food management related activities with about ¾ of the households, I can still recall how e.g. Erika and Stine were quite reserved at first. I also recall how Gorm (male, approx. 50 years old) seemed a mixture of overly eager and occupied about answering correctly during the interview, something that along with time constraints on his part led to his household being excluded from the sample. Often topics that were pencilled in for later on in the

[92] See Appendix.

interview surfaced early. We then ended up covering most of the topics, but not due to my query or in the pre-set order in the interview guide. These introductory interviews took from 1.5 to 2.5 hours. Beforehand, I had asked to interview the person who was most involved in the food management in the household, but that it would be preferable if all involved took part. In the nine households consisting of adult couples, both took part in six of them. When I had asked for the person most involved in the food management, I was also met with the response that it could be either of them. As it turned out, this could be down to a fairly complex way of distribution of labour in the household. It could mean that both took part fairly equally, or that they had distributed the different food management tasks between them dependent on knowledge, preference, habit or practical matters.

These interviews with couples turned out to be very rewarding, yielding good data to follow up on and also opening doors through building a report early on. Even if the interviews tended to be more unstructured, they also allowed for direct dialogue between the household members, with them offering several examples of past practices, considerations and decisions. This was very valuable to me. In order to avoid a confrontational atmosphere, especially when it came to questions which were morally laden, I would deliberately pose questions referring to a larger group or include myself in this group explicitly (Briggs 1996), e.g. "Why do you think we Norwegians waste so much food today?" or "Amongst the people you know, how common is it to make left-over dinners?" This gave me insights into more accidental details influencing everyday tasks, or the how the morality of the topic of food waste could play out on the ground, without becoming too personal too soon.

All these interviews took part in the afternoon or early evening in the informant's own homes by making appointments. One exception was the main interview with Georg which took place in his downtown office. I used a Dictaphone to record the interviews, after explaining the research standards on anonymity, confidentiality and the destruction of the records after use, as mentioned in the introductory letter. The Dictaphone did not appear to be a distraction, and on the few occasions I sensed the interviewee taking special notice of it, throwing an extra glance at it now and again, or perhaps pausing a bit, this would pass a few minutes into the interview. When we started talking about the topic of food, everyone had something to say, and the initial uneasiness I had sensed evaporated. I also took notes during the interviews and had an interview guide in front of me. I walked them through the guide during the initial briefing before the actual interview commenced.

Follow-up Conversations

At a later stage in the fieldwork, as the mutual acquaintance grew between the households and me, more informal interviews or conversations were conducted, frequently discussing topics that had emerged during activities at an earlier stage. Some of the topics were: seasonal variations in household food management, social events and food, changes in food management practices and technology from previous generations etc. These events often had the shape of loose topical conversations, although I launched the topic and also had a few questions prepared in advance. This way, most of these conversations were used as an opportunity to dig deeper, allowing informants to explain further details on whatever I curious about. They could also offer feedback on my analysis of certain statements or practices I had experienced, either together with them or with other informants. This proved to be a rewarding approach. Local newspaper articles and discussions, both in print and on the web, was also a valuable source to gauge local opinion or to initiate conversation. Throughout the whole duration of the fieldwork, I conducted participant observation of the different steps in the household food management cycle in addition to the fixed activities when it was socially and practically feasible.

The Waste-Diaries

When I conducted a full round of formal interviews, I also mentioned to the household members present that I was planning to conduct a "Waste-Diary". When the occasion appeared suitable, I then visited the households where I had gotten a positive response towards doing one, providing them with a one-page form to put on their fridge door.[93] They were instructed to mark down any kind of foodstuff they disposed of, when and by whom it was disposed of, and the reason for it ending up as waste rather than being consumed. The households were asked to do this for a minimum ten days. The diaries were conducted in the months of October-November in ten different households. In three of them I also did an additional diary for the Christmas period to get a glance at the waste-routines during the holiday season.

The content I received was not my only motivation when initiating this activity. I also used the diary as a mean to initiate further conversations or activities. This was

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[93] See Appendix.

especially pertinent in the households that demanded a bit more effort on my part to gain access to. It also proved to be a useful way to kick-start data-collecting activities or if the pause in our communication had been too long.

The diaries gave me indications of who was typically managing the food stock in the house, especially when it came to the disposal phase, and at what times and what days the disposal typically took place. But primarily, I used these kinds of entries to initiate conversations on my topics of preference, choosing the ones where I needed to more detailed data on the household in question. It was a very natural way to engage in further conversation, posing questions. Especially digging into reasons for disposals proved bountiful. The diary also confirmed suspicions of how unpredictable work-hours or travelling resulted in much higher waste levels in the households. In general, unpredictability stood out even more as a factor behind waste generation through information from the waste-diaries, e.g. when Ivar and Ellen went on an unscheduled weekend trip, or when Ingrid had to spend time with a relative at the hospital and when Kjell had to go away on a military training.

I also hoped the diary could allow me to gauge if my general perception of the level of wastefulness in the households so far was fairly accurate, impressions based on previous data-collecting activities. The diary entries served to question my original impression when it came to two households in particular, and after the follow up conversations I got a clearer picture of their waste levels and the particular reasons behind their wasteful behaviour. Unsurprisingly, some of the feedback on having the diary on their fridge door was a raised level of consciousness towards food waste in general. Informants responded that “it made us think a bit more” or similar. And as a consequence of this raised consciousness, and the involvement in the many activities through my project, it is also not unlikely that my presence gradually made the informants waste less food. By being there, researching this politically and morally situated topic, I clearly influenced the field and the lives of my informants.

I also considered if the diary might give me indications of which households would be hesitant to share information about their wastefulness, and thus under-report the disposals in their household due to the morality encompassing the topic. This was not possible to pin down unfortunately, and it would be speculative to draw any claims on my hunch, which in this case concerned one particular household – Erika and Roger. I diligently went through the rest of my data on their household to investigate if this could be right; if they did indeed produce such a low amount of unnecessary food waste. Their diaries only had one entry for a ten-day period, and when I queried Erika if

they had put everything down, she had a long think and only came up with one additional entry that she had forgotten to mark down – one boiled potato.

Considering the cultural morality of the topic, I was indeed fully aware that the list could clearly function as an exposing "list of shame" on their fridge door, with under-reporting of waste a possible consequence. I discussed this with the household members. My instructions beforehand were to just mark down what they would have done in a normal week, regardless of the list being present. But nevertheless, the diary might have been interpreted as a shameful list, one that shaped behaviour towards efforts to avoid having to make entries, and especially for someone as meticulous as Erika and Roger appeared to be in their food management. But on the basis of both observational data, data from food management activities and other interview data, there was little doubt that Erika and Roger's food management practices produced very small amounts of unnecessary food waste. The lack of entries in the diary was thus perhaps the clearest indication as to how wrong it was seen to waste food in their household, something that was also valuable information.

To actually investigate the correlation between the waste-diary and the actual levels of waste in the household, with aims to reach a higher level of probability, it would have been necessary to investigate the actual physical waste for the period in question, and to cross-reference these data with the diaries. Physical waste analysis was indeed conducted in other parts of Norway in direction of the larger "Food Waste-project", where the waste analysis was conducted in a random one-week period, unbeknownst to the households, during a mutually agreed one-month period. But unfortunately, this was not conducted in any of the Tromsø households, so I am unable to cross-reference this data-material with my own.

Fridge- and Freezer-Rummages

If the shopping trip and initial formal interviews rank as being the less intrusive activities I conducted, the meal sessions and the fridge- and freezer-rummages tower at the other end of the scale. They can appear as an anthropological invasion into the private sphere, under the banner of science. Metaphorically, the freezer-rummages did indeed have traits of an excavation, both into the bad conscience of wasteful household food management and the dated household food-stocks.

I conducted fridge and freezer rummages in all 13 households, and in two of the households I did so on multiple occasions. These rummages were done at the tail end of

my planned activities, when familiarity had been well established. The rummages were conducted during the months of November and January and they lasted from 15 to 30 minutes in total for both fridge and freezer. They would take part in the kitchen where the fridges were and in the basement or in any other rooms where the deep-freezers were kept. Before the rummage started, I would ask the person who had the responsibility for the food management to do it together with me. On some occasions, the responsibility was shared and both would take part. Before the rummages, I would ask them to list what they thought they had in the fridge and freezer, and afterwards we would through the content together. The informant would then typically tell me what the different foodstuffs were, how long they thought they had been there, if they had plans to use it, or if it was considered edible. They would also sometimes mention if said foodstuff was a gift and from whom, if it was homemade, bought in bulk and the like. If they considered the food to be inedible, they would be asked to provide an explanation as to why and how this came about, e.g. if there were any previous plans which had failed to materialize and for whatever reason that might be.

The rummages, especially when going through the household deep-freezers, uncovered quite a bit of wastefulness and a lack of control of the food-stock. On such occasions, this would present itself through concrete, physical evidence – old food that had gone off a long while ago, unidentifiable objects or a general lack of order and knowledge. A moral indignation of one's own shortcomings was uttered or displayed quite often, and a sense of shame was never far away in the households who discovered lots of food past the stage of edibility. If both household members were present, a dialogue between them often started. There would be shifting of blame, blushing, or telling each other that a clear out of the freezer was now long overdue. When going through their stocks, the informants told me about the origin of the different foodstuffs there, piece for piece, or which plans they had or originally had for the food. These kinds of data were very valuable to me. These dialogues allowed me to stand back and observe underlying cultural ideals being played out before me. The life-stories of the foodstuffs gave insight into e.g.: The planning and decision-making processes around food, who was involved and also what kind of barriers obstructed the original plans. Changing plans was a recurring reason food waste.

In these fridge- and freezer-rummages and, on two occasion's clear-outs, I again got closer to the doings of my informants rather than their sayings (Schatzki 1996). Just as I did during the shopping runs, dialogue between the household members took place during on-going actions in the actual context. During these fridge- and freezer - rummages valuable data regarding many topics surfaced: The tempo of circulation in

the households, the spatial organization of the fridge, the two-stage holding process of leftovers, the importance of the freezer locality in the house, excess of food in general and also the status of gifts and homemade foodstuffs. The freezer-rummage with Ingrid and Fredrik also resulted in an added bonus - a gift that I felt obliged to reciprocate quickly and somewhat disproportionately.[94]

Different Field Activities and their Influence on Data Quality

The variation in data-collecting activities I conducted improved the quality of the data-material in several ways. But nevertheless, it also meant that the data I got was much dependent on the personal relationship and report I was able to build with the participating households. The information owes much to the choices of methodology, but just as much to the social role I inhabited, a combination of the roles locals assigned to me and those I was able to carve out for myself through interaction.

Occasionally, I was able to go along and take part in the preparation, cooking, consumption and cleaning-up phases related to different kinds of meals. This excludes breakfast, as I did not spend mornings in the households and only a handful of times I was able to take part in late evening meals. I also participated in meals if they occurred as a natural extension to another kind of data-collecting activities or when hanging-out with informants. More than ten times, both the waste-diary and shopping trips resulted in me taking part in subsequent meals or receiving an invitation to one at a later stage. I did not invite myself to dinner. I was invited.

The meals typically consisted of either a lunch or dinner, or just sharing a coffee with a snack while chatting. The data I got during meals was mainly observational and typically related to: the reasoning behind the choice of dinner, the management of stock in relation to food longevity, the preparation put into the meal, the actual preparation of measuring portions, cooking, presentation etc. I posed questions and made queries when the household members didn't explain what they were doing, attempting to grasp their decision-making processes and dilemmas. After the meals, often when having a coffee, the opportunity to probe further into topics related to the previous meal or activity materialised.

At times, I sensed some kind of uneasiness amongst the household members. On these occasions it seemed like I was cast into a combined role of expert and critic, not

[94] This case is analysed in Chapter 13 from another vantage point.

unfamiliar to anthropologists (See e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:77-78), although I attempted to underline that I was nothing of the sort, and was certainly not judgmental towards their practices. Admittedly, when I found it hard not to be so judgmental towards their wastefulness, I usually tried to look into a metaphorical mirror to remind myself of my own food management. Regardless, I sometimes got the feeling that the person cooking, and this included both men and women, young and old, were out to prove themselves as competent and not wasteful. They were putting up a conscious performance. Perhaps they were not yet fully comfortable about opening up and revealing their actual practices in my presence. This of course meant that, beside the obvious point of confirming the cultural moral ideal of how wrong it is to waste food, and the chance to witness a number of ideal practices to achieve that ideal, the data was not reliable in isolation. This initial performativity extended perhaps to less than half of the households, and it was only during the first meal session, or even only a short duration of these sessions, that this uneasiness and performativity was palpable. As they became habituated to my presence in these situations, their habituated actions also appeared to increase. As a result of this development, the quality of my data improved.

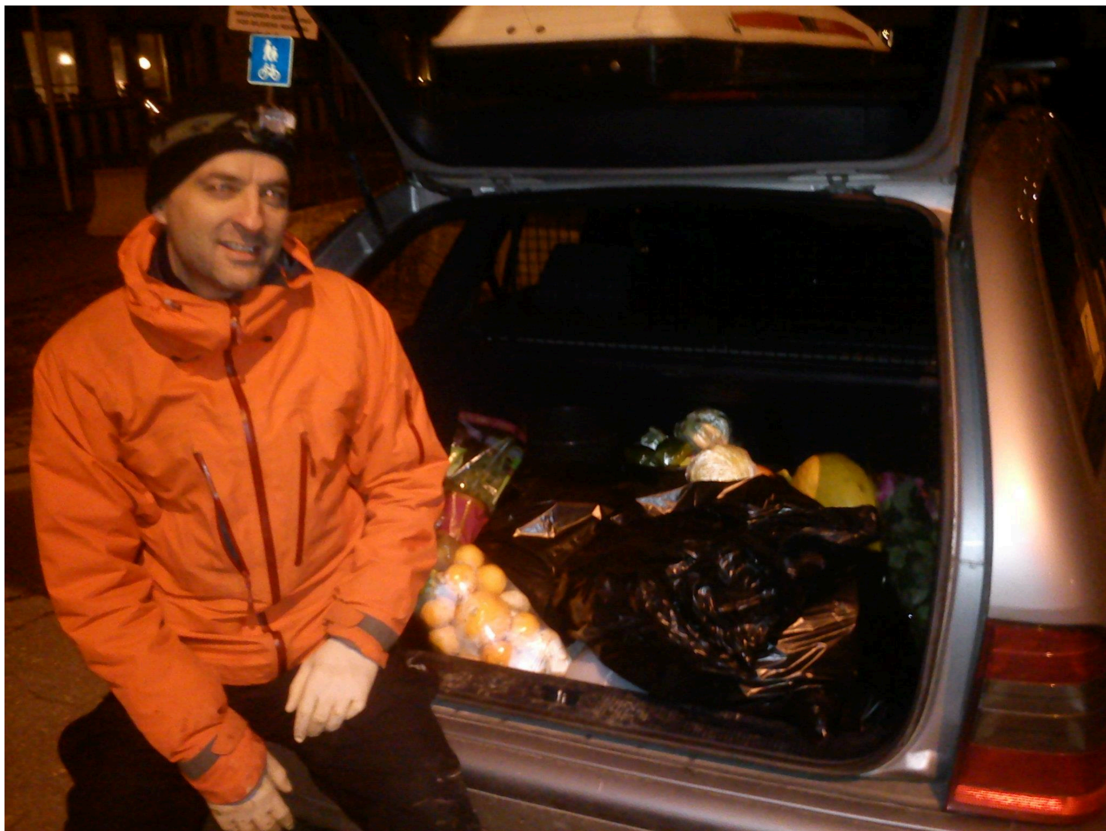
I must add that I should have wished for a larger amount of data obtained from such meal sessions, both in terms of number of households participated and the number of meals. With meals being a social, but also a private setting, the question of me fitting in or not might have been a larger issue than I estimated beforehand. The times when I blended into these meal situations more easily was mainly with people my own age or younger; in their 30's or 40's. At these times, the shared meal was more of a social occasion, compared to research situations where I had planned a pre-set activity and the household I visited perhaps felt too much under the microscope. Nevertheless, I was to an extent able to combine observational data from these meals with my findings from shopping trips, interviews, rummages and diaries to solidify the validity and reliability of some of my analytical points, e.g. relating to the planning and priority of meals in terms of food longevity, the practices of portioning and the way leftovers were managed.

In a few of the households it was also necessary to be inventive in order to obtain more data-material. I had to get them involved in further activities where I could collect data. I attempted to link activities together based on the rhythm of the household's food management activities. E.g. after going through the waste diaries, usually in their kitchen, I would ask for permission to conduct fridge- or freezer-rummages right away. This suggestion was met with a positive response on all occasions. In retrospect, my impression was that this strategy became necessary not so

much due to me being excluded from certain aspects of the household food management, but rather as a result of the households struggle to manage their time and prioritize. This was another reminder of the benevolence the field-working anthropologist is so dependent on.

Other Activities

In an attempt to obtain a wider contextual insight into food and waste management, I decided to follow the food stream a bit further, towards the main source of food – the supermarkets, and also the waste-stream past the household waste bin. Upstream, I dumpster dived and had numerous conversations with Jon, who worked in a local supermarket. Jon and I also dumpster dived together, providing topics for several interesting discussions, in addition to the food. The dumpster diving was done partially out of curiosity. I made five trips to the local supermarkets during the winter months, usually arriving after closing time, at 11:30 pm, rummaging alone in peace in the darkness, using a headlamp.



(The car quickly filled up when I (pictured) went dumpster diving with Jon.)

These trips did actually yield some insights that resonated with some of my findings in the households, particularly when it came to what kind of food was often wasted. I found that food with limited longevity, like vegetables, fruit, bread, dairy products and ready-made meals made up the bulk of the food waste in the supermarket containers. I also found that foodstuffs which were seldom used, i.e. condiments and sauces or products related to certain diets or preferences, like gluten-free food, vegetarian options or ecological products appeared to be over-represented in the bins. I discussed this with Jon. His answer was that supermarkets were expected to have such food in stock, but they did not sell much of it. It was not a surprise to him that it appeared prone to being wasted. During the dumpster diving trips I also got to see first-hand how the juridical regulations of expiry dates contributed to unnecessary waste in the supermarkets.

Down-stream, I had a meeting with three the staff members at the local waste management company “Remix”. They handle household food waste in Tromsø municipality and neighbouring Karlsøy. I met the manager who supervised the handing of waste in the main hall, the head of information and the manager of the used goods outlet situated on the premises of the waste management company. After our discussion, I was also given a tour of the facilities, with the opportunity for questions and answers as we went along. This gave me a better contextual understanding on household waste and in particular the scale of waste involved.

Making Field-Notes

From day one in the field in Tromsø, I would carry with me a small notebook and a pen, small enough to fit into my pocket. When I was hanging out, conducting participant observation in a household and something appeared to be of even a vague relevance to my topic, I would first just gauge the situation. If I felt making notes openly would disrupt or influence the situation, I would wait and take notes later until the interesting occurrence had ended. Sometimes I would go to the toilet and take notes if I felt that taking notes openly wouldn’t be helpful to my cause, or if it could be interpreted as overly intrusive due to the social context. It was decided by a matter of gut feeling, there and then. When the discourse was more focused towards my topic of study and I felt making notes would perhaps even trigger an increased willingness to assist me by providing answers, I would openly take out my notebook and make notes in front of the informants. This way, I left myself open to queries, and criticism, which could lead to good opportunities for follow-up questions or discussions in order to obtain background

or more specific information. I found this to be most useful if there was only one informant present. If others were also present, I would rather attempt to hang-back and let the situation unfold.

As a rule, I would note down place, time, who was there, and what the people present said and did at the time as soon as I could, and also the general atmosphere during the situation and if and how it changed. Acknowledging the benefits of being as descriptive as possible, I found it challenging at times to recount with a high degree of accuracy what happened, or to gather the actual mood in certain situations. The vast amount of information that can be drawn from just a fairly mundane situation calls for the inevitable interpretation and filtering out what significant and less so. My perceptions and interpretations, and on their basis, selections were inevitable (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011:5-6), regardless of my awareness around this process.

Returning to my flat in the evenings, I would type the notes of the day into my computer. These could be notes based on participant observation or from going-along activities like shopping-trips, fridge- or freezer-rummages where I did not have the opportunity to use a Dictaphone. After the goings-along, I would write out my quickly scribbled jottings, and attempt to describe and elaborate the situations as best I could. This second process of what Clifford and Marcus (2001 [1986]) theme as "textualization" would certainly also involve another step of interpretations, as I would filter out some of the notes in my notebook as irrelevant and not type them out into the computer files. Sometimes during any of these stages of "textualisation" I would get ideas about similar situations. I would draw lines to other examples which the current one could be seen in relation to, e.g. "as with fridge rummage in household X – home-made jam".

At the bottom of each field-note entry I typed in, I would add preliminary analytical ideas or thematic tags of varying levels of abstraction or complexity when I found it fit. This could be anything from "categories of waste", "social occasion", "commodities as gifts" to "instability factors", or classifying the notes according to what stage in the food cycle the observation was primarily related to, e.g. planning, provisioning or disposal. They could also be more conceptual tags like "method", "ethics" or "theory", occasionally with a reference to a book, author or theoretical concept. Being weary of the pitfalls of prematurely reaching for abstract concepts (See e.g. Hacking 1999), the idea was just to make sure the initial thought was kept for later and to aid the future structuring of the data. Many of the analytical tags were subsequently scratched, but this kind of in-process analysis (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011:80-85) nevertheless proved productive during both the structuring process of the

whole batch of field-notes, interviews and activity transcripts, in addition to the next step of thorough, pointed analysis.

Structuring the Empirical Material – Data Quality and Composition

Going into the last three months of the fieldwork, I started structuring the empirical material thoroughly. Working my way through it, it became clear that the approach I had chosen had yielded a vast amount of data on the food management practices of the households. With such a large amount, it was inevitable that the quality of the data varied. This was especially clear for some of the interview data and shopping trips, which to be fair had been done early on in the fieldwork when my rapport with the informants was still developing. On the whole, I had reasons to be satisfied and there were plenty of new hypotheses that were unearthed in the material. To ensure that I had covered all the topics which I saw as relevant, it was nevertheless necessary to categorize and systematize the data I had so far, and to discover if anything was missing or should be improved upon in terms of quality. Wholly conscious about the simplifications and aided by the thematic tags applied during the fieldwork process, I chose to systematize the data roughly according to the food management cycle, using thematic tags like "planning", "provisioning", "meals", "disposal" etc. to get a sense of overview. I also split the data into additional categories like "methodology", "local ethnographic" and other topics that appeared relevant: The "uses of technology", "knowledge", "food and social relations", "generational differences". The process of choosing the core themes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011:188) to refine, analyze further, emphasize and in the end present to you readers, was akin to an open coding process (Bernhard 2011:430). The theoretical concepts are by no means absent in this process and are invaluable when making priorities amongst the incidents emerging in the empirical material and understand their interrelations (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011:198). They are the tools that enable me to identify core themes in the first place. It is a balancing act to simultaneously remain open, paying attention, as this refining and sharpening of the core themes comes about gradually in an interchange. While keeping my aim steady on the research question to answer, the core themes in the thesis were thus not only influenced by the theoretical concepts, what emerged as important on the ground, or what I turned out to get good quality data on, but also by what was practically feasible methodologically in the field.

After the fieldwork period had been concluded, the notes from different situations across households were bracketed together under thematic headlines and

sub-headlines, like the abovementioned ones. Reading these data together as a loosely defined entity, undoubtedly offered nuance, richness and subtopics to the core themes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011:191). For instance, when the data from the fridge-rummages of all the households was put together, it allowed me to identify subtopics more clearly, like “the use of space”, “the speed of circulation”, “borders, chaos and order”.

In the end, I had a mixture of topics that emerged throughout the fieldwork like the exchange of food or the role of price in the valuation of food, in addition to themes that had been identified in advance, like uses of technology or expiry dates. The open approach allowed for the discovery and refinement of these, before the next step of identifying possible links between these core themes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011:188-191), for instance how the variation in individual practices like food disposal is influenced by, and feeds back into, the larger context of the valuation of food. And consequentially, how this is interrelated to macro developments in society, like increased access to cheaper foodstuffs, decreasing involvement in food production through regional centralization, technological developments or increased educational levels and a changed labour market. By drawing up possible links both within and between the core themes, we can see how individual and cultural data (Bernhard 2011:113) can interact and feed off each other, enriching and strengthening the arguments put forward.

When transcribing the formal interviews, the preliminary thematic coding was easier as the structure of the interview guide was based on pre-set topics. To obtain more data on topics that arose during fieldwork, I often introduced these during more informal conversations, or even added them as an additional topic at the end of the waste-diary debrief. One such topic was the exchange of food between households in the city and on the countryside, especially of fish. I approached the households that I knew had moved from the countryside, who were likely to have relatives still living outside Tromsø, to examine any potential exchange relations between the household and relatives.

To allow for the local culture to unfold, I didn’t have a pre-set line of questions in a fixed order, and questions were mostly open-ended. I wanted the informants to be able to express themselves within and between the topics in ways they found it relevant. Casting the net in such a wide manner meant that in some cases the data would sometimes be lacking in focus, or not cover all the factual background information about the relatives and people involved. On the other hand, it did provide

contextual and related information I would not have obtained with a more pre-set approach. This especially became clear concerning the topic of gifts between family members on the whole, and also in terms of ethnographically relevant historical and cultural insights, e.g. when it came to the underlying meanings of harvesting and redistributing locally caught food. Data gathered in these topical conversations also served to frame generational differences in food management within an historical and social context, and further to link these to both larger scale societal changes and local continuities.

Furthermore, the quality of the data I obtained the methods of "going-along" (Kusenbach 2003) proved to be very good, as well as the fridge- and freezer-rummages. When I was in situ in this manner, concrete and relevant examples were never far away, and provided entry points to discussions on household food management. I could observe discussions at both the entry and exit points of the household food cycle, e.g. witnessing discussions of what to buy for dinner or the search for reasons for food having deteriorated to inedibility during one of the rummages. I found these dialogues between household members to provide data of good quality, offering insights into cultural factors behind their decisions regarding food expressed descriptively through examples, past and recent. It is relevant to mention a few: The relevance of price for determining the perceived value of food, the different roles of the household members, how to handle the moralities of food waste when confronted with one's own wastefulness, or how the rhythms of everyday life influenced on the priority of spending time on food management. Evidently, such dialogues were a source for different kinds of data. They provided both cultural and individual data by acting as a spring-board for further inquiries into contextual, ethnographic data, but also by their more indirect means of assisting me in drawing the lines towards the cultural ideals and values behind the more practical and mundane data of the individual food management practices.

The Sensitivity and Morality of the Topic of Food Waste

The moral and political position of the project itself, and its aim to discover reasons for *unnecessary* household food waste, deserves attention in a methodological context. The position of the topic is very much founded on the political guidelines and priorities at the Norwegian Research Council (NRC) who funded the project. The NRC is the most important advisor and provider of research policy for the Norwegian Government,

public administration and research communities.[95] The project was initiated in response to a growing concern about food waste in the food-sector in Norway, aiming to achieve a more sustainable resource use in the whole value-chain from producer to consumer.

One of the main hypotheses the "Food Waste"-project started off with originally was that a significant amount of unnecessary food waste is generated in Norwegian households. These assumptions were to an extent based on pioneering research conducted in the UK which estimated the amount and the composition of household food waste in UK households (WRAP 2007, 2008 & 2012). They also dug deeper, coming up with both possible reasons and underlying dynamics. Locating and quantifying food waste, and also uncovering reasons for its generation, is also at the heart of the larger "Food Waste"-project in Norway. During the project period starting in 2010, surveys and waste analysis conducted under the umbrella of this project has established that the food waste level from the average Norwegian household accounts to between 46-51 kilos per annum (Hanssen & Møller 2013).

Initiatives to raise awareness of the multiple consequences of food waste and to find policies to reduce it have been established on the highest political levels. This is reflected in the United Nations Environment Programme[96] or SAVE FOOD: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction[97] run by FAO (The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) and all the way down to campaigns on the local, municipal level[98] directed at the households. The focus is invariably on reducing both the environmental (de-forestation, greenhouse-gas emissions, draught, land-erosion etc.) and social consequences (poverty, famine, malnourishment, conflict etc.) of the wasteful practices, not to mention the economic benefits. Thus the ethical and moral dimensions of the project topic extend all the way from the highest political level, down to the individual household and household member.

I had to remain conscious of this moral undertow when I was operating as an anthropologist in the field. I hoped to manage this by not being overtly confrontational, avoiding explicit judgments on the actual practices of the local households. Rather, I aimed to let the informants themselves express such moral dimensions through their

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[95] http://www.forskningsradet.no/en/Vision_and_mandate/1138785841810 Accessed: 4th July 2014.
[96] http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2726&ArticleID=9611 Accessed: 7. July 2014
[97] http://www.fao.org/save-food/savefood/en/ Accessed: 7. July 2014
[98] E.g. https://www.trondheim.kommune.no/content/1117738882/Matsvinn---reduser-matavfallet Accessed: 7. July 2014

own statements, with minimal inference from my own presence and explicit comments and queries. Inevitably though, the mere presence of me in Tromsø as a researcher investigating the topic of unnecessary household food waste framed and positioned the topic in a certain moral and social discourse. The spontaneous comments I experienced when I introduced the topic were clear; wasting food unnecessary is seen as wrong, for a rather complex variety of reasons, distributed unequally amongst the households I followed.

Before arriving in the field, I had reflected upon how and when the moral dimensions linked to waste would appear, so I was aware that the topic might not necessarily be straight-forward to approach or discuss (Hawkins 2006), neither for me as a researcher, nor for my informants. Thus, I also had to consider how to present the topic of study to the potential informants, both in terms of ethical considerations on openness, while maintaining the concerns over the potential sensitivity of the topic. There was balance a between the ethical question of openness about intent and my need for access to good data that I had to juggle. This is a familiar dilemma in anthropology (See e.g. Berhard 2011:267-270), although arguments that there are tendencies to dramatize the moral transgressions excessively do exist (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:285). Davis (2012:43) cites Hawkins (2006), anticipating a certain delicacy surrounding the topic of food waste as a too confrontational and uncomfortable a topic to be directly exposed to. I could expect under-reporting of wastefulness based on dominant cultural norms and ideals (Rathje & Cullen 2001). Davis (2012) thus chose to approach the topic through broader practices of food provisioning in the households, a holistic approach which can be supported firmly regardless of these concerns of confrontation. As mentioned, I opted for full openness in my introductory letter.

I was very conscious about my aim to describe the objective processes and practices of everyday actions, particularly early on during my fieldwork. I made efforts not to make value-judging comments or pose laden questions, rather than casting moral, political shadows whether the Tromsø households were especially wasteful or not and for whatever reasons. As I was brought up and am deeply entrenched in a fairly similar culture to that I was studying, this was on occasions not an easy task. However, this did not turn out to be a very valid concern. Almost without exception, the household's I studied would openly admit to their own short-comings when it came to wasteful practices, and this would occur without any need for my probing or queries, except for posing questions related to resource management on shopping routines, meal structure, preparation etc. Locals would critically reflect on their own practices. Both in formal interviews or more informal chats or observations during food

management, they would often initiate or throw themselves into general discussions on how the society as a whole had arrived at a state where wasteful food practices were common and widespread. They presented their own theories of how and why this had occurred. Often they would label their own practices shameful and wrong, but nevertheless not hesitate to share them with me. This was of course a great help in my queries into this topic; one I had feared could be too sensitive.

Narratives presenting underlying reasons for waste on such a general level were common. I did not encounter much reluctance to talk about one's wasteful practices, but it is evidently less uncomfortable to discuss morally situated topics like food waste in an indirect manner, referring to people in general. As mentioned, I attempted to counter the potential sensitivity during the interviews by asking questions that were morally charged in a more general manner (Briggs 1996, Bernhard 2011:199-201). I framed questions about "people in general" and not about them specifically as a household or the member in question. This often resulted in answers that were quite damning and judgmental, before our discussion gradually shifted towards describing their own practices, often with admittances that they were also quite wasteful. It is also likely that the interviewees were indeed talking about themselves when they spoke about "people in general", but I doubt that they would have been as critical if the question been directed at them personally from the start, certainly during the early stages of my fieldwork when our report was quite weak.

Third-person narratives quite commonly occur in ethnographic research, and methodologically, the use of such data in analysis call for a high and explicitly stated level of consciousness from the researcher. What, and especially who, are the informants actually talking about? When are they talking about themselves, their friends and family, or when are they talking about current ideal practices they might or might not practice? Such narratives can be presented as stories about practices they actually experience around themselves, while at the same time partially being about oneself and one's own practices. At the same time, such narratives are seen in the light of contemporary ideals about food management.

On the whole, the sensitivity of the topic was not a problematic factor based on my field experiences in Tromsø. Informants would be ashamed of wastefulness, but they would not attempt to hide their wasteful ways from me. Regardless, there were indeed times when shifting the blame onto other household members was too much of a temptation to resist. Two situations which illustrate the morality surrounding the issue of food management and how shame isn't far away when staring one's own practices in

the face due to inescapable evidence follow. They both took place during fridge- and freezer-rummages. First, the following dialogue took place in Ingrid and Fredrik's living room after we had finished the debriefing of their waste-diary. We were chatting in a relaxing manner, enjoying a cup of coffee when I asked:

> *Ant: "Can we have a look in the fridge as well?*
>
> Ingrid: *Is it clean in there, Fredrik?* [slight pause, looks over at him]
>
> Fredrik: *She has been away, you know.* [addressing me]
>
> Ingrid: *Just go over and have a look.* [looks away from me]
>
> *Ant: No, you have to come along, so you can show me.*
>
> Ingrid: *Yes. I should have had a look beforehand…*
>
> *Ant: There is nothing to be ashamed of, you know.* [Smiles]
>
> Ingrid: *Ha ha! No.*" [Walks over to the fridge in the kitchen together with me]

Ingrid here expresses a wish to prepare and tidy up her fridge beforehand. She displays a wish to present herself as someone who practices the ideals of control over the food management and tidiness in the household. Ingrid has been away, but still takes upon herself some of this responsibility. She also partially shifts some of the responsibility over on her husband, which seems quite fair, as she has been absent several days. Jorunn expressed a sense of shame in a much more pronounced manner during their fridge- and freezer-rummage. When faced with the evidence of a fair amount of inedible food in the freezer, she burst out saying that Kjell hadn't thrown away enough of the old food in the freezer. It remained as a representation of wasteful food management practices and, for her, a source of shame for all of us to see.[99] The interview with Georg showed another side to the blame-games. Georg shared a story about how they wasted good quality coffee needlessly in his household, and after revealing one of their more wasteful practices, he later protected his wife and in an attempt to absolve her of *all* the blame, previously expressed openly, and to transfer some of it onto himself.

The anthropologist can clearly be seen as a critic or a judge on these occasions. I am surveying the food management practices of Ingrid and Fredrik and Jorunn and Kjell; an act that appears to create a certain level of anxiety (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:77-78), even if I am also looking at reasons for food not being wasted just as much as the opposite, as they are products of the same equation. In this case, the more

[99] See The Chapter 9: Disposal Practices Part I for a full description of this situation.

traditional gender roles also come to the fore. It is clear that the concept of the "honour of the housewife"[100] is yet not completely confined to the past, as I perceived the shamefulness to be pronounced by the women.

Openness, Trust and My Role and Position in the Field

Reactive behaviour and attempts to manage impressions were certainly factors of obvious concern to me. Participant observation builds trust amongst those we study over time, providing a higher level of validity to the data of the ethnographer. It reduces the likelihood of people changing their behaviour when they know they are being studied (Bernhard 2011:265). Regardless, I also experienced explicit attempts at impression management from Ingrid and Jorunn, who both attempted to shift responsibility of potential wasteful behaviour or a lack of control of household stock to their partner during fridge- and freezer-rummages.

After interacting with several of my informants both socially and in the more overt role of a researcher, I gradually succeeded in carving out a slightly peripheral role that appeared natural and acceptable - avoiding over-reporting, while ensuring participation. In this way, I was taking part in daily activities over time, asking questions, listening, helping out etc. After the initial two-three months, I was, in my view, in the process of landing on what Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:112) coin as a "marginal native"- somewhere between a stranger and friend of the household. Regardless, over-reporting with specific groups of locals was not a problem. In terms of age, life-phase and socio-economic status I had a variety of households I followed. This meant a low risk of exclusion or problems of establishing contact with some households due to visible and frequent contact with others. In the households where I was able to socialize and become more like a friend of the house through my frequent and informal presence, I made sure to participate in social situations where food was a central element when the occasion arose.

Nevertheless, I could have wished for more data based on pure participant observation settings; situations where my presence was not the result of a specific data-collecting activity based on a scheduled appointment. This is for me the clearest weakness in the data-material, although this point mostly concerns the households where it wasn't natural for us to hang out together. This was mainly due to age-differences between me and the household members, but also due to the lack of a

[100] This concept is discussed in the Chapter 7: Household Framework and Communalities.

common frame of reference; we didn't have much in common so it wasn't natural for us to spend time together unless we made appointments. It is important for the fieldworker to find a natural role. If the fieldworker fails to develop a natural role in the environment of study, this can lead to limited roles of participation. I wanted to get close, but not too close, as that might give an impression that I am tricking the informants. Not being from Northern Norway actually helped me here, as it gives me a bit of freedom and room in terms of the role I can carve out for myself.

There were also situations where I felt I could be interpreted as intrusive. I would then avoid asking to join in, e.g. if it was a family setting where they would have guests, or in situations where the households with small children were quite busy. With much going on, it could obviously have been possible for me to slide into the background as an observer, even if the detached observer might be more likely to transform contexts by appearing a voyeur or critic, contrary to what might be intended (Okely 2012:77). Nevertheless, I exercised my social and cultural sensitivities (Bernhard 2011:260) to strike what I perceived to be the right balance between influencing the situation to ensure participation and data, and remaining respectful of their privacy and not being too much of a social nuisance.

Although this shortfall cannot fully be compensated for, the fact that the households and I conducted a wide range of practical food management tasks together (e.g. shopping trips, unpacking, having meals, fridge- and freezer clear-outs) was helpful in this context. These were settings where it was possible for me to slide back and forth on the scale between participant and observer mode (See e.g. Bernhard 2011:260-261 and Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:99-109), even though I was indeed taking part in the activities both asking questions and helping out. These were task that had a natural place in their everyday life, so it is reasonable to assume that many of these actions were fairly habitual, and thus that my presence would not have influenced strongly, certainly as they grew accustomed to my presence.

I might not have been able to shake off the swiftly ascribed label of "the waste guy". Nonetheless, it appeared to be the shared cultural ideal of not wasting food - a morally laden emic issue - rather than my persona and the, admittedly, legitimately ascribed status of an expert or critic (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995) that became the centre of attention, defining our shared discourse. With legitimacy, I tried to soften this image of me as an expert on the topic by underlining my own imperfections when it came to food management. The role of a novice or an acceptable incompetent whom the locals could train or teach might not always be available when doing fieldwork in

one's own culture (ibid:103), and it certainly wasn't to me. This was much due to this ascribed status as an expert that I had to shed, or at least tone down. My experience was that a non-judgmental approach towards describing the processes of resource management in the individual households helped counter this. Focusing on the daily practical issues was instructive. This avoided the potential pitfall of people shutting me out. But people appeared to trust me, and were more than willing to share their experiences, quite often being their own harshest critics.

I got numerous explicit expressions of how important my field of study was, and how nice it was that someone was indeed looking into the problem of unnecessary food waste. As we got to know each other better, the openness I experienced around the issue of food waste illustrated that we had the moral concern over food waste levels in common. Avoiding food waste was rather an ideal that was part of the cultural background of both of us, me and the household members. It was shared. Not due to be being a local and one *of* them, but certainly from being one *like* them. It appeared that a balance of familiarity and distance was achieved since I had a fairly overlapping cultural and historical frame of reference with the informants. But on the other hand, I was also someone not so close that it made the informants reluctant to open up and share their practices. I was an outsider, but not a stranger, so to speak. This made my path to obtain trust a less rocky one, as the trust the local household's placed in me is likely to have increased the reliability of my data, the moral encompassing emic *and* etic context notwithstanding.

However, I do not wish to under-communicate the openness and willingness to accommodate my requests that I generally experienced in the local households. This was a factor that cannot be underestimated. To illustrate this a short story is useful. During what was only my second visit to their household, and Ingrid invited me in for coffee, as I came by to talk about my project and to ask if they would be willing to participate. The initial contact had been made when I bought a used washing machine from Ingrid's brother who lives in the adjacent flat in the house. After sitting down on the sofa in the living room, I quickly found out that it was Ingrid´s 61st birthday. How did I know? It was written on one of the two cakes I was offered to taste. I can still remember the slight awkwardness I felt as I was sitting in the sofa eating cake as guests kept popping by with flowers and gifts, offering their congratulations to Ingrid. As the visitors familiar to the household wondered who I was, Ingrid and Fredrik presented me as a friend of the family. I felt quite out of place. It was a social gathering typically reserved for close friends and relatives. As Ingrid invited me in a very open and including manner, my slight sense of intrusiveness did not become overwhelming. This feeling

was probably misplaced, as at a later stage of the fieldwork, I learned that this kind of warmth and openness was very common in their house. After finishing my coffee and at least a couple of slices of the different cakes I was offered, I thanked them politely for the visit, wished Ingrid a wonderful birthday and said I would call them in a few days.

Insider – Outsider Dynamics

After taking part in the resource management process of the households, I made deliberate efforts in describing these processes as objective and detailed as possible. I tried to avoid value-based assumptions, also to avoid drawing clear-cut, premature lines between relevance and irrelevance. A slightly exaggerated open-ended approach, originating from my wish to counter the likelihood of instinctive projections of my own prejudices, handed me a bit of extra work in the explorative phase. But I believe it was necessary, even if it also made the structuring of the empirical material labouring. To liberate myself from such native knowledge is not possible, but one can still make efforts to avoid projecting one's established cultural patterns onto the field and the data, focusing on a detailed empirical level to resist abstractions at the stage of data collection (Wadel 1991:66-67).

Added challenges in the scientific struggle to maximize the level objectivity are likely to present themselves with such a high degree of shared cultural categories, values and experiences. Increased awareness can probably rectify this challenge to an extent, awareness of my own opinions, values and practices. In the field however, the awareness of one's own cultural values and background only arrive after a bit of an interlude, later on when you have stepped out of the participatory situation with your informants. To illustrate, the case of the gift-exchange with Ingrid is interesting.[101] The episode took place during a visit to their home, as we conducted a fridge- and freezer-rummage together in their cellar. We were going through the contents, and she first offers me some of her homemade sauerkraut, then some coal fish and some meatballs. I instantly felt obliged to swiftly return her generosity. This was at the end of our planned activities for that day, so I went home and stacked my newly received gifts in my own freezer. I returned half an hour later with a return gift: two ptarmigans I had shot the previous autumn.

Only in retrospect was I able to observe and analyze what was actually going on in this social situation. I was perhaps both naive and non-present, but my reflex of

[101] I refer to the Chapter 13 for more detailed information on this case.

returning the gift was a strongly habituated one. Her first gift started a process of exchanges of gifts that have the potential of rearranging the relations between us (Graeber 2014:71). I was indeed an observing participant at the start of this informal situation that consisted of a fridge- and freezer-rummage. Throughout the interaction between us during this set of activities, the dynamic might have slid towards me having more of a participant observer status. Then Ingrid's generosity did indeed alter the scale further, and the gifting triggered something that made me participate fully in the social interaction. The awareness of my own reaction due to my cultural background, habituated practices and the ensuing socially rooted response, was temporarily on hold until I wrote out the situation later that afternoon. I was my own anthropological tool. To use the common concept of "going native" here would be a simplification. Rather, there are degrees of self-consciousness along the scale between the role of participation and observation. Thinking back, it wasn't necessarily the subsequent distance that later enabled me to actually see this exchange for what it also was on another level. I don't think my geographical and cultural background was the decisive factor in me clocking what was actually taking place during this exchange. Rather the analytical knowledge and tools I have as an anthropologist in the field were a necessity for the unmasking of this social phenomenon.

Bernhard (2011:260-261) discusses the different degrees of participant observation, ranging from observing participants to participating observers. Where you are on this scale depends on how much of an insider or outsider the anthropologist is relative to the field and context they are in. From my own experience in Tromsø, the degrees of being an insider-outsider I was experiencing, assuming there is a fair amount of overlap in the perceptions of myself and the households I studied, was both contextually dependent and changing over time as our social relations developed. I was able to strike up a good report with most households, and as the fieldwork progressed, the switch to the observational outsider status was increasingly often something that only took place in my own mind. I probed and queried in the fairly informal atmosphere I experienced, even during the scheduled activities of data-collection like shopping-trips, meal-preparation or fridge- and freezer-rummages. I also believe that my personality as an anthropologist acting in the field had clear implications for my access and the information I was able to gather (Okely 2012:135). Through my trustworthiness and capacity to establish contact with a wide range of people in different ages or background, I quickly obtained numerous invitations for social gatherings, and I was met with positivity and willingness towards taking part in my project as informants.

It can also easily be argued that these kinds of outsider-insider dynamics are shifting and developing as fieldwork progresses, or even during an inquisitive household visit session like the one previously referred to. Additionally, it can be argued that the viscosity of these dynamics and shifts are intrinsically linked to the fraction of a shared cultural framework between me as an anthropologist and those I interact with in the field – the degree of nativeness, fluctuating, genuine or ascribed. The possible cultural blind spots and my taken-for-grantedness as a quite native anthropologist doing fieldwork in a similar culture can pose some problems as well as advantages. A quick glance at several of the well-known possible pitfalls that have been pointed out in throughout the discipline is warranted (See e.g. Lincoln and Denzin & Lincoln 2011, Clifford & Marcus (2010 [1986]). A shared language and fairly similar cultural categories can lead to a premature and only partially conscious interpretation, projecting certainty and a degree of cultural blindness to the richness and nuances of meaning in local phenomena. Such a degree of blindness is perhaps not too different from the habituated nature of some of the everyday food management practices in the households – it just goes without saying, inscribed into our bodies and minds (Bourdieu 1977, 1990).

Similarities in my own practices and those I experience when observing in the field is also a factor. It is another possible hurdle to overcome in my quest to achieve the distance required to offer an optimal analysis. But I cannot forget what I know completely, embodied or consciously reflective. The familiarity with the culture makes me order, place and categorize the practices and statements I experience in the households. Just as humans place, order and sort their natural surroundings, transforming it according to a certain way of life when mind and nature meets (See e.g. Bateson 1985 [1979] and Ingold 2000). The community of shared meaning that my informants and I have, the shared culture, is what makes up what the world we see means to us (Barth 1991:8-10). Awareness is here imperative, both in the field situations and in analysis, as the embodied cultural familiarity increases my need to be aware of my own background and experiences even more.

Doing fieldwork in one's own culture also has its advantages on a larger scale. Several pragmatic positives exist, e.g. the familiarity with language, climate, and culture; a combination of factors which make out a shared frame of reference which means that you are likely to obtain acceptance as a participant observer much quicker (Bernhard 2011). The embodied sensitivity and unspoken knowledge obtained through my own cultural experiences (ibid. 266), in addition to my personal traits, could well have contributed to the openness I experienced. Thus, the data I have obtained by being me,

and by being a fellow Norwegian might have been unavailable or unobtainable if I had found myself more towards the other end of the scale, as an outside observer in the moral, cultural universe of food management. Without my cultural sensitivity, I might not have gotten in the door, never mind being offered a taste of Ingrid's birthday cakes, able to catch a glimpse into the contents of their freezer, nor obtained the brutally honest narratives of Georg's wasteful practices.

I did however experience the outsider role too. One clear challenge was to become enough of an insider to obtain decent data from households that it was not natural for me to socialize with. This gap could be due to generational differences, differences in lifestyle or interest, e.g. the households over 60 or less than 25 years old, or other people my own age that I had little in common with. The formal activities I scheduled with the households allowed me to get the amount of data required, but during some of these activities the role I could carve out ended up to be more of an observational one, or one where I acted more as an interviewer. This will doubtless have influenced the quality of the data I obtained, but I think the combination of different methods and activities I applied somewhat compensates for this shortcoming, raising the validity of the empirical material towards a satisfactory level. Accordingly, my positioning on the insider-outsider scale, and thus the degree of participation and observation, was dynamic, often voluntarily so, at other times not.

Ethics and Anonymity

To maintain informant anonymity in the best way possible, I have used pseudonyms and changed household locality and the employment on other occasions. There is however one clear ethical problem regarding anonymity which arose in relation to the household I first made contact with upon arrival in Tromsø; Jon and Gry. Leaving them out of the study was not considered as a feasible option, especially as they became pivotal for my further recruitment of informants, and also down to the amount of good data from participant observation that our interaction yielded. As a consequence, I have discussed this issue with them directly. In advance I have thus obtained their consent to use and publish the data gathered through our interaction, even if this might lead to some readers being able to identify them indirectly through their knowledge of our interaction and my project.

As an anthropologist, there are also several other ethical concerns to consider to avoid revealing information which can turn out to be harmful, exploitative, breaching

privacy or where there are degrees of different forms of pretence involved in the interaction between researcher and informant (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:263-287). In the former case, there might have been occasions where the shamefulness informants displayed when confronted with their own wasteful practices led to me over-communicating a non-judgmental stance towards what I witnessed. Regarding the potential harm or exploitation towards the informants in the future, there are no issues I could think of.

Coupled with the uncomfortable sense of shame that some household members clearly expressed, the raised consciousness towards their wasteful practices enabled them to take steps to lower their wastefulness, and hence both their household costs and their environmental footprint. So there are elements of learning for both involved parties, even if these learning experiences might be a bit more shameful for some of the household members. In any case, informed consent was secured in advance without pressure, and probing like an inquisitor was not necessary for as household members admitted to what they perceived as morally shameful practices. There was also a sense of pride experienced for a few households, having received confirmation and positive feedback regarding their meticulous food management practices by participating in the project.

Combining and Comparing Different Data Sources

Since the "Food Waste"-project as a whole is based on a mixed-methods approach, previously often labelled as methodological triangulation (See e.g. Blaikie 1991, Bryman 2008 & 2004, Plano Clark & Creswell 2008), it provides data on different levels. These are obtained through different methods executed at different times and arenas, data that are not immediately transferable and comparable. The results from the different modules of the project offer different descriptions of the same terrain, but not from one exact position as, metaphorically speaking, the compass and the map is used differently within each research module, or we could even say: a different kind of compass is used. I chose to follow the pragmatist approach towards mixed-methods, promoted by e.g. Kelle (2001) and Morgan (2007) in Plano Clark & Creswell 2008:59), while remaining aware of the different world views the methodological approaches rest on. The project design of the larger "Food Waste"-project ended up focusing on how the data from the different modules provides answers to solve our current problem – excessive food waste generation, without entering into the debates around the deeper epistemological questions with regards to philosophy of science in this work. With such a pragmatist,

mixed-methods perspective, the aim is that different scientific approaches inform each other and work together so to speak. Results from an inductive qualitative approach can serve as a base for hypothesizes for a deductive quantitative approach (Morgan 2007, in Plano Clark & Creswell 2008:59). Or vice versa, as data from the quantitative survey about food waste helps us formulate research questions for ethnographic fieldwork to further explore from that angle.

Mixed methods working in a complementary manner can for instance be observing through ethnographic fieldwork, like I did, that households going food shopping with little or no planning in advance ended up buying more food than they could consume before it went off. But through this approach as an ethnographer, I cannot make estimates on how much food is actually wasted in an area, in which different groups or during a specific period of time. For that, a quantitative approach would be needed. But thankfully, I already had the survey results at hand for support when I entered the field. The survey results also showed that those over 60 years old wasted just about half the amount of food compared to the highest scoring constituency between 25 and 39 years old, with data also indicating that families with small children where dominant in this constituency. Together, the research group of the "Food Waste"-project then came up with the hypothesis that the high waste levels could be due to a busy everyday schedule. Perhaps there was a lack of time to spend on food management) Knowing this, I had to keep in mind the temptations of confirmation bias (E.g. Klayman 1995) while investigating further, as a qualitative researcher's awareness of the quantitative results can lead to bias if the researcher subconsciously filters out information that reaffirms hypothesizes from the quantitative module.

Through my ethnographic approach, I witnessed the time constraints and the tight schedule in the two families with small children that I followed, and thus also how they did not prioritize day-to-day food management. This increased levels of unnecessary food waste. But I also noticed how a higher amount of people in a household meant a higher number of preferences and challenges of coordination, which in the end also contributed to unnecessary waste. The survey data thus presented me with hypotheses to investigate further, providing possible explanations behind the practices. This data added layers of complexity to the processes behind household waste that my ethnographic approach could not provide. The survey also showed that the categories of food wasted most often were food with short longevity or a short period of perceived freshness, like bread, vegetables and fruit or dairy products. Time thus appeared as an even more critical factor influencing food waste levels within this

constituency. The short-lived foodstuffs became especially vulnerable in an environment where time was already scarce.

The oldest constituency, over 60 years old, was the one that wasted the least based on both the surveys and the waste analyses. But through my ethnographic activities, the reasons behind their lower levels of food waste did not seem as straight-forward as simply being a result of having more time on their hands. They did appear to have more time available, but some of them did still work fulltime. One thing I discovered was that the oldest household members appeared to value food differently than the younger ones; perhaps a perspective learnt a few decades back when food was, if not scarce, less taken for granted. They seemed to treat it more preciously and had knowledge on how to take care of it. This was one explanatory avenue that became very important for my further work.

In addition to combining my own data with data based on the previously conducted quantitative work in such a sequential manner, I was also able to compare the data I got from the different sets of activities that I conducted during fieldwork. As mentioned, according to the survey the kinds of food most often wasted were vegetables, fruit, bread and bakery and dairy products. Knowing this, I investigated this further through a combination of the methods; waste diaries, participant observation of meals, fridge and freezer rummages and interviews. In general, foodstuff with the shortest longevity or period of freshness was often wasted. The results were similar to the findings from the surveys conducted in one of the other modules of the larger "Food Waste"-project and thus increased the reliability of this conclusion.

Cross-referencing in such a manner though does not validate hypothesises, and can also unveil contradictions where you expected correlation (Lien 1987:45). This occurred when going through the waste-diary of Ingrid and Fredrik, one of the most meticulous households. I found that they had a surprisingly high number of entries in her waste-diary. She then told me that she had been away for a while, visiting relatives at the hospital. Contradictions can thus point towards new questions and hypothesises for further queries, or as in this case illustrate the complexity of food management. Here the irregularity of a hospital visit altered their schedule and illustrated the vulnerability of these routines to external factors.

The waste-diary not only gave me the opportunity to conduct follow-up interviews in the households after its completion, it also gave me the possibility to compare both the content listed in the diary with previously gathered participant observational and interview data I had gathered. When I discussed the reasons behind

the different foodstuffs getting wasted according to the notes of the household members, I gained further information about e.g. their provisioning and storage routines, household diets and tastes, and who disposed of the food and when. Using a waste-diary gave me the possibility to compare this data with previous hypothesises, both from my own observations, interviews and from the survey results, and also to pose follow up questions where desired. In a sense, you could say that I also triangulated through a mixture of qualitative activities to obtain a more precise and reliable explanation of the processes behind wasteful practices.

The Gap between Discourse and Practice - Ideals and Self-presentation

Frequently I experienced divergences between conversational or interview data gathered during the early stages of the fieldwork and later observations of actual practices. I noticed differences between what informant's say they do, think they do (often revealed at subsequent stages during our fieldwork interaction), and actually do. This is a phenomenon to be expected in the field for a wide range of reasons (See e.g. Pelto & Pelto (1978) and Bernhard, Killworth, Salier and Kronenfeld (1984))[102].

Voiced ideals and principles were sometimes not adhered to in practice. I observed explicit differences between local ideals and their actual practices, and my informants also admitted to this, sometimes without me having to point it out. Differences between cultural moral ideals expressed in discourse and the actual household practices were sometimes quite pronounced and contrarian. The combination of methods was a helpful tool here. Established cultural norms and ideals surrounding food management were initially presented to me during our early stages of contact. E.g. the immediate responses I often encountered when presenting my projects topic was: "I don't waste food", a response at odds with the survey results that Norwegian households on average waste about 30% of all the food they bring into the household. At this stage, some of the household members probably knew they wasted food, but still claimed they didn't, while others genuinely think they waste very little, and thus say so. Later, the former would then discover that they do indeed waste significant amounts of food.

[102] An ongoing debate regarding the concept of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962) still takes place in the field of social psychology. See e.g. Wicklund & Brehm (2013 [1976]), Cooper (2007) and Jenkins (2013).

According to the established cultural ideals and norms, impression management is certainly not uncommon. Lien (1989) experienced this when it came to food and eating habits in Båtsfjord, Finnmark. Lien states (ibid: 44) that one of the main methodological challenges she encountered was how many of the answers she got represented norms and ideals, rather than actually stating what had been eaten. E.g. prestigious Sunday dishes dominated the answers when she asked that was common dinners in the households. Simple, everyday meals were seldom mentioned until she used more specific and pointed questions like what the households had for dinner yesterday or the day before. Rathje and Cullen (2001) also experienced impression management in accordance with established ideals in their "garbology"-project. Through their mixed-methods approach, participants in the study were found to have underreported their consumption levels of food and drink, as excessive consumption was perceived to be negative culturally (alcohol and sweets). The participants presented themselves in a more positive manner according to the cultural ideals when answering surveys, compared to the results of the actual household waste investigations. At least this reaffirms some of the cultural moral ideals that reign when it comes to food consumption and management, and that food waste can be a culturally sensitive topic, prone to inaccurate reporting in the duty of positive self-presentation.

In addition to self-presentation, forgetfulness or the elements of routine is another of the key factors that can influence how accurate informants report their own behaviour (Bernhard 2011:182-186). Everyday routines of food management and consumption can be hard to place on a timeline, or even to remember at all during busy daily lives. In the attempts to try and reduce such errors, event history or life history calendars are feasible options (Bernhard 2011:185). These suggestions are similar to the waste-diary I conducted, and also with its methodological flaws. But held up against findings from the other activities, I am confident that the data from the waste diaries helped provide what seemed a fairly accurate picture of the food waste practices in these households. The waste-diary was also an eye-opener for many of them, raising awareness of their own waste levels and possible explanations. Most of them thought they wasted less.

Informants will also want to be able to provide answers during an interview situation they have agreed to take part in (Bernhard 2011:184). This can lead to the use of rules of inference, providing answers of what they suppose must have happened, because it is usually done this way e.g. "We go shopping together on Mondays and Fridays after work." Summa sum arum, informant accuracy is quite a challenge and the

reasons behind the possible inaccuracies of the presentations of informants are interwoven.

As previously touched upon, by being a participant observant in the households, it was possible for me to add more context and depth to data obtained in the interviews or the national survey. This enabled me both to interpret what was said in interviews more precisely and to provide explanations behind survey results. But the survey also served to correct my own intuitive beliefs in the field. I expected economy to be a more influential factor influencing waste levels, especially due to the focus many of the households had on food prices and getting good deals. But according to the survey, differences in income didn't correlate with differences in waste levels. It was then necessary to look deeper into the dynamics behind the role of price and how it influenced food management through ethnographic methods. I did that. Simplified, I found that price was used both as an indicator of the value of food itself and as a yardstick to rank foodstuffs. This influenced food related practices in the households seemingly regardless of their income levels[103]. The combination of methods helped uncover more than either could have done alone (Bernhard 2011:290).

Contrasting and contradicting statements about what informants say they do and actually do can even take place in subsequent utterances. This illustrates how complex the interaction can actually be on the ground, and how informants juggle different positions as the discursive landscape changes. In this instance, I find that it also represents an atmosphere of openness in the interview situation. I am in Ingrid and Fredrik's living room, conducting a formal interview with them. Even if I am using a Dictaphone and have an interview guide in front of me, the atmosphere is relaxed and we are chatting away like we have known each other much longer than we actually have, enjoying the mandatory cup of coffee:

Ant: "Why do you people waste so much of the food today then?

Ingrid: I think many times they buy food, try it, then they say "I don't like this."

Fredrik: When the grandchildren come over and get old-fashioned food. Fresh fish and…which have been frozen. It has been frozen fresh. They like it. And then suddenly they do not like it.

Ingrid: I say, in this house there is no "I don't like." Here we put the food on the table. Put on the plate what we got. Then we eat what we got.

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[103] See Chapter 10.

Fredrik: This summer, the youngest lad, Johannes. No, he didn't want the dinner we had. So, we had tinned mackerel here. So we opened one for him.

Ingrid: Now that he wanted! [loudly]

Fredrik: Mackerel in tomato sauce. And he is only two and a half years old. And he said: 'Mackerel in tomato-sauce is good!' Then he ate the whole box."

There is a clear difference between what they at first claim to do and the subsequent narrative. For Ingrid and Fredrik, a very different past is not far away. With one leg in this past and the other one in the present, they might be struggling to manage the expectations of past cultural ideals from their upbringing nowadays; ideals that still hold significance. This example points out dilemmas that the informants are faced with in their daily lives. In this social situation, the ideals, desires and motivations are conflicting, and it can be tough to manage such dilemmas and make decisions. On this occasion, feeding the grandchild and making sure the social occasion of their visit remains enjoyable trumped their ideal of eating what is served.

In a methodological context, it is interesting how these quite opposing statements can be uttered just seconds after one another. This could be an indication of how deeply ingrained these narratives about ideal practices are, and on the other side, how low the level of self-consciousness towards the divergence between ideal and practice is. Considering the element of self-representation in the interview setting, one could also make the case that this shows how relaxed an open these informants are in this setting as they are not afraid to offer a contradictory statements - this is pure data.

Topical Developments - Romantic Pasts, Contemporary Concerns

Topical development is part of being, living and working in the field as an ethnographer. As I gathered data, I got increasingly attentive towards generational differences. In particular, how contemporary everyday lives in the city stood in contrast to the high levels of previous self-sustenance in terms of food production. This kind of adaptation had historically been at the centre of local Northern Norwegian and Norwegian ways of life into the second half of the 20th century.

When investigating and discussing changes in food management practices, comparisons with past practices and ideals often came up. This was a topic that yielded significant amounts of valuable ethnographic data. This topic often surfaced voluntarily as a side-topic or as a follow-up to questions about current household practices. I would

for instance ask directly why they thought people throw away so much food today, and after a brief discussion about the wealth and range of choices available in the supermarkets around the clock today, the discussions would often turn towards their past experiences in terms of food management and how these differed radically. This made it possible for me to follow up with more specific and explicit questions about differences they had experienced: In terms prices, the availability and ranges of food available in the stores, or what the everyday meals would consist of at home when they grew up in the 1940's and 50's.

When discussing the past with some of the older households and analysing food management practices against a backdrop of societal changes on a larger scale; changes that undoubtedly influenced the individual households, I also had to focus on describing objective processes and keep in mind questions of reliability. A fair few of the stories of the past ways of life could be interpreted as quite biased and even romantic narratives representing idealised pasts, just as much as realities[104]. These generational narratives could also be social constructs reflected in the light of contemporary environmental discourses, or idealised stories of their own meticulousness and virtuousness in days gone by.

Were the older households indeed rewriting the past according to the present here? The older generations did present their upbringing as one of austerity and with much care for natural resources, leading to low amounts of food waste. And this could well be a case of them presenting themselves in a more favourable manner, in accordance with their entrenched ideals, ideals habituated over time, also in harmony with the current environmental discourse that this project is wrapped in. The older constituents might still manage, and also have previously managed, their food differently in comparison to others, but this could be grounded in entirely different reasons like poverty, seasonal access only, ideals of austerity, established practices from past times and so on. Hence, I had to take stock in the end and consider; how was the variation in the field compared to the expected when I considered the survey results on waste in older households? There were clear differences between the households when it came to food management practices, and not just generational ones. I also uncovered vastly diverging practices from one household to the next within the same age group, as much as those between young and old.

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[104] For discussions on narratives and representations of the past in the present, see e.g. Bloch 1977, Bruner, in Hinchman & Hinchman (1996, eds.), or Musharbash & Barber (2011, eds).

Simultaneously, as this topical development uncurled, I had to adjust my tools to study this new situation. I experienced how my interaction in the field reformulated and reframed my research questions (Sørhaug 2012:26-27), pointing me towards the societal changes on a larger scale, outside of the households themselves, while still very much present inside them. This was certainly one of the main benefits of participant observation, as through my movement between engagement and disengagement with my informants, I let the topic develop. Not claiming to know the questions in advance (Sørhaug ibid.), but rather uncovering them through my work as an ethnographer in the field, through my ability to connect with the concerns in local everyday life (Hastrup 1992). In this context, the concerns that unfolded were related to the wastefulness of a contemporary society compared to the narratives of the older households from their younger years. Romantic narratives or not, their current concerns basking in this imperfect reflections of yesteryears meticulousness appear as genuine.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed a wide range of methodological issues related to my fieldwork in Tromsø. The list of topics is by no means a complete one, as I have chosen to focus on factors that laid down the premises for my field, and thus for the data I was able to obtain. Describing my entry into the field, how I established contact and gradually obtained access, I have discussed relevant issues pertaining to the choice of sample and the methods of recruitment behind it. Here, I also mentioned how methodological, practical and human factors all ended up shaping the sample as fieldwork progressed. These are factors that evidently influenced the field and the data I got access to. This lead on to comments on the kind of data that I was able to collect and its quality; what I got, and what I did not get. Attempts to explain these shortcomings were then made, imperfect as this ethnographic snap-shot of human practices will always be. I have touched upon my own manners of taking field-notes and my processual manner of structuring the empirical material as fieldwork progressed and as new topics unveiled themselves. I have also discussed important issues regarding research ethics that arose, not least the anonymity of key informants.

Briefly, I have mapped out the background and foundations of the research design, and the different factors that laid down the premises for my choice of data collecting activities. I outlined the multi-dimensional reasons behind my choice of strategy through the organization of these activities, and how this held up in the field as my work progressed, access was obtained, and trust being established. These activities

have each been described one by one as experienced; pointing both towards the pitfalls and positives I could identify in terms of how these influenced the field and the data it produced.

Concerns around the sensitivity and cultural position of the topic of waste was discussed, especially and how this influenced and shaped the research design, the daily fieldwork situation and practicalities, and consequently, the data material. For instance, how the perceived cultural sensitivity of the topic of waste and the privacy of the household setting and its food management was compensated for in the field through contextually adapted strategies. In this regard, my fluid role and position in the field was considered, not only in relation to the political and moral positioning of the topic of study, but also the dynamic aspects of the participant observation role and the influence on the data I could obtain or even see or access.

I considered the combination of methods, and the use of the data obtained through these. Here I have both touched upon the type and quality of data obtained through the various data-collecting activities conducted during my own fieldwork, and additionally, on using data from the larger “Food-Waste”-project in combination with the former. In this context I have also taken the time to mention some concerns regarding differences between discursive data and practice data.

Chapter 5 Our Households

Introduction

In this chapter I will present the households that participated in the study. I will describe their general approach to food provisioning and management. On the whole, the general information about the households' size, structure, economy and background are provided through formal interviews conducted in their homes.[105] I will stick to a descriptive approach, leaving the more specific and topical analysis for later. Although, as it will appear to the reader, some occasional thoughts on underlying reasons for practices and discussions around these will sometimes be necessary to provide context. Many other individuals and households also contributed in different ways, some just occasionally, and others over a prolonged period of time. I will present the main households where I participated in the majority of the food related activities I initiated. A few basic characteristics of the households are laid out, and additionally, some concrete examples related to these. As a consequence, the presentations vary somewhat in length and detail.

What makes up a household?

The definition of a household first of all rests on a demarcation in space; it is a social unit composed of those living together in the same dwelling (Merriam Webster Dictionary[106]) - those who sleep under the same roof, more to the point, in the same apartment, house, tent, hut, or an equivalent space for dwelling. Households are often made up by relatives living under the same roof, but not exclusively so. It is common to distinguish between family and household, but this is not unproblematic. The family then represents reproduction, while the household, including non-family members, can be involved in the production (Døving 2003:39, Rudie 1984).

Members of the same household can also sleep in different units, be them huts, tents or similar. Due to empirical variation, the anthropological definition of a household is to consider those who typically share the meals together to make up the household.

[105] Some of the additional data around food management are the result of other methods of data-collection described in detail in the chapter on methodology.
[106] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/household Accessed: 20.10.14

Meals can be interpreted as the social occasion that constitutes the household and the relations between its members (or member, if alone). However, with the fluidity of current everyday life, family constellations and work schedules in contemporary Norway, such a definition might not always fit, as finding time to share meals together can be hard. In such cases, the definition of households sleeping under the same roof seems more apt, illustrating how the conceptualisation of social action and institutions like the household is to an extent a hermeneutic and contextually dependent phenomenon, dynamic, developing.

Often households follow a typical life-cycle pattern, one where they are established, expand, then dissolve again; a pattern being reproduced over a longer period time (See e.g. Goody 1958, Gullestad 1984). Such a cycle can start with a couple moving together to establish a their own household. The household then grows as they become parents, and then it decreases in size again as the children grow up and move out, before dissolving with the death of the household members. But this pattern presented by Gullestad (ibid.) assumes that the current young Norwegian households will in time develop into what the older ones are today (Daugstad 1999:Chapter 8). The expectations that these household ideals will be reproduced should not be taken for granted, certainly not in contemporary Norway. Nowadays households can dissolve and re-emerge in new constellations and conglomerates as social and cultural institutions like marriage have changed, women entered the work force and co-habitation becoming common in cities with high housing prices etc. There is mutual dependency between the households and larger societal structures, reproducing each other.

Households are present in all societies, albeit with different compositions and purposes, and the concept is thus often selected as the unit of analysis in the studies of social practice. A household is also perceived as the smallest economic unit, a unit of production, distribution and consumption of resources.[107] For us, it is most interesting to look at households as a unit for food management, also since food is a pre-requisite for the household's existence and growth. The household can be a unit for food production, for provisioning, cooking, sharing and consumption. It can also maintain the production and re-production of the more immaterial aspects of knowledge about food, as well as the norms and moralities regulating shared practices concerning food and waste management. Such cultural knowledge is shared and maintained, typically from parent to child or from grandparent to grandchild. In addition to the material

[107] The words economy and ecology both derive from the ancient Greek word *oikos*, meaning household or family.

propensities of foodstuffs, the social, economic and ritual dimensions are produced and reproduced by household members. Food is thus central for the daily practices of a household in both a relational and material manner.

The task given to me was also specifically to uncover underlying reasons for food waste in the households, which defines the household as the analytical unit of study. However, variation in norms, preferences and practices is inevitable, both within and between households. I have included such variations between household members where they have appeared relevant for explaining reasons for unnecessary food waste. In this study, I limit myself to studying the food management that is linked to the domicile of the individual household, and not meals and food management at the work-place, place of study, on the go, or on holidays or travels. Regardless, I remain conscious of how the household is not an isolated unit to be analysed without considering a wider context. It is an entity embedded in the surrounding ecological, economic and social structures.

Fellow Norwegian anthropologist Christian Sørhaug (2012:58-59) draws up interesting arguments around householding in his work amongst the Warao in the Orinoco delta of Venezuela. He follows Olivia Harris (1984) in criticising a traditional way of viewing households as clearly demarcated and contained social units; units for production, distribution and consumption. He is also insisting on the involvement of non-human entities as participants in householding:

> *"I criticize the tendency to conceptualize households as objects, or containers, where humans conduct their daily business. Harris and others (Stenning 1958; Rudie 1984) emphasize the household as human units for consumption, distribution and production. I insist on the non-human as a participator in the holding of house – not just humans as the solitary managers of householding."* (Sørhaug 2012:58)

I wholly sympathise with the methodological and analytical manoeuvre of decentring the human, and thus offering increased possibilities of analysis shedding new light on householding. However, as my main subject of study was people in action, my empirical material gives more resonance to a perspective where humans are those who indeed do manage and maintain households through agency, with participation from and in interaction with other material subjects and objects around them.

For the survival of humans in a household, elementary resources like food and water are essential. They are material and non-human, and undoubtedly involved in everyday householding, as are other people and households, even if often disguised by

infrastructural or geographical distances. Quite similar to other people, material objects, e.g. the natural surroundings, technological tools, foodstuffs, can influence the decisions people make and how they live their lives. But these non-human entities do not manage a household, even if they are essential and involved or made to be participants through the acts of the household members, to use Sørhaugs term from above. Level of consciousness aside, bacteria found in one's kitchen can be said to hold a degree of intentionality. But I find that the capacities for establishing, managing and maintaining a household rest in the hands and minds of human beings, regardless of the essential role of non-humans and the acts they cause in these householding-projects. Human acts, intentional or not, release and manifest the potentialities residing in the non-human materialities to maintain households. With rain and sun, the potatoes grow and fish breed, but through acts of consumption, their value to the household is finally realised as nutrition.

The outline I have chosen is to follow the matter, food, and the involvement household members have with the food all through the household resource-cycle; from production (usually income related work), planning and provisioning to the consumption and disposal-phase. I share the view that a household is not an individual or self-sustained and self-sufficient entity, but clearly embedded in surrounding social, natural and ideological structures, as Harris (1984) points out. I find common illusions of household independency and individuality unhelpful, obfuscating the link between households, individual household resource management practices and concerns on a larger scale. There is mutual dependency between households, the household level and larger scale surroundings, in essence, the acts of people making up other households, e.g. for the supply of potential partners, resources, help, knowledge etc.[108] The repeatedly, processual life-cycle of any household, of establishment, growth, then receding and splitting up, creating new ones, is not isolated. It is deeply dependent on a broader system regulating this process (Graeber 2001:72). This connection between individual household concerns and practices and on a larger societal and material scale will be shown through several of the empirical cases in this thesis, especially in Chapters 11, 12 and 13.

[108] See e.g. Rudie (1984) for a discussion on the interplay between household production and reproduction, and household economics and adaptation from Skallelv in Finnmark.

The Households - Jon and Gry

Jon (male, 42) and Gry (female, 47) live together in a fairly spacious flat, a ten-minute walk from downtown Tromsø. They have lived there for over six years. They are unmarried and have no children together. Gry has an adult son. Occasionally, he comes to stay over for a night or two. Jon is originally from the countryside, an hour or so away from Tromsø. Gry is also from the Troms countryside originally. They both often go to visit their respective parents who still live outside the city. Jon holds a keen interest in food and environmental issues through his work in a supermarket, 15-20 minutes walking distance away. He has worked in the store for about 11 years. Gry does not work regularly currently, but get day jobs now and again through the local employment agency.

Their household is very open. Friends or relatives would pop by early or late for a chat, a beer or coffee either on the porch or in the living room. This was also reflected in Jon's answer to my question of how many people the household consist of. "It depends, he says. It is kind of flexible. Usually just two, sometimes six." I observed that they would often make extra food for dinner, "in case someone popped by" as Jon would put it. Jon could also list up all the allergies of his relatives, who attend meals in their flat occasionally. This knowledge is important when buying food, and illustrates how Jon considers the household to include several others than just the two who actually live there and that they are used to both providing and cooking for this extended group. When shopping Jon says he considers things like: "Will Martin (Gry´s son) be there? Will Kåre (Gry's nephew) pop by today?"

Financially, there were no signs of the household struggling in any way, even if they did not seem to have expensive habits. Jon estimates that they spend between 4000 and 7 000 Crowns on groceries monthly, most of it being food. They have not set up a household budget, but have an account that they both transfer money into on a monthly basis. Jon says they will buy: "what they want, but try to buy when there are good offers". Being on sick leave and without a regular job respectively, Jon and Gry both have lots of time available to manage their food. Regardless of the time available and that the household are not that well off compared to several of the other households in the study, quite a lot of food still gets wasted in their household.

The planning of their food provisioning is indeed sporadic. The food provisioning is mainly Jon's responsibility, and almost all the food in the household is provided through local supermarkets. Occasionally, he makes a shopping list. He often refers to "the list" even if he does not make use of it. He claims he makes "an approximate list",

even if he does not check their stock beforehand. Most often, Jon shops at the supermarket where he works. It is convenient, but also increases the frequency of food shopping in the household. Sometimes he shops every day, as it is easy to pack a few things into his backpack on the way home after work. The temporal perspective is thus a short one. He says they don't have that much capacity to freeze food, so he usually only shops for one to three days. Ideally, he would like to shop in different stores where there are good offers. This differs from his actual shopping patterns which do not appear planned and stringent at all. They appear to split the duties of cooking between them fairly evenly, but they do not cooperate.

Jon finds that cheap food like potatoes, rice or pasta have a lower threshold for getting wasted. Jon claims Gry is more inclined to throw food away earlier and that their thresholds differ:

> *"I am more like, no, no. That can be eaten. Her son is even worse: "No, it is passed the expiry date." But I am conscious as to what I can eat or not. I never touch fowl or seafood if it is old, whereas a bit of mould on some jam or cheese, just cut it off."*

During the fridge rummage, he explains to me that yoghurts and sour-cream are still edible past the expiry dates, as these contain soured-milk. "I look, I smell, and if I think it is ok, I use it. No problem." But the good intention might not always come through, Jon admits. The original idea of eating something might not be so tempting a couple of days later when he checks the food by smelling and concludes that "now, it is not edible anymore." Their perception of what kinds of food which gets thrown away the most corresponds fairly well with survey results on household waste in Norway, with fruit and vegetables topping their list, and rice and pasta also a concern, according to Jon.

Georg and Josefine

Georg and his wife Josefine are in their 40's. They live together with their two young sons aged three and six. They share a semi-detached house in a quiet neighbourhood on Tromsøya, a ten-minute walk from the city centre. It is not one of the expensive neighbourhoods in the city, nor the opposite. Georg is from Tromsø, while his wife is from the south of Norway. They have lived here for eight years, and both have full time jobs. Georg works as a consultant, and Josefine is a scientist. Their everyday life follows a strict schedule, with two small children and both working a fair lot.

They both indicated to me that they are quite well paid in their jobs, and have no problems or worries financially. Regardless of their comfortable situation, there is nothing in their demeanour, family background or tastes that indicate that they harbour aspirations of social mobility. Georg says they both share a common understanding of what the household diet should be – he terms it "fairly healthy". They value good food, and they prioritise eating properly, with healthy and good ingredients. In their household I experienced a clear focus on the children throughout their everyday life. This is also the case when it comes to the diet. Georg says he cannot make "one big pot" for everyone, because small kids cannot or will not eat everything.

I find that their food management and provisioning are influenced by certain lifestyle discourses around food that are quite common in middle-class households and which also dominate in the media. One such discourse is shown in Georg's statement: "I want to serve the boys proper food", with the focus on the children being one side of it, while he health related discourse is another central factor. The "proper food"-discourse is another, one that identifies food made from scratch as more proper and valuable food. This is a strong cultural ideal that resonates well within several other households as well, and we will return to and discuss this further in the chapter on Food Practices.

This focus on proper and healthy food for the children is exemplified by two comments from Georg when we discuss their household diet. Firstly, the boys do not eat sausages. Sausages are the standard food for any children's birthday party, and Georg describes this as a massive problem, because then the boys won't eat. Secondly, when I had halibut for dinner once at their place, the boys used Balsamic vinegar and not ketchup on their fish. Georg enthusiastically asked me if I had ever seen boys so fond of Balsamic vinegar before. I had no answer.

At ordinary weekdays, Georg picks up the boys straight after work, usually between 3 and 3:30 pm. The drive from his workplace downtown to the kindergarten and school takes about five minutes, and more often than not, he then makes a quick stop at the local supermarket to pick up some groceries before heading home to cook dinner for the whole family. A couple of times I met up with Georg outside his work place, and went along with him on this run. With Georg finishing work before Josefine, he is responsible for cooking dinner, and also for the grocery shopping in their household. He doesn't plan the shopping beforehand, and openly admits during an interview I had with him in his office that there is no structure or plan to how they shop food, except maybe a quick phone call between him and Josefine during the day. He tells me that he has a sense of what is in the fridge, and goes by that. The odd time

when a shopping list is made, Josefine makes it, and then Georg often forgets it at home. This lack of structure and planning means that he quite often forgets things they wanted to buy or what they actually had at home.

Georg estimates that 10-12 % of their collective net income is spent of groceries. One day, we are in the car on the way to pick up the children, and Georg says that he and Josefine have thought about making weekly plans, plans to buy big, but that this never materialises. As we got closer to the school of his oldest son, he told me with a slight sigh that Josefine has also been asking for them to set up a budget for their food expenses. This has yet to happen. He says both money and time are motivations behind these plans.

> *"I know that it is stupid to shop when one is hungry and pressed for time, but this is the way it is."*

In the store, Georg does not spend much time considering the prices of different alternatives. He has only a "today" perspective, and the plan he has for dinner decides what is bought that day. Georg knows it would be more rational to shop in a more planned manner and at another time, but practical daily issues get in the way, and he just cannot seem to find the time to plan properly, something which would most likely save the household both time and money. Georg also thinks that a weekly dinner plan will be in conflict with his wish for cooking something he fancies for dinner, as this would most likely be something else than what would be planned. Josefine thinks Georg would not be motivated to cook if she had set up a plan for him to shop and cook by.

Leftovers from dinner might even be thrown away straight after the meal, because as Georg says "he knows it won't get eaten". The other alternative is that leftovers mature for a day or two, and then get thrown away as they found no use for them. In general, Georg cooks too much food for dinner, resulting in regular waste, as the initial good intention to make use of leftovers is not realised. All in all, Georg is the one who manages the food in the household, and he is also the one who disposes of food. He admits that he has a lower threshold for throwing away food quickly, compared to his partner:

> *"I say, this here, we won't do anything with it, while she will say, that right there, I will bring with me for lunch tomorrow. Then she doesn't bring it along, and it gets thrown away later."*

The road towards the waste bin is paved with good intentions, as intention and actual practice differs.

Tor and Kaisa

Tor and Kaisa live together in a three-room flat in Tromsdalen. Tor grew up in Tromsdalen, and both his parents are from the neighbourhood. Kaisa is from Finland. They have lived in the flat for four years. They are both in their 30's and have a year old son. They both work as teachers, but with a quite flexible work-schedule. To get to work, which is a ten-minute drive away, they alternate between biking and driving.

Currently, they have less money as Kaisa only works 50% due to the child having arrived recently and as she is studying on the side. They also had some water damage in the flat that cost a bit, and then they had to move out for a while. Due to these circumstances, they have thought about saving some money, and Kaisa has made some changes in their shopping routines. She always considers the cheapest alternatives nowadays. For her, this means buying "First Price"-products when possible. She has made it a rule to check if the cheapest alternative is a viable option for them. They estimate that about 10% of their net income is spent on groceries. They do not know exactly, and Kaisa thinks that all of her earnings go towards food. So even if they tell me they have made a conscious decision to save money due to these new circumstances, they have no real idea about how much they actually spend, nor have they put up a budget to keep track of their expenses.

Kaisa is the one making decisions on what is needed in the household. Tor shops, but on the whole, Kaisa decides what is needed. She plans the shopping, checks what is in stock and writes a shopping-list for Tor. He often forgets it, so sending him text messages is also a common way to organise the food provisioning. Tor often shops on the way home from work, as he usually drives. The local Spar supermarket in the neighbourhood is his port of call most times. Tor hunts for bargains, buying the larger portions and then freezing them. Kaisa does not share his view, and will typically rather buy the smaller one "because they don't need more". The intended perspective when provisioning is to shop for the next two-three days. The lack of planning also manifests itself in their use of the technology they have available in the household. During our main interview held in their living room, Tor describes their food management practices as a combination of using their freezer as a storage space, and the local supermarket as a fridge:

> *"We have lots of things in the freezer, but you still have to plan a day ahead. Take things up and thaw them. Then one might as well buy it…"*

This quote is quite illustrative of the short-term perspective they generally have. Even with a different economic situation, the hand-to-mouth approach dominates the household provisioning of groceries. Both this statement and the practices I observed when I went shopping with Tor also contrast his previously expressed strategy of bargain hunting and buying larger portions of food on offer and then freezing it to save money.

Kaisa usually cooks for them, and she is also the one who throws food away and cleans out the fridge once a month. The two of them have different thresholds when it comes to throwing away food and making decisions on what they think is still be edible or not. She is more careful than he is, and admits to be more concerned about expiry dates, especially when it comes to fresh meat or fish. He is more overbearing, saying he trusts the stores to remove food that is not edible anymore, and if something is fried or boiled, he can eat it regardless he claims. Kaisa is even more careful now as she is still breastfeeding the boy, and as a rule, she looks and smells food that is getting close to or over the expiry date. She admits to be so used to the expiry dates by now that she gets very insecure when encountering products that do not carry an expiry date. Then she doesn't know what to do. It makes her want to throw this food away. Leftovers from dinner or other hot meals are wasted most often in the household of Tor and Kaisa. But usually, their leftovers are eaten the next day for lunch, or as a small meal in between the regular ones as they often arrive home at different times of day.

Tor and Kaisa have also taken steps to change their routines. Kaisa labelled some of the shelves in the fridge: one for toppings, one for dinner, then fruit in one of the boxes at the bottom, and vegetables in the other one. Tor says he "never found anything" in the fridge previously. Now everything is better. Less food disappears in the back and is forgotten. Tor explains: "Nowadays, it is quite seldom that something stays in the fridge more than two days - the old boxes of liver-pate do not get forgotten anymore." Tor said this was Kaisa's initiative and she was quite proud of it. They have two freezers in the household and use them differently. One is more involved in the daily food cycle, whereas the other one is more of a long-term storage option. In the latter one, the organisation is sloppier. Due to this approach, there were also many surprises that surfaced when we went through this freezer together. We will return to this.

Jorunn and Kjell

Jorunn and Kjell is a young couple in their early 30's. They are not from Tromsø originally, and now share a three-bedroom flat in an apartment building near the centre of Tromsø. They moved together six months ago. Jorunn is an artist, while Kjell works as a civil servant. He has been living in the flat for four years now. In 15-20 minutes they can walk to work downtown in Tromsø. They also have a car.

Economically, they rely mostly on the regular income from Kjell's job, even though Jorunn also earns a bit through her job as an artist. Still, they have no idea how much they spend on food monthly. During the main interview held in their living room, Kjell commented on their spending: "I know we spent 1000 crowns now this weekend, but then we bought much…2000?" Jorunn reckons they spend more than that, but she doesn't really know either. Even with only one steady income, they have no idea how much they spend on food. It is not top of mind.

Jorunn's work-hours vary both in terms of duration and time of day, while Kjell's work schedule is predictable. During the periods when Jorunn's schedule is very unpredictable, for instance when she is preparing an exhibition or is travelling, it is harder for them to have meals together and also to keep track of their food management. They estimate that there are two nights every week when they don't have dinner together. Unpredictability in the daily schedules, often due to shifting work commitments or socializing, often leads to food getting wasted. Then even a good plan is hard to follow. Jorunn explains more in detail:

> *"But I notice, that it depends on how much time I have, how busy I am. If we are setting up an exhibition or something, and arrive home late. Or have dinner at work, and if Kjell hasn't had dinner himself. And if we have done our grocery shopping, food just lies there [and go off], or I just lose the overview if I am not home at the time. If I only eat breakfast and…so you can have a good plan, but it doesn't work because you haven't got time…"*

Food shopping usually follows a set pattern, with necessities being picked up at a supermarket downtown during the week, on the way home from work. There is also the occasional visit to a massive supermarket at the mall near the airport, a ten-minute drive from the centre of Tromsø. According to Kjell, that is when they "shop properly", indicating that they buy more. The perspective when shopping downtown on the way home after work is usually with the next two-three days in mind, because they are walking from downtown. It can be quite heavy to carry the goods home. Also, when shopping on the way home from work, they are usually hungry as they have yet to eat

dinner. They usually have a shopping list, otherwise they find that they get a bit perplexed by the massive supermarkets and don't know where to start. Their reasoning for using a shopping list is pragmatic; to make the shopping easier and quicker and to avoid temptations based on an economic rationale.

They describe they menu as focused on fresh ingredients and vegetables, and not based on ready-made meals or ingredients. Their intention is to "eat properly", and "make things from scratch". They eat quite a lot of fish, but would like to eat even more. During weekends they often cook together, as they have more time. Jorunn cooks most often, and she is also more interested in food. Kjell claims she is "hunting for good tastes." During weekdays they are usually hungry when they start to cook, and often choose something with shorter preparation time as a consequence. They make their own bread now and again, but they don't make other homemade ingredients. Jorunn says that, ideally they have everything they need to make food like fishcakes or jam themselves, but it requires time.

Jorunn and Kjell have one fridge and one small freezer in their apartment. The freezer is small, and shaped like a cylinder, which they admit makes it a bit difficult to keep the contents of it organised. During out main interview, I asked Jorunn and Kjell about the last kind of food they threw away. This was met with a long silence. They then started asking each other if they had thrown anything yesterday, or if the last time was before they went away on holiday. Clearly, the issue is not top of mind, even if they knew in advance that we were going to have a conversation about food and waste practices. Jorunn also admits that she lacks knowledge when it comes to deciding when food is edible or not:

> *"Sometimes when I smell the food, I get very insecure about…how is it really supposed to smell?"*

In their household, both of them dispose of food. Who actually does it depends on who is home or who is cooking. In their waste-diary, several of the entries claim that a hectic schedule was the reason for disposal. Leftovers from a dinner, fish and mashed potatoes got wasted. Kjell's intention was originally to eat them, but they got stuck in the fridge until he returned from an army manoeuvre a few days later and then the food was not edible anymore. Good intentions and ideas get side-tracked, postponed or cancelled as circumstances change, with the end result often being that food gets wasted as it goes off in the meantime.

Ingeborg and Svein

Ingeborg (female) and Svein (male) are both local and approximately 50 years old. They are married and live together in a large detached house they built about 20 years ago in Tromsdalen. They both hold fulltime jobs. He is a plumber and drives to his workplace about eight kilometres away. They have two adult sons. The youngest moved out about a year ago, and the other lives in a flat in the basement.

During our main interview, they both refer to their own parents as more stringent when it came to food management. Svein grew up on a small farm, while Ingeborg told me that they couldn't expect to even have dinner every day during her upbringing. They both say that their parents only bought groceries once a week and were more meticulous in their food management - "because they had to". Ingeborg still remembers how her mother used to get a barrel of salted seal meat once a year:

> *"We come from quite different kind of homes. I come from a home where we didn't necessarily have dinner every day. My mother had some contacts on some of the boats that went into the Arctic Sea to hunt seal. I remember that we got a large barrel of seal meat every year. That barrel stood in the basement…and we ate that, otherwise dinner was not a given. Potatoes we picked ourselves in Lakselvdalen[109]. There was no menu, no plan or anything. When the day of payment came, she [her mother] went to buy groceries so that it would last as long as possible."*

In both these households they acquired food through personal contacts or buy self-sufficiency, but additionally they also got food at the local store. They say the grocery shopping back then took place much less frequently, and they both find that today's food provisioning is completely different in comparison. Still, they also obtain fish, meat, vegetables and berries through their personal networks nowadays, either from relatives or occasionally from friends. This network is spread out all over the Arctic region, with food coming from Northern Troms, Lofoten in Nordland County, or the neighbouring municipality Balsfjord. Their elk meat comes from Finland.

I went along with them to shop groceries once on a Friday afternoon. Svein finishes work early on Fridays, so he has already been home to have a look at what they need when I meet them at 5 p.m. outside of a supermarket at near the Tromsdalen mall. Ingeborg says their perspective is to shop food for the weekend, perhaps until Tuesday,

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[109] In the countryside, about an hours drive from Tromsø

and I am told their choice of supermarket is a conscious one. The price discourse dominates and guides their choice of supermarket. Svein and Ingeborg have to ask each other several times if they are out of certain kinds of foodstuffs as we walk through the supermarket. Even if Svein has just checked their stock, they don't know what they need or have at home. The contradictions between what is said and what is done are very explicit during this shopping trip.

Even if prices decide their choice of supermarket, the money spent on food appears to be of little concern. We discuss how much they spend on groceries per month, and they do not know. A year after their sons have moved out, they are still in the process of adjusting, both when it comes to grocery shopping and meal preparations. There is an increased predictability in terms of mouths to feed, but Ingeborg admits that it will take time to adjust their practices. On the other hand, with fewer mouths to feed, there are also fewer wishes and wants to consider. They made a weekly menu that they try to follow, as they both admit they can be very impulsive when it comes to food. After living together for a long time, they have adjusted to each other's habits and now have pretty similar preferences towards food. They have adjusted and become more similar, or at least familiar with the preferences and practices of the other.

Ingeborg is usually the one who disposes of food in their household. Leftovers from dinners are often thrown away, as they prepare more than they can eat. They also waste bread, as Svein often eats breakfast at work. The consumption of bread is thus variable. When a loaf of bread is not fresh anymore, it gets thrown away. Sometimes they have discussions about when something should be thrown away or kept. They do not always agree. Ingeborg tells she has a poor sense of smell, which affects her approach and practices towards food management. With them as well, an initially good intention is often not followed up as leftovers get wasted after a quite common ritual; a few days mandatory ripening in the fridge.

Kåre and Nina

Kåre (38 year old male) and Nina (20 year old female) live together in a small one-bedroom flat, a five-minute walk from downtown Tromsø. Kåre works at the airport, while Nina is a student. It takes about ten minutes for them both to get to where they work or study. He drives, while she walks. They had been living together for four months when I first met them, and a few months later they are expecting their first child. Kåre's

parents are from Tromsø, and he grew up on the north side of Tromsøya. Nina is from Southern Troms and moved to Tromsø when she was a teenager. They both enjoy living in Tromsø, even if they find it a bit expensive. They like the mentality of the people and find the city to be of suitable size, even if the winters in the north can be a bit tough.

They rent their current flat, but are looking for a bigger place, as it will be too small when the baby arrives. With only one income it is quite hard for them to find a new affordable flat. The housing market in Tromsø is currently very tough. They monitor how much they spend on groceries. They have set up a monthly budget that they try to follow, but they still end spending more every month. The budget is 4000 Crowns in total. The decision to use a budget was initiated by a need to save money to be able to afford a new place to live. Where they shop groceries varies, and they usually take the car to go shopping once every other week. When they go on their big shopping trips, they fill up their small freezer as they have discovered that managing their food in this manner saves quite a lot of money. Under the main interview we had in their living room, Nina tells us that she is the one who shops:

"He earns the money, I shop. That is his part of it. He refuses to shop…"

But if they are going together, she says with a smile that he is also allowed to put things in the shopping trolley. The grocery shopping is usually done after dinnertime during the week, or a bit earlier in the day during weekends. She does not always use a list, claiming that she knows what they need.

Nina plans their dinner the day in advance, and picks up food from the freezer for the next day. Since Kåre works shifts, the one who arrives home first after work cooks dinner. Nina says Kåre has become a better cook, but in the beginning it was mostly her who did the cooking. She shares a little story:

Nina: "Earlier, we both ate here together. Then when it was only the dishes left, he left and went down to his aunt to eat there as well. I had to cook and do the dishes. He ate, and then he left.

Kåre: No, cut that out! Ha ha! I didn't even live here then! I came up here to visit, then you made a little bit of food for us..."

They have altered their habits and adapted to each other after living together for a while. Nina prefers to cook with proper ingredients, from scratch. When he lived alone, Kåre often bought pre-made frozen meals in portions for one to two people. In this manner not much was food was wasted, according to him. There were no vegetables or

other ingredients left from the cooking process, or a small portion of the original serving that could end up being forgotten in the fridge.

Nina tells me she wasted lots of food when she was living alone, but that she adjusted her practices when she saw how expensive her wastefulness really was. She claims she was able to lower her waste levels significantly, and has now become quite good at using the freezer. She makes sure that things don’t go off and she keeps track of what they have in store. It appears that Nina quickly picked up new practices, and of all the young households I followed, she had food management practices quite similar to two of the oldest households. She knew what was in stock, checked what they had before shopping, and the waste levels in their household appeared to be low compared to other young households. Nina says that some of the food management practices like storing and re-packaging things properly were learnt at home, growing up. When they buy in bulk, or when the packaging is not good, she re-packs much of the food in airtight boxes, and also uses clips to close plastic bags completely so that the food is kept fresh. The storage equipment is gifts from her mother.

Anders

Anders lives alone in a modern flat on Tomasjordnes, just north of Tromsdalen. He is 38 years old, single, and works in construction. Originally, he comes from Northern Troms. His neighbourhood is dominated by young couples and families, as the flats are fairly cheap to acquire, but with rather high rents. Anders is an outdoorsman, and most of all, a keen fisherman with a rich knowledge about the nature and the resources in the region, particularly where and how to catch fish. He also has a fair amount of knowledge about traditional ways of conserving of food. He also paints, for recreation.

Quite often he travels back to Northern Troms to visit his parents and larger family. He still refers to the village there as home, even if he has lived in Tromsø for 14 years. This also shows the connection he maintains to this location, a link sustained by his continuous visits there. The link between the small place home where he grew up and his current home is also maintained through his food practices, as much of the food he consumes originates from Northern Troms and sources in that proximity. Financially, he does not have any concerns. And according to himself, he does not really have expensive habits or tastes. This is reflected in his own appearance and his flat where I conducted a long interview with him. His flat is fairly modest in terms of decoration and

furniture. Not having his own family, he has quite a lot of time to spend on himself and to pursue his own interests and hobbies.

Anders provides much of his own food through his network of friends and family. He finds that people from the countryside are more used to manage their food themselves. He usually goes grocery shopping two or three times a week. This is done after work, on the way home, typically at the local supermarket. It is situated in the neighbourhood, only a five minute walk away. They have weekly offers, usually 40 % off regular prices. Anders tells me he often fills up his freezer when there are good offers there. Now and again, he does shop at other supermarkets as they have different brands. He finds that he being a single household makes it easy to keep track of his stock. According to Anders, his menu consists mostly of local food. He describes the stuff he buys as "fairly basic, nothing fancy, and easy and quick to prepare". After grocery shopping, he splits larger packs of food into portions, packs them into plastic bags and puts them in the freezer. The longevity of the food is considered unconsciously, he says, and claims this has been an established practice since he was young.

Anders has an established routine of going through the contents of his freezer and fridge every second or third month. He checks for food that has gone off, or that needs to be eaten quickly before it is goes to waste. Then he eats what is closest to going off. It is important for Anders to buy food with longevity, as he finds that much of the food on sale today needs to be eaten the same day as the packaging is opened. It is not fit for long-term storage. When it comes to cut meat, he smells it to decide if it is edible, and if there is a mouldy patch on the cheese, he just cuts it off. Anders tells me how lots of food gets wasted in the households of his friends. He claims that they generally buy and prepare too much food, and that what is not eaten is then thrown away as they have no routines for managing leftovers. He finds that they have a completely different view on food: "Then, the next day, they just go and buy more". Anders reckons that people throw away a bit less if they are exposed to waste management and recycling. With specific green bags for organic waste, food waste becomes much more visible and tangible. He also reckons it is so easy to throw waste when it is just one large bag, as one does not have to consider what is actually happening. With only one waste bag, food left on the plate after a meal was just shuffled into the same big bag like inedible or non-organic waste.

Erika and Roger

Erika and Roger is a married couple in their early 60's. They live in a detached house in Tromsdalen. They have two adult children who have both moved out. They built their house about 20 years ago. Before that, they lived eight years in a flat in a cheaper neighbourhood a bit further north on the mainland. Both Erika and Roger work in the city centre. It takes about 25 minutes to walk, but they usually go by bike or car. They have a similar upbringing, with both hailing from on small countryside farms in Troms County. They now use the house Erika grew up in as a recreational home, spending vacations and weekends there. After the children moved out, they have refurbished the cellar into an apartment that they let out.

With two full incomes and both children having moved out, they appear to be in a very stable and solid financial situation. They are constantly economising and planning their food management, even if they don't have to be as diligent nowadays. Their routines from previous years with less money are established and still practiced. Erika estimates that their monthly expenses at the supermarket are between 2500 and 3000 crowns. This amount does not include the bulk buying of potatoes, fish and other seasonal foodstuffs.

Erika tells me that they plan their shopping meticulously. They go shopping only once a week; a habit established when their financial situation was tighter. Then money was saved due to planning and in avoiding small temptations, according to Erika. "Then you were only tempted once", she says with a smile. Previously they operated with a fixed amount, not to be exceeded. This has now changed. They don't really have to watch how much they spend, but they still plan. Before going shopping they, more often than not, make a list. But their habits are very established. If something is written down on a list, it is only when they are making something out of the ordinary, or if they are baking. Checking the refrigerator is also part of the preparations. They shop at a supermarket at the "Pyramiden" shopping mall in Tromsdalen, as they find it to be cheaper than the closer one in the neighbourhood. Usually they shop on a Tuesday afternoon or early evening, after they have returned from work and had dinner. Still, when I went with them for food shopping, they were having small conversations; just like most of the couples I went shopping with, asking if they needed this and that. That said, they were the most planned and meticulous household I followed during my fieldwork when it came to their management of food. They plan ahead.

Erika says their menu is very boring and habitual. They have their set patterns. "We only buy ordinary things which have a variety of uses, like carrots, onions and

swede." "We are not so modern in our ways. Pasta dishes are not so common. We like fish, because then we can vary – fry, boil, cook in the oven etc." Considering pasta to be modern gives us an indication as to how traditional their menu is. They admit that their menu was a bit different when the children lived there, with more pasta, meat and minced meat, but on the whole, it was quite similar, says Roger. What to have for dinner is usually decided the night before, and thus picked up from the freezer then and put up to thaw. It was not too common for them to have leftovers, as they were good at estimating how much would be eaten and the number of people to cook for is stable. During a week, they typically have meat two or three times, compared to one or two times when they grew up, typically on a Sunday. When they were young, meat was considered a bit of a luxury. On Sundays they often invite their children over for dinner, especially their son, who does not have his own family yet.

Like in the houses of previous times, they have cold-storage facilities in their cellar, and also a pantry next to their kitchen; a room typical in older houses that is not very common anymore. The pantry is spacious, with large shelves making it easy to see what they have. Their freezer and freezing cabinet are in the basement, and both are well stocked and properly organized, filled with berries, meat and fish. They only have a small, older refrigerator in the kitchen. They use the freezer and the cold-storage room daily. All these storage facilities have different characteristics in terms of space, temperature and light, and they use them accordingly to optimize their resource management.

They sort their waste according to the local standard, and express that it is useful to see the amount of organic waste, as it raises the consciousness about how much the household wastes. However, Erika does not think it affects their level of edible food waste. According to the waste-diary, Erika is the one who keeps things in order and throws things away when they go off. Their diary clearly had the lowest number of entries of all diaries I conducted.

Ingrid and Fredrik

Ingrid (female) and Fredrik (male) are in their 60's. They are married and live together in a fairly spacious semi-detached house on Tomasjord. It is a typical working- and middle-class neighbourhood where most of the houses were built during the 1970's. Fredrik is a retired fisherman, while Ingrid still works. They have adult children who have moved out years ago. Occasionally they visit with their grandchildren. Their house is a welcoming

one, with visitors often coming by for coffee and a chat. When I first visited to pick up a washing machine I was buying, I was invited straight in for coffee and cake during Ingrid's birthday.

On the whole, both Ingrid and Fredrik share plenty of stories about how life was when they grew up. They compare food and waste management practices from their childhoods and youth with the current practices in their own household, and also to the general situation they experience around them today.[110] Ingrid tells me how her father's past as a prisoner of war with experiences of hunger had a strong influence on how they treated food when she grew up on a small farm in Lyngen. They tried to make use of every little thing they had. To illustrate their approach to food, she told me that they even ate sheep bellies, even if it was lots of work to prepare it. They also ate the comb, feet and intestines on the hens. Fredrik also grew up on a farm in Lyngen. They also had a one-sided diet, with lots of fish, and while acknowledging that they didn't have to go to bed hungry, he says they didn't eat everything they had with a smile on their face.

They appear to be doing fine economically. Their sound economic situation does however not mean that they are wasteful or indifferent towards food management. They are both used to treating food with respect and care from their upbringings, and while their household also produces some food waste, they have well-established routines of how to manage their food. When I visited them in early December, they had already started to buy food and plan meals for Christmas.

With regards to planning, they often buy large quantities of food that can be stored for a while when it is on offer at the local supermarket or is in season. Their main motive appears to be economical. Ingrid told me that they bought ten kilos of carrots when they were on offer, and also that they bought 32 kilos of coffee later when that was on special offer. "It is the fourth time we buy like this. With many people (coming by the house) there is lots of coffee drinking. But we still have some of it left", she said. Ingrid also buys cabbage to make larger batches of sauerkraut when cabbage is in season and very cheap. They get most of their fish directly from the anglers, through kinship networks. Ingrid's brother from Vannøya is one source, and she also has other relatives who contribute. These are just a couple of examples that illustrates a more long-term perspective they have towards food management, and also the common flow of food through kinship networks. Ingrid and Fredrik seem to have established their routines around food management years ago, and the mainstay of their approach is

[110] I will return to some of their empirical narratives in several topical parts of the thesis, for more in depth analysis, as this part is focusing on the descriptive aspects of daily food management.

grounded in the ideal of treating food with respect - as a valuable resource. This respect is still reflected in their practices today, and carried out even though all kinds of food from all over the world is conveniently available at the supermarket only a few minutes' walk away.

Ingrid makes fishcakes, meatballs and similar dishes from scratch herself. When I was visiting one day, I asked her what they are having for dinner tomorrow, not the usual question of what they were having the same day. Regardless, she had the answer ready: "We have to use the cabbage before it goes off, so it will be meatballs with cabbage tomorrow", she tells me. She has taken the meatballs out of the freezer, peeled and cut the vegetables and potatoes already. Evidently, Ingrid is used to planning ahead.

They have two freezers in the basement, both fully stacked. One of them is shared with her brother next door. Ingrid tells me that both are usually full, and during a freezer rummage, Ingrid shows good organisation and exercises thorough knowledge about the content, its origin and how long it has been there. They have lots of berries there too, all marked with year and type. She has picked some herself, and friends from Finnmark have gifted them some.

Leftovers make up most of their food waste. Leftovers from a dinner with lamb and cabbage also got thrown away after they had been warmed up once already. There was still something left, but this was not seen as edible anymore. Also, the grandchildren did not finish their dinners another time when they had fish, carrots and potatoes, so the leftovers got thrown away. Boiled potatoes get thrown away now and again, as Fredrik eats less potato now due to health issues. They still haven't adjusted properly, and occasionally prepare too much. After going through a two-week "waste diary" together, they both conclude that they haven't thrown much away, and that they are quite sensible when it comes to managing their food. I agree with their assessment.

Ellen and Ivar

Ellen (female) and Ivar (male) is a young couple in their mid-twenties. They have just moved together in a two-room apartment in Tomasjord. They are both studying at the University in Tromsø. To get to university, they usually catch the bus, which takes about 15 minutes. Ivar is originally from Narvik, while Ellen is from Southern Norway. Having moved together recently, they are now getting familiar with each other's habits and preferences when it comes to food. Ellen admits she is quite picky, but even if both are students, they feel they can still afford to buy the food they want. Ivar also has a part-

time job, and this gives them some economic flexibility. Their shopping is usually done on the way home from the university, or at the local supermarket at Tomasjordnes, a ten-minute walk from their home. They also have quite flexible work schedules at the university, which ads unpredictability to their meal structure and times, and hence also to their shopping habits.

Ellen and Ivar say their approach to dinner is “what do we fancy today?” There is no actual planning. Ellen tried to follow a weekly dinner plan when she had her own household in the student dormitory, but it didn’t really work out: “When I look at the list, I don’t fancy that for dinner that day, or I don’t have the time [to make it]. The only thing that worked was fried mackerel on Mondays. That is a given." Their food management and planning is not very systematic. Coupled with their preference for fresh fruit and vegetables, making food from scratch, and a penchant for “wanting to have different things to choose from” as Ellen says, their fridge is often fully stacked. Ideally, they would like to make most of their food from scratch. Ellen regularly likes to clean the fridge and throw away a portion of what is in stock. She does this to obtain “a bit of order”, something that will be discussed thoroughly later. Wanting to have many fresh ingredients to choose from can also be a challenge in terms of avoiding waste, and their waste levels appeared quite significant.

Other households

The two following households only participated in a couple of the scheduled activities[111], and due to this, my knowledge about their households is somewhat limited beyond the basic information. Stine (female) is in her 30’s and works at the University as a researcher. She has lived in Tromsø for 15 years, but is originally from Nordland County. She has lived in her current domicile for ten years, a spacious three-room apartment on the North-end of Tromsøya. She lives alone and is in a comfortable economic situation. Her provisioning is usually done downtown on her way home from work. As she lives alone, making food can sometimes be a chore, so she cooks dinner in bulk, for several days.

Geir (male) is approximately 50 years old, and lives alone in Tromsdalen, in the house where he grew up. He is divorced and has no children. Currently he works at the

[111] There were also two other households who participated in shopping-trips, but they are not included as this was the sole activity they chose to take part in.

local hospital. Stine participated in one shopping run, a fridge rummage and one long interview, while Geir only took part in one interview and the waste diary.

Summary

In this chapter, I have given you a brief presentation of the households I followed. I have presented some fundamental household characteristics and some empirical examples that give a first glance into their individual practices and familiarities. It has been my intention that this presentation will give the reader a certain sense for the household's approach to daily food management and the larger frameworks that shape it. We will return to several of the issues presented here in the subsequent chapters, as we follow the local practices throughout the food cycle.

Chapter 6 Meals and Rituals - Menus and Diets

Introduction

In this chapter I will current preferences and practices in terms of menus and diets amongst the households. Cultural ideals that influence these topics will be covered under the banner of criteria for food management. The influence of the seasonal aspect and social occasions will show an increased number dilemmas and decisions related to values, and this puts focus on the value of food in practice. I will also discuss practices related to the preparation phase of food, paying special attention to practices leading to unnecessary food waste.

Menus

The dinner menus in the households I studied vary both between and within the households. They range from the quite traditional Norwegian, which consists of dishes with cod, carrots and potatoes, meatballs in gravy with potatoes or pork-chops with potatoes, to imported dishes like the adopted Norwegian classics like pizza and tacos. Lastly, there are the more international and, in Norway at least, contemporary and recent dinner adaptations like sushi or curries (See Lien 1987, Døving 2003). Bugge (2006) identified three different categories of what constituted a good dinner in her study of Norwegian households dinner practices: 1) The traditional, which is linked to values of national and family belonging, 2) The trendy, which demonstrates competence and class and 3) The therapeutic, whose aim is to avoid illness and to achieve good health. As beverages to accompany dinner or evening meals, a variation of water, either tap or bottled, different flavours of fruit cordial or soft drinks are commonly used. Alcoholic beverages are generally reserved for the weekends or special occasions.[112]

For the other meals, across the households, bread usually forms the basis, with different kinds of toppings. The toppings typically consists a variety of cut meat, smoked salmon, cheeses, tinned mackerel, liver paste, jams etc. For breakfast, a variation of cereals or muesli with milk, yoghurts and fruit is also common. Common hot drinks are coffee, mostly black, and different kinds of tea. The cold drinks are usually milk or

[112] For anthropological insights into the moralities surrounding the consumption of Alcohol, see for instance Døving (2003).

different kinds of fruit juice. Two different but illustrative approaches to dinner menus on a generational level can be found in the household of Erika and Roger, in their late 50's, and Ellen and Ivar who are in the mid 20's. These quotes are both from the formal interviews I conducted with them in their respective homes:

> *Erika: "We only buy ordinary things which have a variety of uses, like carrots, onions and swede. We are not so modern in our ways. Pasta dishes are not so common. We like fish, because then we can vary – fry, boil, cook in the oven etc."*
>
> ---
>
> *Ellen: "I like to have lots of food in the fridge, lots of things to choose from; different kinds of fruit and vegetables. Food is an economic priority for me. I could not live on pizza and pasta. It is not an option for me to skip vegetables.*
>
> *Ivar: They (his parents) follow more of a "bondekost" (farmer's diet): Potatoes and meat, vegetables and sauce. We have more variation.*
>
> *Ellen: We use wok and similar more often.*
>
> *Ivar: We shop very often…you want something new every day. You don't know what you fancy until the day arrives.*
>
> *Ellen: Sometimes I try to plan what to have for dinner, but when the day comes, I don't fancy what I planned. It is like: What do I fancy now?"*

After going through their food storages, their menu descriptions were found to be fairly accurate. I also gained a richer and more descriptive picture of their menus. An interesting issue is the desire for variation in diet, both in terms of vegetables and in terms of the dinner menu. This wish for variation was clearly more pronounced with Ellen and Ivar. They want something else for dinner from one day to the next in terms of different ingredients, whereas Erika and Roger would focus more on variation obtained through preparation. In this case we are talking about fish as the main ingredient, along with a common mainstay of vegetables. Motivations for variations in diet might be complex. They could be based in a desire for variation in sensory tastes and stimuli, but also be motivated by nutritional concerns, making sure they get the nutrients the human body needs.

Factors Influencing and Deciding the Menus

Several underlying moralities influencing food practices are exposed in the discussions and observations around what constitutes the dinner habits in the households. Local

categorisations of food uncover ideals that are morally and culturally located and anchored. Food can be seen as morally situated, dependent on time, place and person, according to Døving (2003). A common example is how it is seen immoral, often presented under the banner "unhealthy ", to indulge too much during weekdays; days which for most of the households are defined as workdays. During the weekend, a different morality reigns. Then indulgence and treats are more acceptable (E.g. Warde 1997, Miller 1998, Døving 2003). Without going too deep into these differences, we will revisit how social occasions involving food harbour different cultural expectations and rules for consumption. We will also see how the social dimensions are more in focus, sometimes to the detriment of optimal food management.

Depending on the occasion, there are indeed different moralities influencing meals. They are criteria for consumption, as health, indulgence, convenience, economy, tradition etc. are emphasised to different degrees (Warde 1997). These criteria are essential for the valuation of food. They guide decisions and practices and have a direct effect on the waste levels. The food consumption patterns during weekends have similar traits as during specific social occasions marked by boundaries in time and space, e.g. parties, birthdays or holidays. During weekends there is a stronger emphasis on the social dimensions of meals and enjoyment. There is also more time available: time to plan, shop and cook and enjoy long-lasting meals together. The schedule is more flexible and it is generally easier for everyone to be present. Due to this, culinary experiments or baking are often reserved for the weekends. Jorunn and Kjell underlined how they had spent a bit of time one weekend preparing a reindeer-stew, as they had more time to cook compared to their more unpredictable weekday schedules. The weekends are different for Erika and Roger too, and especially on Saturday's. Then the dinner is usually served later in the evening, often with a bottle of red wine with it, breaking the pattern of the weekdays. On Sundays, the dinner is sometimes also a family occasion, as they often invite their children over for dinner, especially their son, who does not have his family yet.

Social Occasions

In the introduction I touched upon how gifts from visitors can influence the food management and food waste levels in households. This can also happen when the habits and tastes of visitors influence what is bought and prepared especially for them, or for a specific social occasion. Practices diverging from the common food management procedures tend to increase household food waste levels. An increasing number of

factors, like people, foodstuff, preferences and habits can decrease the level of control, and subsequently lead to a higher proportion of unnecessary food waste. Visitors are more frequent during holidays and weekends in our households. On these occasions, more people are involved in the food management, as the following example from the barbeque involving 15 people will show. The invited guests were asked to bring something for the barbeque, but without very specific guidelines for what to bring or who should bring what. There was more than enough food, much of it going to waste.

The barbeque/birthday party took place in the early summer at Ante and Susanne's place. They were friends of a friend. I had met Ante a couple of times in town when I was with my friend Josef, and was invited along by Josef. We were about 15 people, including Susanne's two children who also lived there. Guests brought what they wanted to eat, and Susanne had made a large bowl of mixed salad for everyone to share, and also some bread to share.

The ingredients for the barbeque, meat, fish, sausages and various vegetables, were put outside on a table on the balcony where the actual barbecuing took place. We all sat indoors, chatting and drinking beverages. A few things stood out to me: after we had finished barbequing and eating, we were all full. No one paid attention to what was still left on the barbeque. Due to this, a few skewers with fish, a couple of sausages and a pork chop got well overcooked. "Now that sausage does not look too tempting", Josef said when we went outside on the balcony about an hour after we had eaten. By that time, we were getting a bit hungry again. Half-empty packages of sausage, two pork-chops and some skewers of fish were still lying on the table outside. As I later glanced out the window, I found it quite symptomatic to see a black cat sitting there on the balcony floor, snacking on a pork-chop he had collected from the table. He sat there, surrounded by a couple of empty containers of plastic packaging, fluttering in the wind. The cat only ate a tiny bit of the pork-chop, before strolling away. There was an excess of food for the cat as well, although I did wonder why it didn't prefer the fish.

This happened early in my fieldwork, and I remembered I found this image of the cat on the balcony a tempting metaphor for the wasteful food management practices in many Norwegian households, where an excess of food is available and waste is prevalent (Hanssen & Shakenda 2010, 2011, Hanssen & Møller 2013)[113]. The amount of food at this barbeque would probably have fed twice the amount of people present, even though we spent the whole evening there and some of us ate more than once.

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[113] Survey results from another module in the larger "Food Waste"-project (Hanssen & Schakenda 2010, 2011, Hanssen & Møller 2013).

With no organisation, the appropriate amount is difficult to estimate with so many guests and contributors. Another reason for the unnecessary waste on this occasion was the social dimension. The social occasion influenced the situation, in addition to the beer perhaps, and this led to the food management slipping into the background. The pleasure of the social occasion, the shared experience, was at center stage (Graeber 2001:260), not just the consumption of food, which is actually individual per definition (Graeber 2014). We must also consider the cultural importance of avoiding a shortage of food for social gatherings.

During parties, birthdays and Christmas, I observed that tidying up after a meal was postponed until after the guests have left and the social event has drawn to a close. This is much to the detriment of the longevity or potential future use of the food. Since a big surplus of food was generally available in these households, perhaps even more so during the social occasions I took part in, in addition to all the people involved, this added to the chaotic dimension of the situation, with even less control and predictability in terms of food management.

Holidays – Christmas, Easter and Excess

Food plays an extra important role during holidays like Christmas and Easter, when families and friends gather to have a good time. Holidays often mean visitors, large social gatherings and indulgence food-wise. Unnecessary food waste tends to follow in the wake.

> *"It is a bit special during Christmas. Then you are supposed to 'bang on the big-drum'." Tor*

When I spoke with Tor and Kaisa about Christmas, they mentioned that Kaisa's mother and brother had visited during Christmas, and that this contributed to a loss of control. Kaisa's mother was shopping food, and she would buy food that they didn't normally eat or that was unfamiliar to them. "We didn't know what we had anymore. We lost control", Kaisa told me when the three of us discussed it over a coffee in their living room. After Kaisa's family had left, much of that food was left untouched and was eventually discarded.

Jon had previously shared a similar story with me. Not from Christmas, but from when they celebrated his father's birthday. When we were having a talk about this occasion, he said the food was taken care of afterwards. However, a while later when we went through the fridge together, this turned out to be not entirely true. He then

showed me several things still left from his father's birthday party that had now gone off. He also told me that they had thrown away some of the other ingredients already. This shows how visitors can be instability factors that contribute to waste, as they take part or influence the regular household food management routines – more food, more people and more preferences, in short, more variables that lead to a lesser degree of predictability. The more options that exist, the more potentialities there are for things getting mixed up; getting messy and disorderly (Bateson 1985:241-242 [1979]), and thus more likely wasted.[114]

Ingeborg's difficulties with adapting their provisioning habits to a smaller household after their sons moved out were especially pronounced during Easter holiday. She told me that she had bought lots of good food for them all to enjoy during the holiday. However, the extra provisioning came in addition to still buying an amount of food for their departed sons and the possible guests they might bring along like in previous times. Just the two of them made up the whole household now. She shook her head and sighed when telling me about the excessive amounts they had bought. It was evident that changing habits and adjusting to the change in household size takes time – what Rudie (1980, 1984) refers to as a cultural lag.

On the 3rd day of Christmas, Jon sent me an mms-image of leftovers from their halibut dinner from the day before. The image showed what had been left on the kitchen bench overnight. When I later asked him why, he told me they didn't bother cleaning up and taking care of it after dinner. The occasion, in this case Christmas, had got the better of him. During holiday seasons like Christmas and Easter, family- and social gatherings are key. A central element in confirming these relations is by providing, sharing and enjoying good food. Food appears as something to indulge in to reaffirm the difference from the routines of everyday life. It is an occasion where elements of cultural tradition or individual lifestyle cooking could be expressed, and as something that ties a group of people together. The excessive range of dishes is very much a central element during these holidays, but food waste is a common consequence when the social dimension is emphasised.

There is clearly an excessive amount of food available in these households; more food than mouths to feed. But it is not just during the holiday seasons these excesses occur. During summertime, I was hiking in Tromsdalen with Jon and my dog. We had a little barbecue next to a lavvo in the valley. We had brought some reindeer-meat and

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[114] We will discuss this in depth in the Chapters 9 and 10 on disposal practices.

three lamb-sausages. We then barbequed and ate a sausage each. After a while, as we are getting a bit restless, I ask him if he wants the last sausage. Jon doesn't want it, and suggests that I give it to the dog. I tell him the dog has just eaten, and he says that he is going to have pork-chops soon anyway, so he doesn't want the sausage. I give it to the dog. The crowded food or meal-schedule could just be a coincidence, but it made me think of another occasion. Jon and I was having a chat in their living room about why food is left to linger and go off in their fridge or freezer:

> *Jon: "You just don't fancy eating that.*
> *[Pause]*
> *Ant: So, you have other things to choose from, or?*
> *Jon: Yes, you don't fancy it. You fancy something else, plain and simple. It is overbooked!"*

I encountered similar expressions several times, a craving for alternatives to choose from when you get hungry. The expression overbooking is quite fitting, certainly for the holiday seasons like Christmas or Easter, like Ingeborg admitted above. But the overbooking in terms of food in the households also extends past the holidays. In the later chapters following the practices in the food cycle, we will see how an overtly strong focus on the provisioning phase is a key reason for unnecessary food waste in the households. There are several possible explanations and motivations behind such "overbookings".

Criteria for Food Management

In order to better identify criteria behind what food is chosen and why in these instances, a perspective from consumption studies is useful. It attempts to identify a few key variables and motivations behind such decisions. Alan Warde (1997) has identified four scales that he calls "antinomies." They act as criteria of food consumption. Choices about food management are made along these scales, dependent on context. These "antinomies" are: 1) Novelty and Tradition, 2) Health and Indulgence, 3) Economising and Extravagance, 4) Care and convenience. Regarding our discussion about Christmas above, the Christmas dinner could be identified as traditional, prepared with care, indulgent and extravagant. Without delving too deep into lifestyle consumption and the relation between consumption of food and concerns of individual and group identity (See e.g. Bourdieu 1984, Friedman 1994, Warde 1997, Featherstone 2007 [1991]), a brief comment is necessary before moving on to describing the preferences and ideals

which stood out, and how these influenced the thresholds to wastefulness when it comes to food.

Through Norwegian mainstream media, a multitude of criteria guiding food consumption are presented. Typically, this is done under the heading “Forbrukerjournalistikk” (Consumer-Journalism), with an alleged intention of helping consumers to make better choices. Providing information about products, trends and possible uses is one example. Such articles are likely to influence food management practices, although I have not studied the media specifically in this regard. Through my own data-material, I am able to pinpoint a few dominant criteria around food consumption that are also present in the mainstream media in Norway. Some of these deserve mentioning.

In addition to the strong price focus, a focus on health and nutrition was particularly strong, and the importance of pure and good quality ingredients might be connected with this. Food is often treated as a tool, a means to reach another end than feeding oneself. Your choice of food can either help you or be a barrier in your personal projects, be it to become healthier, more energetic, stronger, slimmer, more attractive to mention some of the dominant bodily ideals presented in contemporary mainstream media in Norway (See e.g. Bugge 2012). Another related theme is managing risk to avoid illness, contamination and unhealthy additives through food consumption.[115] Such a focus was especially pronounced in the younger households and in families with children. It was typically expressed in the context of raising their children, making sure they eat “proper food”. Consumer preferences for ecological foodstuffs should also be mentioned. In addition to better taste, avoiding chemicals was stated as a motivation for choosing such products. This raises the question of what this ideal of “proper food” consists of. Through my empirical material, a few key attributes of what is meant by “proper food” in these households were identified. “Proper food” consists of food that is made from scratch, with fresh and “proper” ingredients - a menu consisting of a variation of nutritious and tasteful meals, often with non-processed meat, fish or fowl and several different vegetables. This is an ideal menu that appears to balance a combination of nutritional concerns and sensory pleasure and variation. These attributes of “proper food” also find resonance in writings on the field of sociology and anthropology of food and consumption (E.g. Douglas 1972, Lien 1987, Bugge & Almas 2006, Døving 2003, Halkier 2009). David Evans (2011:434, 2012a) points to the rhythm

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[115] Here the expiry date on food plays an influential role, which we will return to when discussing practices of discarding.

of food; its material dimension and how the materiality of the ingredients and their longevity shape the priorities and actions to avoid waste. With a menu consisting of "proper food", this challenge is more pronounced, as fresh ingredients are comparatively of a more transient kind (Thompson 1979) and have a more limited window of consumption.

The outlook of what will bring personal pleasure, and thus appears as meaningful practice, is a very influential criterion for human beings when it comes to choosing between alternative actions (Graeber 2001). This can also be the case concerning food. Whether we are talking about a sporadic treat (Miller 1998) or lifestyle consumption trends like gourmet cooking or cooking from scratch, the search for meaning and value contains various dimensions. They can be sensory, individual, social, economic etc., and they are key factors in analysing food management and consumption. Explicitly, such a hunt for meaning can for instance be the search for good taste experiences that Kjell claims that Jorunn sometimes aims to achieve through cooking. They value the good sensory experiences that food and drink offer, and enjoying life through food is a value they find important (Graeber 2001, 2013). It is thus meaningful for them to prepare "proper food from scratch".[116] Phenomena like gourmet cooking, cooking from scratch, and other food consumption preferences could be analyzed further as parts of a network containing lifestyle consumption, taste, identity and class. Different food consumption preferences and tastes are mentioned important indicators of who you are or who you want to be; of identity, either on an individual or collective level. We should not lose sight of food as a necessity for human life and survival, but it is also so much more; a source of pleasure, achievement or competence for instance, and a symbol and tool of affirmation or belonging on an individual or group level. Bourdieu (1984) discussed the latter in his classic studies of how cultural and class background influences tastes and preferences in consumption.

Desire for Choice and Variation

Attempting to explain their wastefulness, students Ellen and Ivar mention a practice that I also experienced in perhaps four or five other households. There was a certain pickiness present, as what to prepare was often decided by what they desired in that particular moment. They also admitted during our conversations that their approach

[116] Another example here is the moments of indulgence, like Georg and Josefine's desire for the airborne gourmet coffee, "Lippe no. 2" that we will hear about later in the thesis.

was not very planned, and more down to what they fancied for dinner that day, when they were starting to get hungry and it was time to cook. At that time, having different alternatives to choose from seems a good idea. But as they also prefer a diet with many vegetables, a challenge in terms of storage, longevity and consumption occurs, due to the inherent materiality of these foodstuffs. A mismatch can then occur (Evans 2012a). Vegetables that had gone off or were considered to be of inferior quality made up several of their entries in their waste diary: peppers, mushrooms, squash, salad, carrots and mandarins were all discarded after they returned from an un-planned long-weekend away. The rhythm of everyday life got in the way of optimal food management (Evans ibid: 46), considering the inherent materiality of these vegetables.

A desire for a variation in diet is understandable. But with little planning, a diet based on food with such a limited longevity, mixed with ad hoc decisions on a meal-to-meal basis dependent on fancies, is per definition a recipe for unnecessary food waste. Evans (2012a:51) also pinpointed the desire for variation and the focus on taste in contrast to large-batch cooking, having the same food for dinner several days a week. This cooking strategy was seen as an option in single households. This was for instance expressed by Stine, who found cooking only for herself boring, and also imagined that batch cooking would lead to less food being wasted.

Without wishing to offer the older housewives sainthood just yet, condemning the young couple above, a quick glance at how Erika and Roger composed their menu provides an interesting contrast. It shows how their menu is interrelated with the planning, longevity and choices of vegetables, and in the end their level of wastefulness. Erika and Roger's approach towards variation in the dinner menu is different. Erika explains that they buy vegetables that have a variety of uses, and the variation in menu is more down to how they chose to prepare their ingredients. The foodstuffs themselves are fairly generic and have a range of uses. In addition to potatoes, the vegetables that make up the mainstay of their diet are carrots, swede and onions. These are all quite easy to store for months, if done the right way. Their approach demands a certain competence about these foodstuffs, optimal storage and the possibilities of preparation, but the differences in level of planning and the predictability in food management routines is the central element here. Having a preference for a range of choices, with a wide variety of food at home, especially vegetables, makes it more demanding to keep the household food waste-levels low. Additionally, when the decision on what to prepare is most often done ad-hoc, based on individual desires and fancies, it is evident that this has a huge influence on the different waste-levels in these two households.

Different discourses are likely to influence the two household's food practices. Using Warde's scales (Warde 1997) as indications of the orientation, the scale between novelty and tradition is relevant in this case, as is the dimensions of indulgence and care. Ellen and Ivar's pronounced preference for variation in foodstuffs to choose from and their ad-hoc approach, stands in contrast to a more stable and planned choice of menu of Erika and Roger, where more generic foodstuffs form a basis for their menu. Clearly, the food management practices of these to households in question are not so black and white. I am emphasising the differences here to underline the consequences I found in terms of waste levels linked to the different approaches, one focused more on individual pleasures and spontaneous desires, and one more traditional and carefully planned.

Proper and Healthy food

In relation to household food preferences and menus, the most apparent emphasis is found on the scale between different positions on Warde's (1997) "antinomie" of Health and Indulgence. It seems that all these "antinomies" play some part and influence practices behind unnecessary waste levels. The scale of Care and Convenience for instance, plays a central role in the busy everyday lives of some of the households. But when idealised images of one's household menu are presented to me in conversation, the main talking point would concern the balance between consuming tasty, but also healthy food. With the expressed ideals of "eating proper and healthy food", "making food from scratch" and "using good ingredients", a variety of concerns come into play. These can e.g. be personal health, avoiding additives, control of content, better tastes, a wish for authenticity etc. Looking back at Bugge's (2006) three archetypes of dinner in Norway, it seems the ideal of "proper and healthy food from scratch" ticks all three boxes. It holds references to traditional, proper cooking, which also requires competence and can thus be related to status or traditions and pride in cooking, also maintaining the healthy dimension. Evans (2012a) also found that ideals of "eating properly" and "making food from scratch" were explicitly expressed in his study from Manchester, UK.

With two small children, Georg and Josefine's decisions on what is on the family menu are quite connected to their children. They want their diet to be "fairly healthy", and prioritize "eating properly, with healthy and good ingredients". They cannot make "one big pot" for everyone Georg claims, because small kids cannot or will not eat "everything". Herein lays a daily dilemma for them, one between raising the kids and to

get them to eat a sufficient amount of nutritious food. Their children can be picky at times, and they have periods when they only eat one kind of topping on their bread, Georg says. Or when suddenly, pasta is not preferred anymore. This leads to food waste in their household, as these changes are unpredictable. Food is available in plentiful, so the traditional child-rearing practice of "clean your plate" is not being practiced. I base this on observations when I was present for dinner, or by the half-eaten cereal bowls left from breakfast that I also observed. Georg also makes homemade bread because "it tastes better," and he can "control the level of salt". Other households without children like Jorunn and Kjell, and Ellen and Ivar also explicitly express that they focus on healthy, proper food and good ingredients. These statements were also reflected in their provisioning and cooking practices where fish, chicken and vegetables were important, and neither did I observe widespread use of pre-cooked food-products.

Preparation and Meals

The meals I was privy to observing and participating in during my fieldwork were mostly dinners, occasionally lunch or evening meals, and a few social events where food was important, like at barbeques or birthdays.[117] As mentioned in the section discussing gender, who cooked dinner appeared to be decided primarily on the basis of practical reasons. This could be one or a combination of: who had the energy, wanted to cook, or who arrived first home from work and similar reasons. On the whole, there wasn't a whole lot of discourse data in the interviews discussing the preparation of meals, apart from who did the preparations and when. This lack of data is in itself interesting, as it hints at preparations not being much in focus when it comes to food and waste in the households. It was only in the two oldest households (Erika and Roger and Ingrid and Fredrik), with Kåre and Nina, and once with Jon and Gry that I experienced that next day's dinner was planned and partially prepared in advance. This happened the evening before, and consisted of peeling vegetables, defrosting meat, fish or berries. Such practices put more emphasis on care rather than convenience (Warde 1997), but they have traits of economising and tradition too. Like data in the section on household descriptions show, the temporal perspective on food management does usually not extend past the next two-three days, and for some households it doesn't really include next days dinner, which is a question more of convenience than care. Such a short-term

[117] When nothing specific is noted about the kind of meal, the comments in the following section refer to dinners that took place in the domicile of the households. I do not have data on dinners taking place outside of the household apart from during social gatherings.

perspective is indicative of a lack of care and planning. It offers clear indications towards the preparation practices; the preparation phase is not emphasised. Food is available in plentiful, close to home, at almost all times.

The preparation phase is most likely to start right before the meal is taking place. The preparations start after arriving home from work or studies. Dinner usually took place between 4:30 and 8:00 pm, dependent on the work-schedule of the people in the household, spare-time activities or established habits. Scheduled dinnertime thus varied by the day of the week in some of the households. Some worked shifts and some had flexible or unpredictable work-hours. Sometimes dinner was eaten individually, at separate times, or not in eaten at home. I did not observe occasions when dinner was skipped in the households, as I was most often present just to take part in the actual dinners.

Communalities from the preparation phase that minimizes food waste were observed when I had dinner with Erika and Roger. The first time when I had dinner with them, we had what could be coined as a typical traditional Northern Norwegian meal: fish (halibut) with boiled potatoes and carrots. Typically for them, the dinner was planned the night in advance, and the fish was picked up from the freezer to thaw in time for next day's dinner preparations. Their practices lean towards care, tradition and economising using Warde's scales (Warde 1997). During the preparation phase, I also noticed how cautiously Erika was measuring up the exact amount of salt for the quantity of water to boil the fish in. Their routines appear to be meticulous and habitual. They told me that they have grown more alike as they have spent time together, even though they had similar upbringings regarding food practices and that their habits were by now well established. This was also visible during one shopping trip I did with them. Compared to the shopping trips with the other households, there was much less dialogue and needs to clarify what they needed, what they had at home, or what kind of food they should buy.

When I asked Erika about portions and preparations as we went through their waste diary together, she told me how they would re-pack the fish they bought in bulk, usually into quantities of four-five kilos. They would split it up in portions suitable for two people, then mark it with date and content and freeze it. It was not too common for them to have a large amount of leftovers, as their estimates of how much would be eaten and their preparations were meticulous. This was also reflected in their waste diary, where they had marked down the occasional entry of a single boiled potato that was in the end wasted. The level of planning in the preparation-phase directly

influenced how much leftovers were produced. Once when I was over for dinner, there were leftovers. Perhaps they expected me to eat more than I did? Guests are as mentioned one of several instability factors that can contribute to unnecessary waste.

Preparation practices that contributed to unnecessary waste were numerous. In principle, they were a juxtaposition of the planned and structured practices of Erika and Roger: Assessing stock before provisioning, re-packing food in portions, making shopping lists, optimal storage temperatures and planned and structured meal preparations and times. In short, stability, predictability and sticking to established knowledge-based plans are key factors to avoid waste. But such preparations require effort, and even Jon, who has lots of time due to being unemployed, found it hard to prioritize planning meals, such as preparing dinner the evening in advance in the everyday life:

> *"So…then things have just been sitting there [in the cupboards]…because for some reason or another, it is far away in a sense, these drawers and cupboards. In one way or another, one does not arrive there to get food. I cannot explain it in another way. It can be things that need preparation, peas and lentils. Peas have to be put in water the day before. Things you can put time into when it is Christmas for instance. But in the everyday life, things move so fast. You don't plan…putting peas in water for tomorrow's dinner. There is something there. Because of that, it [these foodstuffs] just remains there [in the cupboards and drawers]…You just forget that you have them, things which you seldom use."*

Jon doesn't plan ahead or prepare dinner in advance. For him, preparation should ideally be quick and effortless – alas towards the convenient (Warde 1997).[118] When someone unemployed, with a fair amount of spare time does not put effort into planning and preparations, and is stating that everything moves so fast, food management is not much of a priority.

Previously we discussed how Svein and Ingeborg struggled to adapt their food practices to their reduced household size. During a long interview session with them in their living room, Ingeborg shared some thoughts about the dinner they just had. She thought they did well that day, as they only got two potatoes as leftovers. She said they actually had a discussion if they should add more "fishpudding" into the pot with "fishballs", but they didn't, and it turned out to be enough food. They did however

[118] He also finds that foodstuffs that they seldom see or handle tend to slip off the radar, which we will return to when discussing the relationship between technology and waste.

consider it. “It is strange. It is just the way it is”, comments Ingeborg. They find it hard to re-adjust and to break old out of old habits. I experienced similar challenges to re-adjust to new household situations and sizes in several households; Ellen and Ivar and Kåre and Nina recently having moving together, Jon and Gry and Svein and Ingeborg re-adjusting established everyday routines of food management to fewer household members. Preparing too much food for dinner, like Svein and Ingeborg discuss above is a common reason for edible food subsequently ending up in the bin. I have already mentioned Jon who didn’t want to be told off for not making enough food for dinner, and thus prepared more food than what was needed, with a large amount of leftovers being the result. The low price of rice was also used as an argument to preparing more their household, “just in case”. The exact phrase that Svein also used above. Not making enough food is clearly not desirable socially. But instead of measuring up portions, the solution was often to add a little extra in the pots and pans, “just to be sure”. It is an easy way out, but a practice that produces leftovers and subsequently, unnecessary food waste.

"Just in case"

In this regard, there are contextual cultural elements that can influence local household practices in terms of dinner preparation. I heard statements claiming that during less prosperous times in Northern Norway, the food was indeed treated more carefully, storage technology, quantities and material longevity permitting. Food was valued higher, manifested through more careful practices and prioritised food management (Graeber 2001, 2013). However, another social aspect related to preparing meals was also present. Where food was scarcer, making extra food could be interpreted as a way of communicating that although we are not very rich, at least we have enough food. Extra food was also prepared as an act of social responsibility for the extended family and friends. I assume such a practice would be emphasised in a more exposed social context, on special social occasions and holidays when more people were gathered. Nevertheless, I also experienced this in some households that often had visitors. Especially in Jon and Gry’s quite flexible and open household, I heard them mention several times that they made extra food for dinner, as someone might pop by. They would say, “just in case”. Then, if someone came by, they would also be offered food, usually dinner. I was also on the receiving end of such extras several times in Jon and Gry’s household.

The cultural definitions of what is seen as meaningful and valuable are reproduced though daily gestures (Graeber 2001:82). The sharing of human necessities like food is pretty much expected in egalitarian societies. In times of struggle it is almost a moral obligation. But it is also pleasurable to share, both communally and individually – there appears to be a duality present, similar to the concept of the gift, according to Mauss (1995 [1924]). To Mauss, gifting is neither egoistical nor altruistic. It always contains fragments of both. Sharing a meal with others is pleasurable; one gets company and gets to host, and one gets to please others. In addition comes the creation and affirmation of the social relations between the involved parties the acts of gifting. The practice of making extra food constitutes the perspective of an extended household, one that stretches beyond ones own. Through their sharing of food, Jon and Gry reproduce an important element of the local culture. Generosity and hospitability appears to be important to them, as does company. These are values that they find meaningful and valuable, manifested through their everyday acts of offering family, friends and neighbours something to eat when they pop by for a visit.

Preparing too much food for dinner, with half-full pots and pans left when everyone is full, is in a sense an illustrative micro-image of what happens on a larger scale when it comes to food waste. Acts early in the household food management process, like the provisioning or the planning of provisioning, create consequences throughout the rest of the process. It might seem banal, but if households buy more food than they need, prepare more food than they need for meals, they are likely to waste more of it, regardless of the technological equipment and their knowledge about storage and treatment. The households are then likely to become what Jon so accurately coined, overbooked, with the consequence of food getting wasted needlessly. Practices of measuring up what is prepared for dinner, judging portions or asking how hungry different members of the family are not very common. Such practices are grounded in the everyday habits of food management, taking good care of the food, expressed by experienced household managers like Erika and Ingrid, and the meticulous young Nina. Again the emphases of these practices are not so much on the convenient, modern and convenient, but towards the other end of the scales, on care, tradition and economising (Warde 1997).

Quantities and Entities

On the whole, making rough estimates about how much is needed for dinner based on the number of people likely to share the meal is the common practice. Then a bit more

is added, “just in case”. Jorunn and Kjell also find that they prepare more food for dinner than necessary. During our main interview, they tell me how they often cook too much rice or potatoes, before expanding on why some kinds of food are easier to estimate than others:

> *Jorunn: “Like those spaghetti-measurement things. I have seen them. You can regulate the size dependent on how many portions you are making. It would have been very smart, because I usually make way too much. Sometimes I also don’t get enough. I find it close to impossible to see.*
> *Kjell: Usually, we make three portions (of dinner) for us two.*
> *Jorunn: But it is easier to estimate when for instance I have one piece of meat or fish, and then just make side dishes. It is easier compared to making a soup or a stew or something. I don’t know why.*
> *Kjell: Then you just have…that is the piece of fish. If you have that piece, you will finish it.*
> *Jorunn: But it isn’t always like we cook too much food.*
> *Kjell: No, definitely not.*
> *Jorunn: But when I was alone (when Kjell has been away for a week or two), it happened, but on purpose so that I had for several days.”*

First of all, this shows the occasional local practice of cooking too much food, and the struggle to estimate how much of each ingredient to prepare for dinner. Producing leftovers occasionally are in a sense as unavoidable as producing food waste in itself (Bataille 1991)[119]. And both when it comes to specific ingredients like meat and fish, and dishes with more undefined portion-sizes like soups and stews, estimations of portions are seen as problematic. Jorunn perceives the quantification of more distinct entities like pieces of meat, fish and similar distinct entities of food to be easier compared to food like rice and pasta, which comes in more numerous and indistinct quantities per prepared portion. Obviously, meat and fish are also sold in portion-sized packages or they are pre-cut into pieces in sizes to fit the common servings, compared to rice, pasta and potatoes. This shows how experience and the habit of measuring ingredients by using measuring cups, something Erika practices, can limit leftovers and thus the likelihood of unnecessary waste. Georg found his own solution to his previous wasteful cooking practices when it came to rice:

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[119] We will return to discuss Georges Bataille’s notion of “The Accursed Share“ at a later stage.

Georg: "Usually, I get too much potatoes, pasta and rice when I cook. But we use it later. But I have control over the rice now. The boys finish it every time. I found a pot that holds about the right amount, but when it comes to pasta…it differs a lot how much the boys eat. It can be quite difficult, and the pasta is difficult to re-use. Potatoes you can just fry.
Ant: You said you had gotten better at portioning rice?
Georg: Yes, I have found our level. It is a pot that I use; the smallest pot that I use. It is a pretty good measurement."

The instrument he uses as measurement is a whole pot, and he did not consider using measuring cups. Previously, he had just used larger pots, before arriving at this one as the solution. Still, he didn't measure the rice up when I was there for dinner once, when rice was on the menu. He put an approximate amount in the new favourite pot and then added an approximate amount of water to fit the amount of rice he had put in. My point is not that using tools of measurements gives you the perfect amount, and just like that you avoid any kind of leftovers or unnecessary food waste, but a level of correlation can be expected. Rather, I find the lack of consciousness and attention paid to the process of estimating the amount of food needed for a meal to be quite revealing. Such an emphasis on convenience is an indicator of the excesses of cheap food available. I view these common non-reflexive and accidental practices of preparation as indicative of how food is to an extent taken for granted in the daily household context. Habits of low levels of preparation represent another example where food management is not prioritized in terms of time or effort, compared to alternative actions. This indicates that it is not so meaningful and valuable for the household members to spend their time on such management, if we follow Graeber's value-based theory of practice (2001, 2013).

To recapitulate, several factors can be behind such a loss of meaning, or value, something previously connected to more careful food management practices, to values of austerity and a respect for foods life-rendering potentials. The abundance of cheap food currently available, a stronger focus on individual consumption, indulgence and fresh food, a changed temporal perspective on provisioning, changes in household organization and resources, and increased distances between food production and the end consumers alter the shared perceptions of food and its value.

Cooking from Scratch

Jorunn and Kjell describe their menu as focused on fresh ingredients and vegetables, and not based on ready-made meals. They want to “eat properly”, and “make things from scratch”. This aligns with care rather than convenience, but also problematises Warde’s scale (Warde 1997) of traditional versus modern focus as traditional cooking practices have become popular again. It has traces of all the categories that Bugge mention (Bugge 2006): 1) Traditional family values and history, 2) Trendy as displaying competence and lifestyles and 3) Therapeutic, with aim to achieve good health and avoid illness. However, during busy weeks, daily dilemmas occur. Such a dilemma can for instance be a conflict between this ideal and convenience and time. There is an explicit expressed gap between this ideal and their actual practices, a cognitive dissonance of a kind (Festinger 1962). In our case, Jorunn and Kjell would like to eat more fish than currently. Then there are typically a few different practices available to manage this dissonance: Change behaviour (eat more fish), justify current behaviour (fish is so expensive) or justifying the behaviour by adding conditions (I don’t have to eat so much fish as I will just eat vitamin pills instead). We will return to discuss this gap between ideal and practice at a later stage.

During weekdays, they are usually hungry when start cooking, if they even manage to have dinner together due to varying work schedules. Then quick and convenient meals are more common. There is a mismatch between temporal demands at work and the temporal demands of the food (Evans 2012a). In this case, there is a mismatch between the ideals of a menu with food cooked from scratch and the preparation time and effort needed. During weekends they have more time available and often cook together. This underlines that they are indeed a household based on the classic anthropological definition based on shared meals, even if their weekly schedules make this difficult at times. Household and family relations are expressed and constituted through shared meals (E.g. De Vault 1991). On these occasions, Kjell claims Jorunn is “hunting for good tastes.” Making dishes from scratch requires time, competence and good ingredients. Jorunn says that they have everything they need to make things [fishcakes or jam] at home, except time. Ellen also told me that she prefers to “make things from scratch”:

Ellen: "I prefer to make things from scratch.
Ant.: Do you make things yourself? Bread? Jam?

Ellen: I want to learn it, but I haven't done it yet. My mother makes everything herself; juices and jams, pickles."

The ideal image Ellen and others communicate is clear. Cooking "from scratch with proper ingredients" requires vegetables or fresh fish and meat. These ingredients have limited longevity and proper storage requires competence and diligence. Quantitative surveys state that food with limited longevity, like fruit and vegetables, bread and baked goods and dairy products, top the list of most wasted food categories in Norwegian households (Hanssen & Shakenda 2010, 2011, Hanssen & Møller 2013). The ideal of cooking from scratch, coupled with materiality of the foodstuffs needed to follow such a diet, influences both household priorities when it comes to food practices and meal organisation (Evans 2011:434), and in the next instance waste levels. The ideal of "cooking from scratch" is expressed by the younger generations of households, whereas for the older ones above 60 years old, "cooking from scratch" was always more or less the standard. The foci on "proper food" and "cooking from scratch" are also ideals that emphasises the quality of the food, its use value, more than the exchange value and its representation, the price (Marx 1990 [1867]).

Evans (2012a: 50) also showed how factors on different levels of scale, from city gentrification to life-phases and daily time-schedules can clash and outcompete this quite time-consuming ideal manner of food management and cooking. The result is often that both good intentions and good quality vegetables are left rotting in the bottom of the fridge. There is a mismatch between the rhythms of life and the rhythms of food (Evans 2012a), implying its longevity as it succumbs to entropy. Using the perspective from value-theory (Graeber 2001, 2013), the priorities of households and how they spend their time are related to time being scarce, and e.g. socialising might be more meaningful. Such priorities are influenced by the general level of access to a wide range of affordable foodstuffs, current time constraints. Societal macro-changes in the region of Tromsø and beyond have shaped this context and the current values that guide the valuations of food in the households and their decision-making and priorities in resource management. In chapter 11 we will discuss this thoroughly.

Culinary and Dietary Adjustments

Dietary change is another factors that can influence food waste levels, both towards an increase or decrease. While I wouldn't necessarily categorise a dietary change as another instability factor, the changes in diets I experienced in the households did lead

to unnecessary food waste. Household members needed time to adjust to the new diets. Provisioning routines, management of stock, knowledge levels and established habits of preparation and cooking were all challenged by such changes. The motivations for dietary changes vary. I experienced motivations ranging from a wish to lose weight, eating more "proper food", obtaining increased energy, and due to arising medical conditions. A few examples follow.

In Ingrid and Fredrik's household, boiled potatoes would get thrown away now and again. Fredrik eats less potato after he was diagnosed with diabetes, and in terms of preparation, they still haven't adjusted properly and occasionally cook a couple of potatoes too much. Jon also struggled with some health problems. He adjusted his diet and started following a strict regime. Due to this change, he told me that he had thrown away both a rice-based beverage and some homemade squash (fruit drink) his mother gave him. The rice-based beverage was tried as a replacement for milk, but they didn't like it so they threw it away. With the new diet containing a minimum of carbohydrates and lots of vegetables, the amount of vegetables wasted also rose. When their sons moved out, Svein and Ingeborg also adjusted their menu. Not just due to the change in household size, but also as they are both a bit overweight. Their new menu consisted of more salads and vegetables, and was on the whole more varied. Their freezer still contained quite a lot of food that was more suited to the previous diet in the household. Its fate remains uncertain.

There is indeed a change both in diet and options available in the supermarkets nowadays compared to just a couple of decades ago. Several of the older households pointed out such changes during our conversations, comparing their own diets with those of their children. In Marianne Lien's study "From Fish to Pizza", from Båtsfjord in Finnmark (1987), she also argues that social changes took place there during the 1980's. At the same time, changes in food habits occurred with the introduction of new dishes and preferences. Such a culinary transformation can be exemplified through a short exchange during a dinner I shared with Georg and his two young boys. When we had halibut for dinner in their home, the boys used balsamic vinegar and not ketchup or other kinds of condiments on their fish. Georg enthusiastically asked me if I had ever seen boys so fond of balsamic vinegar before. I had no answer, as I was more used to children their age using ketchup.

Their food management and provisioning is influenced by lifestyle discourses around food, grounded in cultural moralities, like raising the children, eating healthy or expressing culinary competence. Georg's statement: "I want to serve the boys proper

food", focus on raising the children, while the health-related discourse is another influential factor (See Bugge & Almas 2006, Halkier 2009). There are also elements of caring and showing affection for the family through serving proper and healthy food, in the vein of Miller (1998), and also of putting one's own preferences to the side (De Vault 1991). As Georg says, he wants to serve food he knows the boys will eat. The "proper food"-discourse also identifies food that is made from scratch as more proper than what is pre-cooked to different degrees – industrialised food. This is a strong cultural ideal that resonates well within several of the households.

Sausages do not appear to fall into the category of proper and healthy food for Georg, although there is quite a range of sausages to choose from in the local supermarkets or specialised food stores in Tromsø these days, ranging from cheap in-house brand types to gourmet-sausages. The boys do not eat sausages, says Georg. Døving (2003) claims that middle-class households express distance towards sausages. Døving states that in the small community in South Eastern-Norway where he did his fieldwork, sausages are first of all categorised as food for children. Døving found that sausages should ideally be eaten outside, during a party, birthday or similar occasion. Georg also tells me, as we eat the halibut, that sausages are the standard food served at children's birthday parties. He describes this as a massive problem: "Because then the boys won't eat. They don't like sausages. But they love fish, because they get it all the time." Judging from his statements, it appears as Georg is at least to some extent succeeding in "raising the children" by teaching them what they find to be healthy food habits. These statements could undoubtedly also be analysed in the context of class, lifestyle and taste, with individual food consumption as indicators of class, and subsequently individual identity, to follow Bourdieu (1984). My data material though is insufficient to allow me to discuss food preferences in relation to social class.

The Strange Stew - Bricolage and Creativity

A couple of times during the preparation phase, an interesting practice occurred; well-intended cooking experiments resulted in food eventually getting wasted. This process usually starts with the households discovering that they have a limited range or stock of food at home, but don't want to go shopping. Someone then attempts to combine what is at hand into a dinner or an evening meal. Unfortunately, I did not get to hear about such experiments that succeeded, but rather when most of the food wasted. However, these stories should not be interpreted as a discouragement towards experimenting. The flexibility and orientation the household members take towards cooking play a part.

Evans (2012a:46) found that some of the households he studied weren't really experimental in their cooking and would rather stick to what was familiar, or a set recipe. They felt rather incapable of improvising. This approach could also lead to unnecessary waste. Surplus ingredients would end up as waste since the household members were incapable of improvising or composing a meal based on what was at hand or close to going off.

They are unprepared. They haven't been shopping and don't want to do it now, so the cook tries to make something out of what they got. The motivation can also be to avoid waste if something is close to going off, or to save money by using ingredients they have in stock instead of going shopping. These situations can also occur when they lack an ingredient that is a central part of the dish. In short, when the alternative is not viable or desirable, or when something unexpected came up. The result is improvisation. So, in a manner of bricolage (Lévi-Strauss 1966 [1962]), the available ingredients are combined in a new and creative way. Another reason for similar culinary experiments can be if a household member buys something on special offer in the supermarket. With the intention of saving money, they try to make a new dish, incorporate the ingredient into a known dish, or to use it as a replacement for an ingredient traditionally used in said dish. Both Jorunn and Kjell and Kåre and Nina did this.

Jorunn and Kjell made a stew with smoked meat bought on special offer. They mixed it with coconut milk to make a curry sauce. The untraditional choice of smoked meat to go with such ingredients turned out all wrong and none of them liked it at all. Their intention of saving money in this creative culinary way did not succeed. It is very likely that this "strange stew" as they called it, ended up getting wasted. Although Jorunn told me she had made several attempts to "sell it in" and make Kjell eat it after she stored in the freezer. Kåre and Nina had similar experiences with some ready-made dishes they attempted to customise with some creative adjustments. During an interview held in their flat, they told me about one such occasion. Kåre combined a ready-made fish-dish with other ingredients to make sure it would be enough for them both. According to them both, the dish ended up tasting "just like water". They said they had "attempted to rescue it", but it ended up in the bin. They say this was a bit of an exception, as they seldom dislike the food so much that it ends up being thrown away. Experiments can also take place during the provisioning phase. Jon told me that he enjoy trying new kinds of food that arrive on the market or unknown ingredients from "immigrant stores" as he calls them. He admits that this approach carries a risk. He showed me a few different jars he had on a shelf in the fridge door. It had several results

of his adventurous shopping practices. Kåre would describe such occurrences as "bomkjøp" – a failed purchase.

Fresh Food as the New Standard

A few years after moving from the countryside to the city of Tromsø, the habit of buying whole slaughter of lamb, reindeer, pig or similar was abandoned by Ingrid and Fredrik. They said the availability of fresh and affordable meat at the local supermarket changed this practice, and it also changed their perception of the quality of meat. Buying in large quanta is not so desirable anymore, as they find that both meat and fish will get dry and inferior in taste if it is stored for a longer period. Erika and Roger also buy smaller quantities of meat nowadays, pre-cut, and not whole slaughter like in earlier years when they took care of the cutting themselves. Ingrid and Fredrik have also stopped buying potatoes by the bulk. They told me that the cellars at all three places they have lived at in Tromsø were not fit as storage rooms. They were too hot compared to the cellars at the farms they lived at previously.

Much of the necessary infrastructure for storage has moved from the individual domiciles to the supermarkets where larger quanta can be stored. However, storage technologies have also moved in the other direction, from the local store to the individual households. Erika and Roger told me that their families used to rent space in the deep-freezer at the local shop during the 1960's. This was before refrigerators were common in households in Northern Norway. Around this time, affordable, deep-freezers and refrigerators for households started to arrive on the market.

> *Ant: "So what happened when the freezer arrived?*
> *Erika: Well…it was a change...meat didn't have to be salted or dried. It wasn't anything more than that."*

However, this development clearly had quite a few consequences. Households didn't have to make a weekly trip to the local store to collect food from the freezer. Additionally, the practice of buying larger quanta of foodstuffs became, if not obsolete, quite outdated. Stockpiling and hoarding of food became possible at home, and on another scale. Actually, a few of the households had more than one freezer, and these were quite well stocked. Still, many shop food every day.

It is useful to contextualise and remember the larger picture. After World War 2, an increased availability of affordable food arrived due to mass-production and ever-growing distributive infrastructures spreading out (Evans, Campbell & Murcott 2013:14-

16). Add an increasing standard of living, the rise of lifestyle consumption, status and a focus on the sensation of food and how it tastes, and you have important factors contributing to fresh food gradually becoming the expected standard. With more frequent, small scale provisioning and storage, the everyday dependence on the distributive food-market infrastructures, ending with the supermarket outlet, cements this dependence further. The movement away from the more self-subsistent households of previous times continues. Pre-cut, pre-packed, pre-portioned, pre-spiced or pre-cooked products; there are many ways to obtain a premium price, relieving the consumers of some strenuous and some not so strenuous tasks of food management.

A wider range of food and fresher food at increasingly affordable prices for all is not negative, even if some of the household practices that follow from such market structural changes are undesirable in an environmental and social perspective. The availability and range of fresh food has raised the expectations when it comes to food. This is manifested by households buying smaller quantities for a higher price, for instance meat or potatoes which previously would be bought in bulk and stored for months.

Fresh has now become the new standard in many households, and food in stock is regularly replaced by more recently bought food. I experienced this through Georg's routine of replacing fruit they had with fruit he had just bought as he returned home from his shopping run, not to mention when he discarded homemade bread, replacing it with the freshly baked one. Bread has a specifically low threshold of getting thrown away, even if it is still edible. A pronounced expectation of freshness exists regarding bread, one of the chief categories of unnecessary food waste:

> *Anders: "I can eat bread which is two days old, but I have friends who never eat two-day old bread. The bread is just as good, but it is because it isn't fresh. It is supposed to be fresh."*
>
> ---
>
> *Ivar: "You buy a whole loaf of bread, and then I throw it a bit too early if it becomes dry. When you have had one loaf of bread for a week, then the last quarter of it is dry…"*

I also observed the practices Anders and Ivar describe many times. Pieces of bread, ranging from just a couple of slices up to almost whole loaves were thrown away when a fresher alternative was available. Also, in one household with young students and professionals where I used to hang out, the total amount of old dried out pieces of

bread lying about in the kitchen totalled up to one large plastic bag that got thrown away when they cleaned the kitchen.

Georg and Josefine's waste-diaries showed that even if bread would be homemade, it was thrown away when the fresh, newly baked ones were ready. Usually, Georg bakes bread on Sundays. Come Monday, they still have some left of the bread made the Sunday before, and this will then get replaced by the freshest bread. The oldest is thrown away. He noted in the diary: "Made new and better one yesterday" and "Baked a new one, would not have been used". Even if the bread is homemade and he has taken the time and effort to bake it, it still gets wasted reguarly. I also learnt through interviews, observations and waste diaries that Georg and Josefine have expectations of freshness when it comes to fruit. This was also an instrumental factor in fruit regularly ending up as unnecessary waste in their household. When the fresher alternative arrived, the oldest food would get devalued, manifested through the practices of discarding it (Graeber 2001, 2013).

Kåre for instance, says he eats almost a loaf of bread a day due to his physically demanding job. The rest he leaves in the cupboard until Nina finds it and throws it away. He will then have moved on to the next, fresher loaf. She has her own bread without gluten, which she freezes in slices to avoid wasting it. Kåre doesn't usually finish off his boxes of tinned mackerel in tomato sauce either. They are too big for one meal, and he throws away the leftovers as "the taste isn't good" after a while. Kåre says it does occur that they throw away what is left in cans, as he cannot be bothered to repack it into another container. The portion sizes are relevant as it takes effort to re-pack the remains, and sizes are hard to adjust to custom needs and wants of a spectrum of household varieties. Another entangled factor is the preference for freshness and desired taste.

Broken seals and opened packaging can be perceived as an indication that the foodstuff is not as fresh anymore, and increases the chances for loss of quality and taste. Some food-producers have tried to counter such challenges by offering packaging which is re-sealable or re-closable, to maintain the freshness of their products. Such efforts might not automatically heighten the threshold for disposal of food, as the importance of freshness and taste is a strong one, or if the re-sealable technology fails to live up to its promise, as it can struggle to repay the trust the consumers placed in it. In the main interview at their home, Jorunn also told me how she had to throw meat cuttings away, as the re-sealable technology of the plastic packaging did not deliver on its promise to keep the food fresh. The packaging technology is designed to keep food

fresh in the original packaging, relieving the consumer of having to re-package the food. On this occasion, it actually contributed to increased waste, as the trust Jorunn placed in it was unwarranted.

When I talk with Ingrid and Fredrik about the changes in terms of food consumption nowadays compared to when they grew up, they get quite normative and moralize about the practices of younger generations. They claim younger households only buy fresh food, especially when it comes to meat and fish. At the same time, they still buy a larger portion of fresh food nowadays compared to when they grew up on the countryside. Then they didn't have the same storage facilities and technology, or several supermarkets close by. Their moralising is quite understandable due to the difference in practices they experience between generations. They still maintain many of the austere practices they grew up with, and their waste levels are low in comparison to their children's households. They see the practices of younger generations, people who have grown up with a different situation and culture when it comes to the availability and management of food, through the lens of their own ideals. They value food in another manner, and thus prioritise differently when it comes to food management (Graeber 2001). It makes more sense for them due to their established values.

This desire for fresh food is a contributing factor behind unnecessary household waste. The gradual development and increasing influence of an ideal of freshness and fresh ingredients is another angle into understanding the previously discussed ideals of "eating properly", "proper and healthy food" and "cooking from scratch." Following these ideals, fresh ingredients like vegetables, fruit, fresh meat or fish, make up the mainstay of the menu. This desire for freshness leaves a smaller timeframe for consumption in the households. And with more and more activities competing for the amount of spare-time, daily food management slips down the list of meaningful activities. The waste bin then beckons, especially in the case of fresh food with shorter shelf life that deteriorates in quality rather quickly due to its highly transient materiality (Thompson 1979). On the other hand, this ideal of freshness is not always a dominant and deciding factor when it comes to provisioning or disposal and when it takes place. There are many examples where households treat food which is not the freshest as still containing its potential use value (Marx (1990 [1867]) as human nutrition. Some households maintained such a perspective for a while or when it came to certain kinds of foodstuffs. To be discussed in the concluding chapter, are the occasions when Erika and Roger buy milk with shorter expiry dates in the supermarket. Their explanation was that otherwise it was likely to be wasted in the supermarket. They know they will use it

before the date expires anyway, so they do not risk paying for goods they will not be able to use.

Summary

In this section I have gone through some of the main traits in the household members' choices and preferences in terms of menus and diets that I witnessed. I have specifically focused on practices that contributed to unnecessary food waste. Common cultural and established ideals that exert influence in different contexts have been discussed. We saw how the preferences and expectations of food are linked to the different social occasions like Christmas, birthdays, parties and other social or family gatherings, or just through the difference between weekday and weekend. I showed how the social dimension of the occasion, of visitors, or indulgence gains a stronger meaning in these situations, and how a focus on food management can disappear into the background. The involvement of several people and households are factors that challenge the stability of the household food management, making meticulous practices more challenging.

In addition to social settings with many people involved, the more flexible, shifting and short-term framework in the everyday lives of many households, both regarding work and spare-time, today bring a lack of stability and predictability in their food management. I discussed culinary changes on a generational level and how the household menus have changed through the last decades. More specifically I looked at new ingredients and dishes, but also changed preferences towards freshness and variety in diet. A number of factors lead to new practices and changed knowledge, and with time, new standards and expectations in terms of food present themselves: Less bulk and seasonal provisioning, increased short-term perspectives and provisioning, major infrastructural changes, both in terms of food availability and distribution and domestic household technologies.

During the preparation phase, I drew the attention towards practices related to portioning of foodstuffs and surrounding factors that decided how much food is prepared. Here both material factors as the shapes and sizes of the foodstuff in question are highlighted as important to understand waste levels, as are social ones, this time in terms of changes in household sizes and composition, preparation of extra food for possible guests, or culinary experiments for a variety of reasons. The component of stability and predictability was again highlighted as key to avoiding waste. We saw how

the rhythm of food and its materiality and the everyday habits and schedules of households were out of sync, with food waste as a consequence. This is amplified by contemporary cultural ideals like "eating properly" or "cooking from scratch", typically involving foodstuffs with a shorter longevity and in need of meticulous management. The transient status of foodstuffs really comes into the foreground with the rise of the contemporary ideals of convenience, freshness and pleasure. Having a variety of choices of food available, and the fact that even more of these are almost always available close by through the contemporary market infrastructures, consequentially leads to food taking up new meanings and valuations, as manifested through changed practices and priorities (Graeber 2001, 2013).

Necessary dietary adjustments and changes within households due to health or weight issues were also mentioned as a potential source of waste generation. Current cultural ideals present food as a central component, influencing choices of menu and diets, but regardless, food is often seen as a means to an end in contemporary lifestyles. This can manifest itself either as individual and personal projects of obtaining better health, losing weight or creating desirable sensory experiences, or as more collective ones, like social enjoyment and rituals of affirmation of family or friend relations where food is an important ingredient. When food becomes such a means to another end, it also represents a movement away from the potential use value (Marx 1990 [1867]) of food as a necessity for human survival. The presence of food becomes a given, and it is taken for granted. The value of food as nutrition still remains as an ideal, but amongst the younger generations mostly only in discourse, as exemplified by their widespread wasteful practices, strongly shaped by more large-scale changes in society[120]. This cultural contradiction between morality and practice represents a typical case of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962) that the household members attempt to juggle on a daily basis.

[120] We will discuss this in depth in Chapter 11 and 12.

Chapter 7 Household Frameworks and Communalities

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss key infrastructural factors and characteristics of the households that shape patterns in food management practices. Building on the empirical chapter about the households' daily lives and their menus and diets in the previous two chapters, I will discuss household structure, size and organisation, life-phases, gender issues, economy and time-management. I will also consider significant technological and infrastructural factors on a general level, all in relation to food waste.

Household Size and Structure[121]

A household is dynamic, and changes in its size and composition are key characteristics that shape the practices of resource management. This can manifest itself in several different ways, while it is also changes in external factors. On a general level, the practices can for instance be altered due to: 1) Changes in the household size, 2) Changes in knowledge levels if someone moves in or out, develops, acquires or loses knowledge, 3) Changes in levels of income, 4) Changes in distances or access to the source of food, with the consequence of an increased investment of energy or time necessary to obtain food, 4) Changes in technological infrastructure etc. All of the above entail changed food management practices. Something as simple as moving the freezer to another room, buying a new fridge, or the local supermarket re-locating can influence the way food circulates in a household in a variety of ways.

There are several life-phases in household cycle that are reflected in changes in size and structure: single households, couples moving in together, getting children, children moving out, someone moving out or becoming alone. I will go through these phases and point out communalities that influenced the food management process in the households I followed. Discussions and observations in the households show that changes in household size and structure can take a while to adjust to.

[121] The definition of a household is discussed in Chapter 5.

One-Person Households

Several factors that make it easier to manage food in one-person households. Although the opportunity to share the burdens or costs is lacking, it is easier to control and manage the resources when alone. As a common Norwegian saying goes: The more chefs, the more mess.[122] When there is just one chef, you can make what you want, and no one interferes with your food management. However, many foodstuffs are not portioned for one-person households to begin with. This calls for re-packing, freezing and planning to avoid food waste.

Young, one-person households typically eat out more often. Meals are a social activity, and cooking for only for oneself can have a higher threshold. But as have been pointed out by David Evans studies from Manchester in the UK (2011, 2012a, 2012b), when people often eat out or socialise with friends, one likely consequence is less fixed routines and subsequent loss of control in terms of household food management. Instability and loss of control was also reflected in statements from Nina and Kåre who had recently moved in together when I first met them. During an interview in their home, we discussed household changes and waste. Nina then told me that single life meant she wasn't home that often. The food she had bought and kept in the fridge would sometimes have gone off when she decided to stay in one night and wanted to cook:

> *"I was never home to eat, and when I was, I had to throw much of the food away".*

Nina adjusted her practices after discovering how expensive this was. She moderated her waste levels significantly with increased planning and better use of the freezer. Kåre also pointed out that he also often went out to eat with friends instead of cooking and eating alone at home. He also experienced food going past its expiry dates and getting wasted at the time.

Such social priorities, and how they tie in with macro-factors like economy, infrastructures and cultural ideals, are illustrated in an exemplary case by David Evans (2012a). We meet a young, single, female professional who cannot afford to live in the city, closer to her workplace due to gentrification and rising housing prices. After finishing work, she finds the one-hour commute too long to consider going back home for dinner and return later to socialise with her friends in the city. Thus, she tends to head out straight after work, grab a bite and then socialise before returning home late

[122] The English equivalent: Too many cooks spoil the broth.

in the evening. Sometimes the end result materialises a few days later; she has to throw away lots of vegetables from her fridge, because she originally had a plan to cook "proper meals from scratch" at home. She prefers to cook this way when has a few days at home, and are not travelling with work. Graeber's (2001, 2013) perspectives on value are useful here; what is seen as valuable is what we imagine to be meaningful to us. Hence, this is what we channel our energies, actions, intellect and concern towards – the alternative actions we choose from. On this basis, we could argue that socialising with her friends is perceived as more meaningful and valuable to her, so she chooses that ahead of other alternatives. In this case, increased food waste was one result of her choice, not to mention avoiding the chores of commuting and having a more interesting social life. If we argued from a purely economic rational perspective, it would be a better alternative for her to manage her resources with more diligence, wasting less, hence saving money. We already heard in the previous chapter how social occasions would interfere with optimal food management, and for her, socialising is a priority, as it appears more meaningful and valuable (ibid.). Evans (2012a) argues that everyday life just gets in the way of her food management, and I would add, these are activities that often appear more meaningful in this phase of life.

Cooking and Eating Alone

Stine, who also lives alone, pointed out that she used to make food in bulk. The idea was that she would have dinner for several days, not having to spend as much time cooking just for herself. However, she discovered that she would get fed up with having the same dinner on day three or four, and rather opt for an alternative. Households that choose to cook in bulk, as it can be time consuming or boring for them, express a conflict with their desire for variety. Getting fed up in this manner is not uncommon (See Evans 2012a: 51). Households also cook in bulk to avoid waste or to save money.

Stine finds it important to eat something she truly enjoys, and even more so as she lives alone. She doesn't have any company to enjoy, so at least she wants to enjoy the food. She does not consider making large batches of dinner anymore, even though she knows it saves me both money and time. She used to make large pans of curries or soups, but the last times she had batch cooked, she got so bored by eating the same food. She now prefers either eating something different each day, or making the meal into a social occasion, where one cooks for someone, and enjoys the meal together. The social element of the shared meal is important to her, and if she eats alone, the sensory enjoyment of the meal is.

Ellen also pointed out that she would often just skip dinner when she lived alone, something she doesn't do any more after moving in with Ivar. One strategy these households use to overcome this is to invite others to share meals in their homes. One-person households might focus on cultural or social activities for periods, and then make dinner- or lunch-plans that often includes others when they have time or when they choose to prioritise making food "from scratch" at home. Then the social aspect of the shared meal is at centre stage, which can also give it an air of an event, differing from the daily routine.

Sharing meals is not only about the moral element of sharing a resource essential to human beings. Socialising and conviviality is also pleasurable (Graeber 2014:69). The local cultural definitions of what is seen as meaningful and valuable are reproduced though such daily gestures (ibid: 82), e.g. offering food to a guest, inviting people over for a meal, or in our context; sharing meals.[123] As with Nina and Kåre, Stine and Ellen's stories, obtained through the main interview sessions, reflect how little satisfaction or meaning they find in cooking dinner just for themselves and of eating alone. Therefore, they opt for inviting friends or going out to eat, or just skip dinner all together and pick up food on the go, after work and a then pursue social activity, similar to the girl in Evans' (2012a) example above.

Young Couples - Moving in Together

Going from single to couple can be a challenge in many ways, and adjustments have to be made in managing food and organising meals. Two of the young households I followed had recently moved together, Ellen and Ivar, and Nina and Kåre. This entails getting to know the habits, preferences and ideals of one's partner or flatmate better. Both these couples shared their stories about negotiations and adjustments as they were taking place.

Some of the couples that have lived together for a long time, like Erika and Roger and Ingeborg and Svein, pointed out that over the years their preferences, habits and food management practices have grown increasingly similar. Some of the older couples had lived together for perhaps as much as 30-40 years. Ingeborg claims they have adjusted to each other, and now have fairly similar preferences towards food. We heard how other activities take priority over having dinner in one-person households. But

[123] We will revisit the topic of sharing of food later in the chapter discussing making extra dinner in case guests might come.

having someone to share the meal with changes that outlook, according to those who have experienced the transition recently. Dinner then becomes a social everyday event that is expected and cherished.

Another social factor is that couples typically spend more time at home together, and how food then becomes an important element when relaxing at home. The young household's are staying in more now, compared to when they were single. Economically, the fusion of two single households into one can have varying effects. Two of these young households assume they spend more on food after moving together, as they stay at home more and enjoy preparing and eating good food together. They also point out that making food for two people compared to one lowers food waste levels. Here Ellen and Ivar explicitly told me they prioritised food, and wanted to have lots of different vegetables available. Upon inspection, their fridge was indeed very well stacked, and they admitted that quite a lot of food got wasted regularly. Their waste diary confirmed this. What they might save economically by becoming a two-people household compared to two one-person households might equal what they now waste due to a focus on togetherness and staying in, enjoying and prioritizing a wide range of good food.

Another interesting related to change in household size and structure comes from Kåre and Nina. With the presence of a conscious house-manager like Nina, waste appears to be much lower in their household after they moved together.[124] Overall, Nina's approach and management practices stand out amongst the younger households. She took charge shortly after they moved together and now oversees the food management process. She claimed it was necessary, as Kåre practices were not very economical.

Households with young children

Two of the households I followed had small children. They were between the age of one and a half and seven. Older informants had children too, but they had moved out. Some had grandchildren that visited occasionally. Similar topics of food management and preferences also surfaced during the visits of grandchildren. The expansion of a household and the presence of children influence the household resource management

[124] Here statistical data would have been valuable to see the development from single households to two-person households when it comes to both spending on food and levels of food waste, but unfortunately, I do not possess such.

on several levels. Considerations like raising the children, nutrition, food safety, albeit present before household expansions, gain increasing importance when children are present.

The term of raising the children usually consists of a combination of aspects from the moral and ethical, to the social, economic and health oriented: treating food as something valuable, eating “proper food” as in having a balanced and nutritious diet, following a set meal-structure, finishing your meal etc. There is much to teach the offspring about food. An increasing number of preferences have to be considered in families with children. The more people involved, the more preferences and compromises. The children in these households wield significant power, either directly or indirectly, over what is served in the households and when. I experienced that the pickiness and fuzziness of smaller children was a regular reason for unnecessary food waste. For parents or grandparents, this sometimes boils down to the idea that the most important thing is that the children actually eat. It is quite understandable that you do not want your children to stay on a hunger strike. The children know that there are options in the household, and communicate their desires accordingly.

A very influential issue for this constituency is time, or rather what is communicated as a lack of it. The weekdays of households with small children are packed with chores and activities, and they are often quite stressful. Georg and Josefine know that it would be much smarter to make plans for shopping and meals. It would save them both time and money, but they can never get around to making these plans. They have the least amount of time available due to the combination of work and household commitments, but still find it hard to invest time in planning to save time. Typically, their temporal horizon is short. Georg explicitly expresses this when I go with him on the daily shopping runs, on our way to pick up the children at school and kindergarten. A day-to-day perspective is common, or hand-to-mouth food management, shopping and cooking.

As also pointed out by Ingeborg and Svein, children add to the dynamic of the household by bringing other children into it, or by often being absent from their own household, eating elsewhere. Such flexibility in terms of household size can also lead to increased waste, when planned meals are postponed or cancelled. In this manner, children and concerns related to them or their preferences are another factor bringing instability to resource management.

Children Moving Out

A time comes when the birds leave the nest. As children move out, the influence on a household and their food management is pronounced. Ingeborg and Svein especially told me how it had taken quite some time to adjust and establish new practices, as the old ones appeared to be of a habitual and rather un-reflected nature (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). During an informal interview with them held in their living room, we discussed their planning and provisioning and their meals with grown up children in the house, comparing it to how it was after both their children moved out. This happened over a period of only a couple of years. Ingeborg says that previously they would often make food for six or seven people, just to be sure to have enough as their two sons often had friends over. They find it easier to plan nowadays, being just two, but admit they have not yet adjusted to the new situation, even if it is more predictable. "So, we have gone from that, to none", Ingeborg says. A year after the last son moved, she still admits to shopping for four people occasionally, and even to preparing extra food just out of habit. It just doesn't seem to be enough as she looks at the potatoes in the casserole:

> *"It's just like; you cook six potatoes, but then you put a couple of extra in, just in case, even if you know it is only us two who are going to eat."*

Ingeborg says she thinks differently on weekdays compared to weekends. During the week, she often thinks that it doesn't look like it is enough food for them, and that they will not get full by eating what is initially in the casserole, so she adds more. During the weekends, they prepare an extra amount of food as someone might come by to visit, so they can also get served. This trait was not unique to them, as I also experienced this practice in other households, like with Jon and Gry. They often had people popping by, so having a bit of food ready for potential guests was quite common. Another common social occurrence in any family was that the departed children would visit for dinner, especially during weekends. This was particularly common if the children hadn't established their own families yet and were living alone. Erika told me that upon leaving after such a visit, her son would sometimes get a small gift to take home, a loaf of homemade bread or similar.

Ingeborg and Svein conclude that even if they are still struggling to adapt to being only two, they have noticed that they spend less money on food now. Their menu has also changed. Now they only have to consider their own preferences. They found one of their sons to be quite fussy, and this influenced their menu considerably.

Adult Singles and Couples - Generational Differences

Five of the households I followed fell into this category, with their age ranging from early 40's to early 60's. With the children having moved out, or not having children, these households usually had more time to manage their food. Some of them, like Erika and Roger and Ingrid and Fredrik, were accustomed to planning their food management most of their lives. They had experienced harder economic times in their younger years when the household was larger and with less income.

Their temporal perspective on planning and shopping is longer. This can range from up to one week for regular shopping trips. For some of the food they buy in bulk due to seasonal availability locally or special offers in the supermarket it can be months. They certainly do not go shopping every weekday on the way home from work. Nowadays, with adult children, they still plan and manage their money and resources carefully, even if they do not have to due to a more comfortable economic situation. However, it is unlikely that their approach is representative for this age group, and I also experienced that younger households I followed manage their food meticulously, e.g. Nina. There is cultural variation in terms of food management within this older constituency. A widespread emphasis on pleasure and enjoying life, something that was not possible to the same extent when they were younger, also seems to be increasing along with the ever-increasing standard of living in Norway. Norwegian mainstream media highlight the spending power of the age group above 50, underlining their lifestyles expressed as "enjoying life" through consumption. During conversations with informants, usually in the context of discussing why food is wasted on such a scale in Norway today, moral concerns surrounding increasingly excessive lifestyles were expressed. The judgments I encountered were spread along the whole scale from indignation and condemnation to an emphasis on a deserved, or at least an understandable, emphasis on self-realisation and pleasure through consumption. Households in this age group experience a new-found economic flexibility and freedom since the children have moved out, in addition to an increased amount of spare time, to mention some crucial factors. Within this constituency, I did experience overstocked food inventories and well-filled waste diaries, much in contrast to some of the other households within the same group who were frugal, strict planners and wasted little food.

During conversations about reasons for food waste today, older household members were fond of presenting themselves as less wasteful and more responsible than their offspring, or the younger generations in general. This appears to be a valid

claim, one backed by our statistical data (Hanssen & Møller 2013, Hanssen & Shakenda 2010, 2011). I have mentioned how Ingeborg, Ingrid, Fredrik, Erika and Roger refer to their upbringings as ones in relative scarcity where fish and potatoes were the mainstays of their dinners. However, there are indeed varying practices in food management amongst the younger households, as with the older ones, even if communalities stand out.

Nina is young, but also a very responsible household manager. Her careful approach towards food management is based on her own personal experiences as a young student and what was learnt at home. She recalls how she could not afford to be so wasteful as she initially was when she started living alone for the first time. She then evaluated and changed her approach and practices. She also became aware that she was already in possession of quite a lot of knowledge. She had learnt storing and packing food properly at home, but that she just hadn't put them into use yet. After recently moving together with Kåre, she try to keep up the ways she learnt and has gotten quite good at repacking their food and using the freezer to make sure things doesn't go off. Additionally, she keeps track of what is in store, and this helps avoid buying things they already have at home. I learnt this from our conversations, and both observations and the waste diary entries confirmed this. In this manner, her practices are more akin to those more common in the households of older generations. Generational and life-phase aspects are quite relevant and pronounced when it comes to wasteful practices, and in particular regarding thresholds of edibility and the propensity to dispose food. We will revisit this later.

Being Alone

None of the households I studied had gone through the change where a multi-person household becomes a one-person household. However, during an interview in the home of Jorunn and Kjell, Kjell shared a story that points to gender differences of the older generations and the relation to knowledge and practice. Additionally, his story illustrates that the role of being a host to visitors and the social and cultural expectations that followed could not be fulfilled anymore.

Kjell's grandfather is over 80 years old and has recently lost his wife. He now lives alone. When Jorunn and Kjell visited him last summer he wanted to serve his guests something, being the host. It is not that often they visit him as he lives approx. a 10-hour drive away. Kjell narrates:

Kjell: "I have one grandfather left, who has just become widowed. And who has been served food for 59 years. We visited him this summer, and…I don't know how to put it, if he has hit the wall. He has never cooked for himself. He has never peeled his own potatoes. He misses the food my grandmother made. Now he is over 80, and not able to cook at all.
Jorunn: He had lots of those ready-made dinners….
Kjell: Yes, Fjordland[125] *and such. Now during summer, he was out in the garden working, then when got tired, he comes in and "no, there is no food here". He has to make it himself. Then he ends up just eating bread.*
Jorunn: He really wanted to serve dinner when we were there visiting. He became very stressed because of that, as he isn't able to.
Kjell: I think it wasn't easy for him. And he could of course see that it wasn't the kind of food that she made…"

Both the practical and intellectual knowledge of cooking had departed the household with the death of Kjell's grandmother. His grandfather was close to incapable of cooking, and certainly to the standard he was used to since his wife always took care of that. Such a clear division of tasks in the household was not common in the households I studied, and belongs more in the past.[126]

Gender and Food

On the whole, gender differences appeared to be quite unpronounced when it comes to food management in the households I followed. This has led to a reflection on possible limitations in my data, as perhaps such differences or responsibilities are neither displayed in my presence, nor communicated at a later stage. Perhaps modern ideals of gender equality also played a part, and contributed to under-communication of possible differences, but this is only speculation on my part.[127]

In Runar Døving's household study from a small community outside one of the larger cities in Southeastern Norway (Døving 2003), he experienced clear gender differences in household practices. Gender was very pronounced according to his study,

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[125] "Fjordland" is a Norwegian food-brand that specialises in pre-made meals that require minimal preparation along with other food-products.
[126] The gender related issues in terms of food management is discussed later in this chapter and in the chapter on methodology.
[127] I have discussed the strength and weaknesses of my data material concerning gender and ethnicity further in the chapter on methodology.

something that actually posed a significant problem for him when it came to access and the information he got. He argues that the house metaphorically speaking represents the woman, whereas the surrounding areas of cellar, attic, garden, garage etc. are the man's responsibility. He also found that the knowledge surrounding provisioning, like where to get the best prices and who provides the best services, mainly belonged to the women in the households. Such a distribution of knowledge only appeared dominant in two of the households in Tromsø, one fairly young one (Nina and Kåre), and one older one (Ingrid and Fredrik).

Overall, in addition to few gender specific tasks, I also found that food provisioning was often done together, or it was based on who had the time and opportunity to do it in between other daily chores, rather than distributed according to gender. Not organised by a clear division of labour based on gender, the households could more precisely be described as a work-collective. Both man and woman contributed at different times, at least across the spectrum of household food management tasks I observed.

Nevertheless, statistical material from Norway shows that although women spend less time on housework today compared to earlier years, and that the time men spend has increased, they still spend more time on housework on the whole (Vaage 2012). Jacobsen and Lavik (2011) also found that women are still more likely to be the one with the main responsibility of provisioning, cooking and hygiene in the kitchen. Though my fieldwork experiences, there appeared to be few tasks linked to food management that were exclusively male or female, but I consider the possibility of my own gender limiting my exposure and what was shared with me. With this in mind, it becomes even more important to look at situations where practices seemingly grounded in gender were played out and how.

The Household Manager

During the recruitment phase and my lap of door knocking in the neighbourhood, the division of labour within the household was briefly brought up. When I reminded people about the leaflet I had already dropped in their mailboxes, and asked if they would be interested to take part, men in two households[128] expressed that they had to talk to their wives first, because "she is the one who handles all that". This is in accordance with what Døving (2003:48) experienced. Following the households who were younger

[128] Svein and a man in a household who chose not to take part in the study.

than approx. 50 years old, the division of labour seemed more based on practical issues or established routines and habits related to their work-hours rather than gender. It was decided by who comes home from work first on different days, who has the time or energy, or who enjoys cooking the most.

In the two oldest households (Erika and Roger, Ingrid and Fredrik) the division of labour when it came to food management was quite different. Along with fresh householders Nina and Kåre, the household of Ingrid and Fredrik is the one where the division of labour in food management was most clearly defined. When they were first recruited and I introduced the topic more in depth to them, Fredrik said: “Then you haven’t come to the right place”, implying that her practices were quite wasteful, but he also hinted to Ingrid being the household food manager. Ingrid would mainly be the one managing the food. This was illustrated through our conversations, the fridge and freezer rummages and the waste-diary. She was the person showing me around and telling about their ways. She also made the entries in their waste diary and acted as the host when I was visiting.

With Erika and Roger, their responsibilities for food management appear to be grounded in pragmatics, and mostly a communal affair. They both keep track of what is in stock, both are involved in the provisioning and planning of meals, and they usually eat together. Who prepares the meals appears dependent on how the task fits with other activities, be they work or spare-time related. Here there were indeed two household managers, and clear and specific lines could not be drawn as to what was his or her task. Erika was indeed the one doing the cooking when I visited for dinner, but they both claimed that it might just as well could been Roger, if he had arrived home first that day. Erika might have been acting as the host, but she wasn't necessarily clearly defined as the manager of the food in the household as Roger was the one showing me their food inventory. However, further emphasis and conclusions about their specific responsibility and division of labour would be speculative, as I could have wished for more solid data material related to food practices in the context of gender. Regardless, the main idea is to illustrate that in my current material there are few clearly defined divisions of labour based on gender that can be experienced, but rather an emphasis on practical issues or personal skills and knowledge. Georg also appeared to be the household manager in their household, something that appeared to be down to practical issues – he finished work earlier. He then shopped and cooked dinner, straight after picking up their two boys. Jon worked in a supermarket, and in that capacity, he took on a prominent role in food management in their household.

The Housewife - Responsibilities, Honour and Shame

"Husmoræren"[129] is a traditional concept used to describe the pride and honour Norwegian women took in keeping a neat, tidy and well-run household. This also includes being a good mother and a good host (See Müller Hval 2012, Døving & Klepp 2010). Being in control of the food management, and surrounding moralities are also part of it. The balance between presenting enough good food and avoiding waste is one dilemma that needs to be solved (Müller Hval (2012). Currently, the home is not the main work-arena for many women compared to earlier times. One possible consequence is less focus on "husmoræren" (Vaage 2012), even if culturally expectations are still present when it comes to household management and work (Døving & Klepp 2010).

As discussed in Chapter 4, Ingrid expressed personal pride in keeping the household in order and was a bit reluctant to show me the fridge when I asked, passing the question on to Fredrik asking if it was clean and orderly since she had been away for a while. Perhaps she felt that her honour and reputation as a good household manager was at stake. However, upon going through it together, we found her fridge to be well organised, and she could easily tell me where everything is from and what plans she had for it. She had been away, but there was nothing in there that had gone off, and the ingredients for next day's dinner had already been prepared. Shining through was her wish to present herself as a good household manager, being in control. She still acknowledged her responsibility for the food management, but also tried to shift some of the potential blame or responsibility over on her husband asking him if the fridge is clean. The connection to expressed shame is interesting, and shows the morality surrounding food and the management of it. It points towards our wastefulness as something we don´t want others to see. We will return to analyse the moral dimensions surrounding unnecessary food waste, also how it can be seen as an antisocial practice on several levels.

Distribution of Knowledge

When it comes to knowledge about food management and gender, Kjell's story about his grandfather who had lost his wife is relevant. She was the household manager, in

[129] Directly translated this means "The Housewifes Honour".

complete control of the food management. With her passing, the knowledge and skill of cooking also left the household. When I observed the cooking sessions in the households I followed, the knowledge and skill did not appear restricted to the women only, or even to only one of the parties in the household. It seemed that both men and women could fill in for each other and cook with relative ease. Perhaps the knowledge that traditional housewives were in possession of is not situated within the actual household to a similar degree today. Certainly, it is at least available through words, pictures and movies on the Internet. Tips could also easily be gathered by a phone call to a relative or friend. The younger generations can act freer and less inhibited by norms and traditions. This leads to a higher degree of complexity through multiple sources of knowledge and a wider range of foodstuffs. Such variation and complexity when it comes to food, knowledge and food management practices can also drive waste levels. The more factors to keep track of and juggle, the more likely it is that mess and waste will occur[130].

Knowledge about food management appears to be distributed between several people in the household and not restricted to one person. And in general, it is not decided by gender. Some of the knowledge can appear to be of a more superficial nature. For instance, one can know several ways to prepare cod or know its country of origin, either through the marking on the packaging or by word of mouth if provided through private connections. Simultaneously, the same household members might lack knowledge about longevity, proper storage, how to decide if food has gone off, or how it is produced. It is not possible for me to assess if a higher portion of the population able to cook today compared to the generation Kjell's grandfather belongs to. However, what is defined as cooking varies. I came across examples where using intermediate goods, like a pre-produced sauce, would be classified as cooking, whereas others would question if that was cooking, since it was not done "properly", from scratch.[131]

One young household where a clear division of responsibility is shown is with Nina and Kåre. We discussed the division of labour during an interview in their living room, and touched upon a multitude of food related issues. They told me about household knowledge of stock and prices, and of being economically frugal and responsible. Nina said she had to assume the responsibility for shopping shortly after

[130] The parallel to my discussions in the chapter on waste practices using amongst others Gregory Bateson (2000 [1972]) and the concepts of order, chaos, mess and waste is evident.
[131] A further discussion about what is considered cooking, or indeed waste, and how the content and borders of such concepts develop and change in the interplay with more large-scale developments of infrastructure and knowledge about food would be an interesting point to follow.

they moved in together, as Kåre would be too irresponsible, not knowing what they needed.

> *"He just comes home with small glass bottles of Coca-Cola, chocolate and crisps."*

This is similar to what Døving (2003) found to be a local stereotype where he did fieldwork – that men are seen as incompetent shoppers who lack knowledge about what is needed and where to get good economical deals. Nina also described another situation where she found Kåre to be irresponsible and lazy. According to Nina, he would occasionally not sort the waste properly when he disposed of something. For instance, if the organic waste bag or the cardboard bag was full, or if they had just been taken out, he would just throw everything in the residual waste bag. She claimed it was just because he couldn't be bothered to put new plastic bags in. But if she put a new empty bag in the organic waste bin already, then he would use it. Nina here expresses how she exercises her command and control over the kitchen, something that is not so common in the younger households I followed. Kåre agrees; that it is for the best that she handled the food management, as she is more organised and economical than him. The roles might be just as much down to personality traits as gender.

For Jon and Gry, their responsibilities when it comes to provisioning are quite different. Jon claims that they cannot go shopping together. Gry would put goods in the shopping-basket, then he removes it. He says this happens because he is more conscious about prices, as he is more knowledgeable about how a supermarket is organised:

> *"I work in a supermarket, so I know how it [the store] is organised. She picks the way they want people to pick, following how the shop is set up. While I know!"*

Mainly due to his job, Jon indeed has extensive knowledge about food management and prices. This was confirmed on many occasions. In their household, provisioning was mainly his responsibility, while it was more split when it comes to cooking.

To summarize, in the households of this study I experienced that a pragmatic approach was the most common when distributing the tasks of food management. Knowledge related to food management did not appear to be distributed along gender lines of previous generations, as exemplified in starkness by Kjell's story about the powerlessness of his grandfather. A clear and distinct division of tasks or knowledge did not stand out in my material, even though there appear to be exceptions, like Ingrid and Fredrik or the young couple of Nina and Kåre. Both national research (Døving 2003, Syltevik 2000) and regional ethnographical material (E.g. Lien 1987) show that it is

women who mainly act as the household managers and statistical material (e.g. Vaage 2012) also shows that women perform more housework than men in Norway. In my material though, I find that this area of household management tasks appears to be divided along different lines than ones based exclusively on gender.[132] There were few clear indications towards specific tasks being labelled as exclusively male or female when it came to food or waste management. In the households, and especially where both man and women are working, pragmatic aspects strongly influence who does what and when. Other activities than food management are often prioritised, and what appeared to matter the most is who is in possession of the skills, initiative, desire, energy to perform the household tasks related to food management, or just who arrives home first after work. This could be a weakness in my material. I cannot know what they would have showed a woman, or if they would have showed me a different perspective on gender equality if they placed a different degree of trust in me.[133]

Work and Time – Developments in Norway

The work- or school-schedule of the household members has a clear impact on the food management of households. With many households consisting of two people working full-time, and some having children who are at school age or in kindergarten, planning is mandatory to achieve a fairly set meal-structure where one can eat together as a family regularly.

Statistics show that time spent on work to earn income has decreased slightly from in the period 1970 to 2010: Norwegians spent 3 hours 21 minutes a day in 2010, compared to 3 hours 25 minutes in 1971.[134] We also see a marked decrease in work time for men from 5 hours 29 minutes to 4 hours and 10 minutes per day, and a large increase for women in the same period, from 1 hour 56 minutes to 3 hours 1 minute per day in average. Time spent on housework per capita (including food management) has decreased from 4 hours and 5 minutes per day in 1971, to 3 hours and 25 minutes per day in 2010. Here the statistics state that women have decreased their amount housework by approximately two hours, while the men have increased their share by an hour. Women still spend 50 minutes more daily on housework than men, 3 hours 50

[132] Here I must point out that gender was not a topic of special attention, although it might have deserved more attention. There were a multitude of different topics and variables to consider as influential in the context wasteful practices.
[133] This is discussed thoroughly in the Methodological chapter.
[134] The statistics in this paragraph are from Statistics Norway - http://www.ssb.no/tidsbruk/ Accessed: 29. January 2016. They are calculated on the basis of a 365-day year.

minutes and 3 hours respectively. A significant factor behind this decrease in time spent on housework is due to an increasing number of women working outside the household. The statistics also show that during the same period, spare-time has increased from 5 hours and 6 minutes to 6 hours and 9 minutes a day. The time spent on meals remains fairly consistent, from 1 hour and 12 minutes in 1970 to just 6 minutes less in 2010.

There are no detailed statistics that offer indications as to how much of the average time spent on housework is spent on actual food management. But as the average time individuals spent on housework decreased by about 40 minutes from 1971 to 2010, it is a reasonable assumption that time spent on food management has also decreased. Through fieldwork, I also noted that food management and planning are not highly prioritized daily activities. The days of the housewives are gone. In many households both adults are now working full-time, with implications for household tasks on the whole, including the food management and the meal structures. This development is also reflected in my observations of a pragmatic distribution of food related tasks, rather than a gender-based one.

In the household of Jorunn and Kjell, having dinner together is not a given as her flexible work-hours leads to an unpredictable meal schedule. This especially concerns dinner. This unpredictability also makes it harder to plan what to eat and when, and such factors adds complexity to their everyday life and contributes to food being wasted needlessly in their household. Everyday routines are harder to maintain, and due to unpredictable work commitments or socialising their food waste levels increase. With such uncertainty, even a decent plan is hard to follow. Jorunn here shares some of her daily frustrations in this regard:

> *"But I notice that it depends on how much time I have, how busy I am. If we are preparing an event or something, and I arrive home late. Or I have dinner at work, and if Kjell hasn't made himself dinner. And if we then have done our grocery shopping, things can just lie there [and go off], or I just lose the control if I am not home at the time. If I only eat breakfast and…so you can have a good plan, which doesn't work because you haven't time…"*

This is a clear example of what Evans (2012a:45) also found, situations where the rhythms of life and the rhythms of food are in disharmony. Evans (ibid.) pointed out a mismatch between the temporal demands of work and the temporal demands of food, e.g. in terms of longevity and preparation practices and frequency. This mismatch can also be extended to domestic work and spare-time activities as well, as both eat out of the time necessary to maintain optimal food management. Life-phases also have

relevance in this context. This resonates with descriptions of Georg's packed daily schedule of logistics involving their young children, meals, shopping, work and transport. In this regard, it is also appropriate to mention some of the highly relevant macro-factors that have direct consequences for the food management practices in our households[135]: 1) Women working increasingly more outside the home, 2) more flexible work schedules, 3) increased living standard, 4) widespread, nearby availability of cheap mass-produced and convenient foodstuffs.

Evans (ibid.) points to legitimate reasons like tiredness and hunger for choosing food on the more convenient side of the care-convenient scale offered by Warde (1997). In such instances, food that requires time and effort to prepare is not preferred. Evans (2012a) argues that the demands of daily life just get in the way, and in the end some of the food goes off and is wasted. Another interpretation, with an environmentally situated moralistic edge to it, is that food management is not such a meaningful and valuable option when weighted up against the alternatives of other time-consuming practices (Graeber 2001). The option of socialising with your friends or going to the gym can be seen as a more rewarding way to spend your spare-time.

Available Time and Priorities

Several of the households express that they do not prioritise spending their time on managing their food better, and that they experience a lack of time in general. Even with all the focus on food prices being too high, a lack of money was not expressed explicitly. Time however, was often mentioned as a critical factor. A hectic daily life was in conflict with the time required for food management practices. A lack of time is sometimes also used as an excuse when confronted with wasteful practices. And time certainly appears to be a critical factor for some, not least for the families with small children. But generally, when it comes to wasteful food practices, I find that much depends on how households chose to prioritize their spare-time. Take Jon and Gry for instance; due to being on sick leave or only working the odd day, they have quite a lot of spare-time. They have the time to plan and manage their food, but it still doesn't happen. There is no regular or structured planning by using a shopping list, keeping track of stock or planning ahead. Others households also cannot seem to find the time based on a range of different explanations from work, travelling, social commitments etc.

[135] We will return to the influence of these macro-changes in more detail in later chapters.

One family with seemingly little time to spare is the family of Georg, Josefine and their two young sons. One afternoon I meet up with Georg after he had finished work, as we have arranged to go food shopping together. In the car, on our way to pick up the kids from kindergarten and school, Georg tells me that Josefine and him have discussed making plans; weekly plans about what to have for dinner, and also plans to go shopping only once a week. These plans have never really materialised. He is aware that these daily shopping runs take quite a lot of time, and he also thinks they are costly. Josefine has asked if they could make a budget, as they spend too much on food, but Georg tells me they can never seem to find the time to make a budget, or a weekly dinner plan. They can still afford to shop in this manner; so somehow making the plans are not prioritized. Bluntly, one could say that through their short-term perspective, lack of planning and the subsequent wasteful practices they chose to spend an extra bit of money to avoid spending time on food management. They make a "money for time" trade-off. In their household, time is precious. The tempo and schedule of their everyday life makes it hard to alter their habits and make plans, plans that could actually save quite a bit of time. We could argue that the wasteful practices persist, as current practices are seen to be more meaningful and valuable, all things considered, compared to alternatives courses of action (Graeber 2001, 2013). This perspective is not so focused on individual rationality, but based in the social and reciprocal, as what is perceived as meaningful actions are primarily seen as social products, rooted in past experiences and socialization, just as well as an estimated future. What is valued and prioritised is a reflection of shared values.

With their economical flexibility, it is convenient for Georg and Josefine to continue with their current practices, regardless of their wastefulness. This perspective does entail certain levels of consciousness about alternative courses of action and about the collective "imagined audience"; a kind of moral compass made up from everyone whose opinion matters to you, living or imagined (Graeber 2001: 75-78). Additionally, the pitfalls of emphasising on an analytical perspective dominated by a rationalist approach looms. Surely unconscious, embodied, habitual aspects (Bourdieu 1977, 1990) would also play a part in these daily situations, as e.g. Georg shopping on the way home from work every weekday. We did this together a few times; an established part of the daily routines that goes without saying.

Time is very scarce in their daily lives, and thus very valuable to them. A short-term perspective remains strong in a hectic daily life. As less time consuming alternatives than preparing "proper food" from scratch available to them, taking proper care of leftovers, splitting and re-packing ingredients and other food management

practices are skipped during the week. It would eat out of the time available for other alternative spare-time activities that are seen as more meaningful in a hectic schedule, e.g. spending time playing with the children, relaxing together after the meals. Looking at the contrasts between the time available and the practices in the households of Georg and Josefine and Jon and Gry, whether the household members are working full-time or not, the results when it comes to levels of food waste seem quite similar. Even with quite different economic situations, and certainly very different levels of time available, both households waste significant amounts of food.

If every person involved in the food management are working full time, this naturally means there is less time available for other pleasures and chores. On the other hand, it appears not to be solely about available time, as seen through the practices in the household of Jon and Gry. Regardless of the time they have available and that they seemingly earn significantly less than several other households, observations, interview-data and the waste-diary indicate that significant amounts of food still gets wasted in their household regularly.

I argue that this is another indication, along with the statistical material quoting the gradually decreasing percentage of annual household income spent on food, of how affordable food actually has become, no matter the misguided complaints about its high price levels. The low awareness regarding wasteful practices in the participating households suggests that it is not a conscious choice to waste up to a third of the food they buy, using the national average statistics as our benchmark. These practices might be a consequence of increased living standard and an increased availability of food, in addition to a culture with an increased focus on individual pleasure and indulgence, to mention a couple of factors that stand out. To me, it seems like Georg and Josefine are only partially conscious of their spending, judging by their wasteful practices and low concern for food management. They focus on activities they find more pleasurable or meaningful than planning and food management.

Household Economy

Through my fieldwork, I got a clear impression that economy did not constrain the households much when it came to food provisioning. Nor did it appear to influence them too much when it came to their subsequent management of food in the household. If we consider statistical material on macro-developments in Norway, this appears quite understandable in an isolated, economically centred perspective. On

average, Norwegians today are quite well off compared to other European countries, and is considered one of the richest countries in the world. The GDP per capital has increased by 180 % in the period 1970 to 2007. When we look at the portion of total household income spent on food it decreased from 39,9 % in 1958 to 11,8 % in 2009. Food has indeed become significantly cheaper, also considering the clear and steady increase in GDP per capita and income levels. Numbers from Eurostat show that only Luxembourg and The Netherlands have lower food prices than Norway measured towards GDP, and only marginally by 0,1 % for The Netherlands. [136]

The low price on food relative to income is of interest considering the excessive practices in the households. Even in student households like Ellen and Ivar, or with Jon and Gry, whom were both on unemployment benefits at the time, there were no signs of the economic situation restricting their spending on food, or that they took special measures to keep track of their spending on food. Food is affordable to all the households I followed. As a necessity, it should be. Even though there were no particularly expensive food habits that I could identify, all the households could to an extent buy the food they wanted, when they wanted it. They could also clearly afford to waste a lot of it.

The Access to Food

Reflecting on the food management in their household and discussing their practices in their home, I asked Nina and Kåre to consider how and why the wasteful practices they observe in Norway today take place. In the statements below, Kåre and Nina start off sharing stories about personal experiences with friends. They then turn towards a narrative about people in general, also referring to large-scale societal developments:

> *Nina: "It [food] is so easily accessible. It is just to pop down to the store and shop. It is so easy. They don't really need to…*
> *Kåre: Let's just say that…you are visiting families. They usually have their own cold-room, or a large refrigerator, and it is as a rule; full. Now I am cheeky when I am visiting, so I will go and have a sneak peek in the refrigerator to see if there is anything tasty…hehe! And I can see that there is an incredible amount of things on which the dates have expired, which are in a side-shelf, or innermost or…which is refilled the whole time, but there might not be a consciousness*

[136] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/household_budget_surveys/Data/database Accessed. 12. December 2013.

about using the food they got. But of course, it is not easy to have an overview there when both are working fulltime, and things are supposed to be both quick and without much effort. Perhaps that part of the household management was followed up previously, when the housewives where home?"
Kåre: "Generally speaking, people just have lower thresholds for throwing things, and then just buying the most recent. And this doesn't just need to be about food, but everything else too. I saw this piece in the newspaper about Tromsprodukt, next to the waste-heap[137]*. They had so many things there, and they were shocked over what people came to throw away, new things: skis, bicycles and those things. That generation of 50-60 year olds they are well off, and can afford to throw away and buy new stuff all the time."*

This general reflection, although not representative on a larger scale, does indeed mention the issue over-provisioning of food that I also identified in the practices of the households I followed, including their own. We just discussed the lack of time and possible effects, especially for large families or for those with active social lives not prioritizing food management. And we have touched upon how households are quite prone to over-stocking and re-stocking to a level that is not in harmony with their consumption patterns and the longevity of different foodstuffs. These are practices that result in increased waste levels. But as we will revisit in following chapters, I frame the wasteful food practices in the household's within contextual changes in a set of social, cultural and economic factors on a macro-level. These factors reinforce each other and, at least to some extent, explain the increased access to cheap food for Norwegian households, their changes in valuations, manifested through practices, which I see as the basis for the ensuing wastefulness.

In a European context, the percentage of women participating in the public workforce in Norway as of 2012 is relatively high. Eurostat states that 73.8 % of the women between 15 and 64 years old are involved in work outside of the household. This ranks second highest in Europe, behind Iceland at 77.1 %. The European average (28 countries) is at 58.5 % for women. For men, the rate is 77.6 % in Norway, which ranks as shared sixth. Switzerland is topping at 85.2 %. [138] Statistics Norway state that from 1972

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[137] Tromsprodukt is a second-hand shop, right next to the waste management facility in Tromsdalen. http://www.nordlys.no/nyheter/article6281569.ece Accessed: 8. January 2014.
[138] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/ Accessed: 18 February 2014. Conditions for these statistics are amongst other factors: Employed persons are all persons who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference week or were temporarily absent from such work. The statistical units are individuals living in private households.

to 2012 the share of women participating in the workforce rose from 43.8 % to 66.7 %, with the share for men being 77 % in 1972 and 71.7 % in 2012.[139]

The household organisation was obviously different when women spent more of their time managing the household, including the food. Following women's growing participation in the public workforce, particularly in the decades after World War 2, this contributed further to the already increasing income levels in the Norwegian households. Post-war increases in industrialised food production and distribution on a national and international scale (Evans, Campbell and Murcott (2013:14-16), also meant that an ever growing range of food at lower prices became increasingly available closer to the domiciles. Additionally, the opening hours of local stores and, later on, supermarkets kept on expanding. As a consequence, empty shelves became almost unheard of. They certainly are today, as it is deemed bad for business as it drives customers away (Stuart 2010).

These infrastructural changes were increasing in the 1950's, continuing at varying paces dependent on where they took place, are described by Evans, Campbell and Murcott (2013:14-16). They are also exemplified further in Chapter 12, with narratives about the movement from the store in the village, via the corner-shop, to the neighbourhood supermarkets. The story also mentions the increasing ranges of food on offer, and the gradual shift from an emphasis on preservation techniques, shared storage technologies to the availability and distribution of storage appliances for individual households. Up through the last 50 years or so, an ever wider range of different foodstuffs thus became increasingly readily available; close by, at a lower price, at almost all times. For most households it is indeed just to pop over, stock up, and re-stock to appease ones desires. With such a surplus of food, the wasteful practices of one's own and other local households appeared to have little influence on current and future supplies[140]. Locally in Norway, the abundance can appear endless as full shelves welcome customers on every visit.

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[139] Employed persons are defined as persons aged 15-74 who performed work for pay or profit for at least one hour in the reference week, or who were temporarily absent from work because of illness, holidays etc. There is as you can see a discrepancy between the statistics from Statistics Norway and Eurostat here for reasons unknown to me, but the tendencies of an increasing participation in the public workforce is clear, and what I intend to illustrate by including these statistics. https://www.ssb.no/statistikkbanken Accessed: 18 February 2014

[140] The slight increases in the costs of bulk foodstuffs like corn, wheat or others on the global raw-materials markets due to drought periods, like in the summer of 2013 where the in the United States were severely hit, are not likely to have much influence on the consumer levels in Norway. Food expenses make up about 11.8 % of the total household expenses in 2012 according to Statistics Norway. https://www.ssb.no/statistikkbanken Accessed: 18 February 2014**.**

A Mirror of the Past – Romantics and Responsibility

With the established cultural acceptance that food waste should be avoided present, the link between food and waste also brings to the fore questions of guilt and responsibility. Valuable, life-dependent resources are wasted needlessly. The question of responsibility was communicated to me frequently during interviews and fridge rummages. Vegetables or fruit would often be labelled as being of poor quality, an explanation for their disposal. The main point is the attempt to shift the blame from one's own sub-optimal food management routines onto the food management in the supermarkets, the remote location of Tromsø, or even the foodstuffs themselves. This shows that the moral dimension related to wasting food remains strong.

Many of my informants were quite harsh on themselves when it came to describing the developments in society as a whole, and the wastefulness they experienced around them. The practices of previous generations are engulfed in an idyllic and romantic light. I am in no position to verify their morally charged discursive statements about past practices, but their expressed views on contemporary practices and motivations are quite critical. Like Kåre and Nina expressed in their narratives above, Anders was also struggling to understand the wastefulness he experienced around him. He also offered a retrospective glance in an attempt to grasp these wasteful practices:

> *Anders: "People earlier…they had to think and treat the food properly, so that it would not get ruined. People now, if something gets ruined you can just go and buy something new. It is like it isn't their fault that the food has been ruined, even if it is they who have ruined it.*
> *Ant: What do you mean, not their fault?*
> *Anders: They think in a manner like…if there is food scattered all around them, they also know that they can just go and buy some more. Strictly speaking, they don't have to take care of it.*
> *Ant: Is it the store's fault then or, the food itself which is to be blamed for the lack of longevity of the food then or?*
> *Anders: It is the peoples own fault…that they don't use the food. I think so…it doesn't matter much…they just go and buy some new food."*

One of the aspects Anders mentions is related to an argument that follows in Chapter 12, namely how this abundance and the increased distances to the larger cycle of food

production contributes to a growing devaluation or re-valuation of food. I will argue that the use-value of food as a fundamental source for human life has become veiled or detached somehow and that the consumers are alienated in a Marxian sense (Marx 1988 [1932]). Due to the wastefulness that is experienced in the immediate surroundings, where food is wasted all around, a view of food as something very affordable, easily accessible and disposable festers. The practices of wastefulness and poor management of food acts like a spiral, reinforcing a view that food can be taken for granted. Food is devalued, which further reinforces the subsequent practices of excess into habits. Like Gry's son tells Jon as he is preparing dinner: "Just make some extra rice, it doesn't cost anything anyway."

Food still holds high value culturally and socially as well as physiologically, but it is increasingly treated as means to an end in individual life-projects, rather than as a fundamental necessity for survival. Food is an essential component for throwing a good dinner-party displaying your culinary competence, eating healthy and nutritiously to lose weight, to become fitter and better looking, or for satisfying your desire for the superior taste freshly ground airborne gourmet coffee.

When discussing the societal development in the context of resource management and waste, romanticising about the past, and especially about how waste is born out of modernity, is a view perpetrated regularly. I experienced how food waste on a small level appears to be nigh on unavoidable, even in the most meticulous households I followed. Georges Bataille (1991) argues that an accursed share exists when it comes to energy and resources, a share pre-destined to be wasted. Narratives about the past recount a life in a less developed and poorer Northern Norway, one closer to nature, which is automatically presumed to have meant less wasteful food management practices. The ideals of frugality and austerity strongly influenced household resource management practices before the increasing industrialization and serialization of the food industry in the decades after World War 2. However, I am in no position to comment on the levels of waste in previous times in Norway. There is no statistical material. Nevertheless, since the focus is to understand reasons for food waste today, do these past narratives bring any value to this task, and if so, what they can tell us apart from acting as a critical mirror people use to view their contemporary practices in (Bloch 1977)?

Principal Technology and Infrastructure for Household Food Management

The households have access to a fairly similar infrastructure and technology to assist them throughout their process of food management. Listing up the basic technology that shape the basic premises for their daily food management might border on the banal, but it is necessary to reflect upon the infrastructure and technologies that help constitute their practices in their everyday lives (Warde 1997). It is important to situate and to raise the awareness around everyday practices, and to avoid current technology and infrastructure being taken for granted. This is a particularly relevant challenge when conducting fieldwork in your own culture.

Let us start outside the domicile, which is where most of the provisioning takes place. These households all rely on the infrastructure of local supermarkets to provide them with most of the food they consume. They depend on the technology of currency to pay for it, and on both infrastructure and other people to provide them with these means through exchange. In Chapter 13 we will look into how food also flows between households, outside of the commercial market infrastructure and the formal economy; food provided through social- and kinship-relations, or by the household members themselves.[141]

Food provisioning in the households is mainly dependent on industrialised, market infrastructures, and none of the households in the study rely on horticulture, agriculture, hunting and gathering, animal husbandry or pastoralism for their food supplies. Some seasonal gathering and fishing occasionally takes place. All the households mainly rely on local supermarkets. Some of the households have other sources of supply directly from local producers, but generally this is not pivotal. There are a few exceptions. Anders provides much of his food himself by fishing, hunting and gathering extensively, in addition to relying a bit on a personal network. Erika and Roger, and to an extent Ingrid and Fredrik, also provides food through personal connections when it comes to certain foodstuffs like fish or potatoes. With the exception of Anders, I am not aware of any of the households growing or harvesting food for their own consumption, apart from the odd fishing or hunting trip that hardly constitutes much in the context of their yearly levels of consumption. Another exception

[141] I am not aware of any statistics on the distribution between different sources of food provisioning for Norwegian households, or local Tromsø households for that matter, but such estimates exist on a global scale through UNEP and NGO's like ETC. They provide estimates of how much is produced industrially on large scales, how much locally on smaller scales, or how much is provided through own food production, own harvesting, fishing and hunting. Such statistics can only point out common sources and methods of food provisioning in my view, as making estimations of the distribution between the different categories in our locality would be very difficult.

is picking berries (blueberries, lingonberries and cloudberries mostly). This is quite common and a small contribution to the food supply in a few of the households.

All the households have a fairly well stocked supermarket within the proximity of about 15 minutes walking distance maximum. This gives us a clear indication to how well established and spread out the infrastructure for food distribution is in Norwegian cities today. Often households can even chose between several supermarkets within this radius from their domicile, not to mention that such a density is also likely in proximity to their work places. Two of the households did not own a car. A car is considered to be an important asset to enable food shopping on a larger scale, for instance with a weekly perspective in mind. The household of Jon and Gry was one of these, and Jon usually walked the five minutes over to the store, while Stine preferred to do food shopping in the city-centre on her way home from work and then catch the bus home. Others often relied on their car(s) when shopping food.

Most of the food management takes place in the kitchen. Crudely defined, a kitchen is a room or an area for preparing food, usually with cooking facilities. The kitchen is not a physically separate room in the domiciles of all households. Sometimes the kitchen and living room are not wholly separate. In some households, the kitchen is only the room where food is prepared, and not the room where the food is consumed. To store their food, the standard infrastructure and technology consist of: a refrigerator, a freezer, cupboards and drawers for dry and tinned food. A few households also have cold-storage rooms, either next to the kitchen or in the basement. Additionally, for storage, they use different kinds of foil, wrappings, bags, boxes and other containers made out of a range of different materials (wood, metal, glass, plastic, cardboard etc.).

For the preparation and cooking-phase, some bench- or table-space is needed, as is access to water. When it comes to technology, a variety of kitchen utensils and tools, some electric, some not, are used, in addition to pots and pans, and a kitchen stove. Some also have a microwave oven they use sporadically. All the households use electric stoves for cooking. In addition to cupboards and drawers for foodstuffs with longevity, like dry and tinned food, all households have access to a freezer. They either use a stand-alone deep-freezer or a smaller one integrated in their refrigerator.

Freezers

I found that the deep-freezers were usually not placed in the kitchen but in a separate room. Sometimes it was placed in a guest room or a storage room, but most often the

deep-freezer is placed in the basement of the domicile, if there is one. For the households living in apartments, a stand-alone freezer is not always possible or prioritised due to space limitations. Consequently, a few of the households only have small freezers as integrated part of their refrigerator. These freezers do usually not hold more than -20 degrees Celsius. They cannot reach as low temperatures as deep-freezers. These typically hold a temperature colder than -30 degrees Celsius. The former ones thus have a reduced ability to preserve food over time, due to the element of entropy (e.g. Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971], Bateson 2000 [1972]).[142] Only having integrated freezers also restricts their capacity to store certain kinds of food. Not having a spacious freezer influences their temporal perspective on food management. Then it is not possible to buy in bulk and plan over a longer time span in the same manner as those having larger deep-freezers. Interestingly, it is quite common to stock up on freezers too, as the old one is often kept when a household decide to replace their current one. The old one is not sold or disposed of, but often placed in the garage, still used, and often just as full (Strandbakken 2007). This leaves an even larger inventory of food to keep track off and consume.

Changed Infrastructure and Technology

When we were discussing food storage facilities, Tor told me that at their father's house in the countryside they have a trapdoor in the middle of the living-room floor. Underneath was a hole in the ground. It was a very basic and rudimentary technology, but a well-functioning cold storage used for food. Northern Norwegians also often joke about not needing a refrigerator most of the year. They can just hang a plastic-bag containing food out of the window due to the cold weather. In earlier times, even after the arrival of the refrigerator in the 1960's, houses would often have cold-storage rooms, pantries, next to the kitchen or in the basement. A few of the households had such storage facilities, but mainly in their basements. Tor finds that older generations often have two refrigerators or two freezers:

> *Tor: "For them (older generations) it is common to have two refrigerators; one for daily things and one for things that more seldom which are left a bit longer. They are conscious, perhaps from their own parents, who always had one of those holes in the ground that they put the food into, so that it would last.*
> *Ant: A hole in the ground?*

[142] The concept of entropy in relation to food is discussed thoroughly in Chapter 9.

> *Tor: Yes, they still have that at my father's place. In the middle of the living room, they have this trapdoor, a hole in the ground where you can just leave food in. And my mother, she has two freezers. So when you are talking about freezers, you stock food from special offers, and to take care of things you get from friends and relatives, then you are able to take care of it."*

From my experience, additional freezers were not uncommon, although I did not observe use of additional refrigerators in the households. An interesting observation regarding changes in infrastructure for storage and preparation of food is how the size of kitchens in many newly built apartments in larger Norwegian cities is very moderate. There is very limited space for both the storage and preparation of food. What is still coined as a kitchen is in some cases reduced to a small corner of a living room, in a so-called open kitchen solution. The gives an impression that preparation of food is not too important, and due to limited storage space, such kitchens can be interpreted as more fitted to a short-term perspective on food management. The infrastructure is not made with food preparation in mind to the same degree as just a couple of decades ago.

These kitchens are probably intended for households who do not cook or eat at home every day. Such infrastructural changes to apartments could indeed be related to the active lifestyles of single, urban households. There are also changes in the production of foodstuffs which can influence the preparation practices at home. Broader ranges of pre-cooked and pre-prepared meals are increasing available from local stores, and take-away and order-in options are many. This mitigates the need of home cooking. At the same time, different tendencies are present. For some, the kitchens are treated as the heart of the house. The kitchen becomes the place where both guests and households members spend much time socialising, working, studying etc. in addition to cooking and eating.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented some general household characteristics that are influential in defining for the framework for food management. Whether we are talking about household size and composition or knowledge and technology, issues of control and stability, appear central to maintain low food waste levels both outside and inside the household. Instability, changes and fluidity make food management increasingly challenging.

Contrary to national statistical data, the responsibilities in the households appeared to be defined mostly by pragmatism, taking the form of a work-collective rather than defined by gender-specific tasks. However, the ethnographic concept of the housewife's honour still appears to hold some relevance, even after the increasing participation of women in the public workforce.

Assisted by technological solutions, time spent on housework decreased noticeably the last 40 years, while work outside of the household has increased. These changes are connected to developments in large-scale societal frameworks that influence household food management practices: An increased standard of living, income and access to cheap food, with changed priorities and lifestyles intertwined with these. With increased flexibility and unpredictability throughout everyday life, the need for planning increases. However, this is not prioritised even if time is perceived to be scarce. Current priorities and practices in the households are manifestations of the perceived value of food, and the priority on food management has decreased. Reflecting on these changes, critical perspectives often arise, turning towards, perhaps somewhat romantic images and narratives of practices of the past.

Chapter 8 The Food Management Process - Practices and Analysis

Introduction

Over the next three chapters, we will follow the matter of food throughout the typical food management cycle in local households. The vantage point is empirical, and rather than presenting stand-alone arguments individually, they are part of a larger whole. This whole forms the empirical basis of the main argument which then follows in the subsequent chapters. In this chapter will we will concern ourselves with common household practices preceding and including the actual meal.[143] We start with the planning phase, continuing with provisioning, unpacking, re-packing, preparation, cooking and finally we discuss the actual consumption; the meals. I focus specifically on the practices that contribute to unnecessary food waste. I also introduce the concept of instability factors to indentifying factors driving waste generating practices.

Going through the household food management process step-by-step, I acknowledge that everyday practices leading to unnecessary food waste take place within larger contexts of practices. These contexts decide what are seen as meaningful acts to the household members. Thus, a necessary approach is to analyse reasons for food waste with the whole food management processes in mind as a holistic, non-linear cycle. This should be done considering the infrastructure and the basic characteristics of the households, viewing these in a larger societal context.[144]

I find it important to treat concepts on political economy with consideration, and to analyse practices of consumption as part of a larger whole of practices. Rudimentary speaking, this whole includes production, distribution and consumption - the actual production of human beings, physically and socially (Graeber 2001, 2006, 2013). Throughout the chapter, I will present practices and related perspectives at different stages of the food management cycle, like planning or provisioning, and show how these influence practices later in the cycle. We will also see how infrastructural, societal and cultural changes are connected and reflected in household practices regarding food. We

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[143] Unfortunately, I do not have substantial empirical material to comment on food consumption outside of the domiciles.

[144] For a state of the art discussion on the topics of waste in general, and food waste in particular, I refer to Chapter 2. Also, see e.g. Warde (2005) or Shove (2003) on how consumption is taking place within a larger set of practices, integrated in the dynamics of everyday life.

will for instance examine how the increased access to cheaper, fresher food, and wider ranges of food manifests itself. As Barth (1978:255) reminds us, macro-levels exist in the micro-levels and vice versa. We use an empirical vantage point to explore these intersections of different levels of scale and the meeting-points between diversity and communality in the local practices that these households view as meaningful and valuable.

Food management is multi-dimensional and relates to many concepts: materiality and intrinsic characteristics, survival, health, habits and routines, social relations, ideals and norms, knowledge, technology and infrastructure etc. Throughout the analysis of the cycle of food management, different dimensions will be actualised, as they intersect, overlap, are intertwined. They also have a dynamic and shifting level of importance in the cases I present. The daily dilemmas household members face when they decide between different alternative courses of actions are particularly interesting. Dilemmas tend to highlight contradictions and bring underlying, constituting, ideals and principles to the fore. I have split the chapters describing the household food management cycle in two just for the sake of the thesis structure. They are obviously deeply connected.

Practices leading to unnecessary food waste can occur quite early in the process of household food management, even before the food reaches the household. Here is a conversation I had with Charles, a man in his early 40's at a local café in Tromsø. As I was telling him about my topic of research, he quickly started sharing his theory on reasons for food waste:

> *"It is the affluent society. I have worked at Rema 1000[145], and every day, if I wanted to, I could have carried with me 4 shopping bags with food – apples with a small cut, fully edible. And lots of other things too. It is down to Storkapitalen (The big capital interests)."*

Charles had just been out food shopping, and him and his friend probably sat there for a couple of hours while his shopping bags were sitting on the floor next to the couch where we were seated. Not exactly the ideal storage of milk, minced meat and other fresh products he had bought, all food which require cold storage temperatures. Additionally, if food is stored incorrectly either before arriving at the local supermarket or in the supermarket itself, this would also render the expiry date as a guideline for longevity useless, just like Charles' sub-optimal practice. This also shows the need for a

[145] Rema 1000 is one of the main supermarket-chains in Norway.

holistic perspective on the food management cycle. We will discuss several such examples in this chapter, examining the relationship between ideal and practice related to food management.

Planning and Provisioning

When it comes to planning of food provisioning, there are a few basic practices that are fairly established and common in households that waste less food. And surprisingly often, practices on the opposite end of the scale are common in households where waste levels are high. During planning, the main factors that contribute to low waste levels are checking the stock at home before going shopping, using a shopping-list, planning ahead, using the freezer actively, being conscious about the period they shop for, thinking through and composing individual meals. In addition, adjusting their consumption levels based on experiences of wasteful practices.

The differences in the emphasis on planning tie in with the temporal perspectives on food management in the households. These perspectives differ. We have daily shopping trips, with a hand-to-mouth approach, and more meticulous planning with weekly shopping only. The latter often involves un-packing, re-packing, conserving and freezing foodstuffs in portions. Some households buy in bulk. They stock up on large quantities of local products like potatoes and fish when in season. This is typically done through personal connections and networks, directly from the producer. Some also provide food in bulk through fishing, hunting or picking berries in the autumn. Most households typically practice something in between these extremes, and they will also deviate from their most common practices from time to time.

Repeatedly, I encountered household members explicitly expressing a belief that their current shopping practices contributes to unnecessary food waste. They were buying more than they needed. The ideal way of food provisioning is perceived to be one weekly shopping trip, with perhaps a visit or two to pick up milk, bread and other necessities that need restocking during the week. The household members have their own hypothesises on how the frequency of food provisioning influenced their waste levels. Both Erika and Jorunn talk about being exposed to fewer temptations, as one is less likely to give in to these with fewer visits to the supermarket. Jorunn also told me how she had experienced that the less often they went food shopping; the less they spent and wasted. A few years ago, Jorunn shared house with two others in a place where they didn’t have grocery store nearby. Then they got used to buying food seldom

and in larger quantities. They had to plan, she said. Also, only one of them had a driver's licence, so they only went to get more food when he was present. There were buses, but they did not go very often, so shopping was more strenuous. This made them plan more thoroughly, and Jorunn thought they wasted less food then. The accessibility guided their practices, and they were also forced to consider their own investment of time and labour up against the potential reward. In this context, the most common hypothesis is based on an economic argument; being better off economically by shopping less frequently and making plans, something Georg openly expressed.

According to Jorunn, this practice of food provisioning was maintained after they moved together to a shared flat in Tromsø. They continued to shop seldom, even with supermarkets on literally every corner. This could indicate that the frequency has an influence on levels of unnecessary food waste, but also perhaps that it isn't as ingrained or dominant. The influence of established routines and habits will be discussed further later, as will the accessibility to food in general.

One link between the frequency of food provisioning and waste levels that I am in a position to comment on is the relation between the longevity of different foodstuffs, shopping frequency, quantum and household consumption levels. Planning ahead and sticking to plans is important to avoid unnecessary waste, as mismatches between provisioning and what is eaten before the food goes off leads to waste (Evans 2011:436). Of course, much of this mismatch can be offset by better storage routines even when considering the high degree of transience (Thompson 1979) of foodstuffs like fruit, vegetables, bread and baked products etc.

Multiple Mismatches

The fluidity and complexity of contemporary everyday life presents challenges for the household members on many fronts, also in terms of food management. Even when practicing planned and regular weekly provisioning, continuous adjustments are necessary to avoid waste. This is nicely illustrated by David Evans (2012a:47) studies from Manchester, UK. Here, one family did not adjust what they routinely bought to their changing consumption levels. One week after the next they would buy the same ingredients that fitted with their expected diet and consumption levels. They expected these ingredients to be eaten between their shopping runs, but this did not turn out to be the case. An unused packet of green beans in the fridge would just be replaced by the one recently bought this week. The oldest package was discarded, unused, and the

informant explained her actions by saying she knew she wouldn't find use for the oldest one. I don't know if the current stock was checked or not before the provisioning took place in this household, and it appears quite extraordinary if the household did not adjust their provisioning if this was a reoccurring practice.

However, this practice is not exclusive to this family in the UK. Similar habituated and apparently conscious wasteful practices of shopping occur in Tromsø too. Georg's practices of buying fruit is for instance quite similar. This also extends to other foodstuffs in their household, as well as to other households in the study. Ellen and Ivar's focus on having lots of vegetables to choose from is a conscious choice. Even if they are aware of the waste this generates regularly, they still shop in a similar manner, as choice of fresh food is important to them. It is a priority, as Ellen puts it. They like to have lots of food available in the refrigerator, and admit that this often means stocking more than they manage to eat before it goes off. Ellen expresses a preference for having lots of options, especially when it comes to vegetables and fruit – a mainstay in her preferred diet. She says she could not live without vegetables. Her individual desire or preference here becomes a deciding factor, both in terms of provisioning volume and choices, and what is actually consumed or wasted. A mismatch between consumption levels and longevity of foodstuffs can thus have its origin in certain dietary preferences and ideals amongst consumers.

I was also met with explanations that a mismatch between what you want to have dinner when you are in the store shopping, and what you fancy when you are about to prepare dinner can occur. What seemed a good idea earlier in the day, or a couple of days ago, is suddenly not so tempting anymore. Then something else is chosen if alternatives are present, or a new purchase is made instead. Again, individual desire takes precedence. Vegetables is one of the top categories of unnecessary waste. Due to their transience, both wishes to avoid eating similar dishes often or the preferences of having a range of alternatives to choose from makes maintaining low food waste levels particularly challenging.

Such a mismatch between provisioning routines, consumption level and priorities and the limited longevity of food is a prominent contributor to food waste in the households. Evans (2012a:48) also points to this as a common source for food waste. Here household concerns of providing "proper and healthy" food for the family are being a concern offset by making sure back-up meals and "just in case" food solutions are present in the households. In Tromsø, too often too much fruit, bread or milk is bought with regularity, sometimes just out of habit. Then later, a new batch of food is

brought home from the supermarket. There is still some left at home, unused. It is still edible, but perhaps only for a day or two, and it is not so fresh anymore. These foodstuffs are then either replaced instantly by the newly bought ones, or left to linger as household members start consuming the freshest food instead. Such waste seems to occur on a weekly basis.

With very limited longevity, certain kinds of fruit and vegetables are especially at risk of being wasted. The quality of fruit and vegetables is often a topic for debate in Northern Norway, due to long distances and extra transport time. Placing the blame then often becomes a simple, evasive exercise when your wasteful practices are put under scrutiny. I experienced this during a chat with Ellen about their waste practices and what they threw away last:

> *Ellen: "Three brown bananas. They weren't eaten, as we had bought too many considering their ripening. Fruit can sometimes go off a bit quickly."*

Similar practices are taking place in the household of Georg and Josefine and Jorunn and Kjell. Jorunn would raise the issue of poor quality vegetables in Tromsø supermarkets compared to other places she has lived. The expectations of the food are dynamic and variable. In Georg's household, both fruit and homemade bread was thrown away when a fresher alternative became available. With a wider range of fresh food becoming increasingly available, fresh is on its way to becoming the new, or indeed for some, the only standard when it comes to food. Georg is well aware that they buy more fruit than is consumed, so there is a mismatch between the longevity of the fruit, the amount bought and the consumption levels in the households. This carries similarities to the practices Evans (2012a:48-49) mentioned above. This clearing-out ritual before cooking a meal can also be interpreted as a way of making order out chaos (Bateson 2000 [1972], Douglas 1966 and Eriksen 2011:126-130). We will return to discuss this angle thoroughly when analysing disposal practices, as Georg is not the only one making his inventory more orderly by discarding edible food.

Product Sizes and Special Offers

In relation to wasteful practices, I had a few discussions with informants about the sizes of different kinds of products available in the local supermarkets. Some expressed their frustrations of not having more choices in quantities on offer, due to a mismatch between the quantities and their consumption patterns. Practices in some households show how such a mismatch can be mitigated with a combination of diligence,

knowledge and re-packaging, considering the availability of necessary storage technology.

Some vegetables, like carrots, cucumbers, onions, garlic or potatoes are not always available in preferred quantities in local supermarkets. These vegetables are often pre-packed. Typically, the customer also does not have he option of buying smaller pieces or halves. In this regard, the size of the commodity is predefined by the physicality of the foodstuff itself. Volume of purchase is thus pre-determined or guided by the physicality or the available portions in the store For Instance, you have to buy a stocking containing two, three or four onions. It is quite common that the sizes of such pre-packed products do not match the consumption levels or day-to day food preferences in local households. For smaller households, or households with sporadic or unpredictable consumption of such food, the longevity of fruit and vegetables can be a challenge. Ingeborg and Svein reflect on this when we talk about their adaptation to a smaller household:

> *Ingeborg: "Shopping for two…*
> *Svein: When you buy a cucumber, you can just take the knife and cut it in two, in the store.*
> *Ingeborg: That is not possible everywhere.*
> *Ant: Not everyone? There is no knife there?*
> *Ingeborg: No, the knives have been removed… intentionally; so that people will not do that [cut the cucumbers in half]."*

I won't speculate about the reasons for the supermarket chains removing the knives, or not offering the option of buying half cucumbers. However, with a significant portion of the vegetables being sold in pre-packaged sizes, there is obviously less flexibility in terms of volume.

Knowledge levels about proper handling and storage of fruit and vegetables or other foodstuffs with short longevity and pre-packaged quantities also influences waste levels. And even though correct storage would decrease food waste levels, packaging sizes is for several of the households of study yet another contributing factor to their waste levels.[146] This was evident as both household waste-diaries and interview data state that parts of vegetables like broccoli and cucumbers, or parts of pre-packaged vegetables and fruit figured often on the list of wasted food.

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[146] That food producers push increasingly larger packages of their products, in order to increase their sold volume is also a tendency which can be observed in certain product groups in the supermarkets.

Tristram Stuart (2009) is critical towards some of the strategies supermarkets use to increase their sales. He mentions the "Buy one, get one for free" as a slogan consumers fall for, ending up throwing away parts of what they buy. With the increasing attention towards food waste in households in Norwegian media, the well known "3 for 2"-offers also came under increased scrutiny in the mainstream media during 2013. In the midst of this and awareness around food waste issues, supermarket chain Kiwi promoted a new offer "Buy one – Pay for one". The aim was supposedly to help their customers save money by not buying more than they need. Other chains also considered following Kiwi. Regardless of the "3 for 2"-offers being discontinued, the "2 for 50" or "2 for 40" Crowns promotions are still common in Norwegian supermarkets.[147]

I have insufficient data to provide insights into how or to what extent such offers influence provisioning routines, and subsequently, possible effects on food waste levels in the households. There have only been sporadic comments by some informants that they believe it is a contributing factor to waste in their households. There are a few factors worth mentioning in this context though: 1) the focus on obtaining good deals when provisioning, 1) the dominance of the price discourse surrounding food, and 3) a strong focus on the provisioning phase in the food management cycle, with the ensuing over-provisioning of foodstuffs. Added together, these factors create a platform for such "2 for 40"-offers or similar offspring to thrive.

The Poor Quality of Food in the Supermarkets

During one of our conversations about waste, Jorunn points to a familiar topic - the poor quality of fruit and vegetables:

> *"The quality of the stores here in Tromsø, it varies a bit. You buy things that are just on the...it can look good when you buy it, but then two days pass and it has gone off."*

The distance and time it takes for vegetables produced in foreign countries to arrive in the local supermarkets is in general longer than further south in Norway. Jorunn, who has just moved up from Trondheim, finds the quality of vegetables and fruit to vary quite a bit in Tromsø, and underlines how important it is to check the food in the supermarket when shopping. When in a rush, she doesn't always remember to do this

[147] http://www.aftenposten.no/okonomi/Na-blir-det-slutt-pa-3-for-2-i-billigbutikkene-7420468.html#.UwIJ_YXHIfx Accessed: 17. February 2014.

she says. Then when she gets home, on closer inspection, what she has bought is not edible due to mould, or that the vegetables have started getting mushy or spotty. She told me this had happened with peppers, asparagus and spinach lately. She also bought some plums, expecting them to remain edible for more than three days. The blame for food waste on these occasions is placed on the poor quality of the fruit itself and on the supermarkets for having in poor routines, not having removed the food that had gone off or was of poor quality. The food was considered to have "gone off" or to be "bad" already when it was picked up in the supermarket. So even when she was in a rush and did not check the quality of the food properly, she finds it more convenient to place part of the blame for the food being wasted needlessly on the supermarket. She admits she should have checked, but so should also the supermarket staff. Jorunn and Kjell then continued the discussion:

> *Kjell: "It might be that the store down here waits longer before throwing things away compared to Rema.*
> *Jorunn: Well, that is good in one way, but it is annoying if I have to throw it away instead...haha! I try to think, ok now I have half a broccoli in the fridge, and then try to make something where it fits in, so that it is used. Instead of start a fresh. Not just make food on the basis of what you have made before, but what you actually have."*

Jorunn's statement above illustrates that she is most concerned with their individual household and what they waste, and not so much if the food is wasted in general. She then shares her approach to make use of what you got. Several informants point their fingers towards the food itself or the poor food management in the supermarket, as reasons for food going off. The comment "it was poor quality" is often brandied about in such conversations. Household members might admit to limited knowledge when it comes to food storage, and know it has been handled sub-optimally, sometimes damaging the food so that it goes off quicker than necessary. Still, there is a strong tendency to place the blame on the food itself, or on the store where it was bought. There is a lack of will to assume personal responsibility for their food waste levels, again illustrating the morality surrounding the issue.

Provisioning Focus

There is a surplus of supermarkets in Tromsø. Competition is rife, and new chains are entering the arena. During my nine-month fieldwork in Tromsø in 2011-2012, there

were at least four new large supermarkets starting up. In local newspapers, representatives from the chains claimed that Tromsø was becoming overstocked with supermarkets. Still supermarkets were competing hard to get a foothold in the lucrative market or to maintain it, focusing on low prices to attract customers.[148] As of early 2014, talks emerged about some chains withdrawing from the market in Tromsø as they were losing a lot of money. If not as a consequence of the overstocking of outlets and the ensuing price wars, households are evidently also prone to overstocking their food supplies.

The price discourse is very dominant in the consumer food market in Norway, and we will return to analyse this more in depth later. It is useful to quickly reiterate some of the roots to this. In the 1980's the emergence of large supermarket chains focusing on low price and limited ranges of goods brought a focus on price as the measurement of the value of food. This was aided by extensive media coverage in the shape of consumer journalism comparing the different chains, focussing almost exclusively on prices. This focus has now festered. Along with numerous articles on the advantages of crossing borders into neighbouring Sweden and Finland to provision cheaper food, this focus has ironically contributed to a common misunderstanding that food is expensive in Norway. EU-statistics however show that measured against GDP per capita, Norwegians have the third cheapest food in Europe.[149] In the households of study, I also experienced a strong focus on price in different food related contexts. One particular way price dominates this discourse is the emphasis on getting a good deal. A good deal is primarily defined by receiving something you perceive as more valuable than what you gave up for it. The comparison is for instance done with alternative foodstuffs, volumes or previous or customary prices paid for similar or identical foodstuff. In short: if you had made a bargain or not.

Throughout the fieldwork, I observed a tendency in the households to put a strong emphasis on the provisioning phase, and thus also over-provisioning (Evans 2011, 2012b). This tendency could be based on a focus on getting a good deal when possible, even if storages at home are well filled, or having back-up meal-solutions of different kinds. Provisioning without checking the household stock is common, and for households with storage technology available, there was also a tendency to what I would term as hoarding.

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[148] http://www.nordlys.no/nyheter/article6888815.ece Accessed: 3. January 2014
[149] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/household_budget_surveys/Data/database Accessed. 12. December 2013.

Mapping out the food stock in households when only sporadically observing their provisioning routines can be a challenge. The difference between what appears like hoarding and actual long-term food management involving strict planning, can seem subtle and difficult to ascertain. However, while observing the whole food management process in the households in detail and over time, the differences become clearer. Households that hoard and focus chiefly on the provisioning phase stand out from those that also have well-filled freezers, but who are more meticulous and whose waste levels are fairly low. Households that focus on the provisioning phase, getting good deals and having enough food at hand, do not necessarily practice a high level of planning. The planning of the provisioning can be both sporadic and not very thorough. Overstocking is one common consequence. These practices are similar to hoarding; stocking up on food in periods of scarcity, except that there is no scarcity at the present time, or to be expected based on recent food supplies. In the households of Georg and Josefine, Svein and Ingeborg and Jorunn and Kjell I experienced this to different degrees. Their overstocked freezers and fridges, a lack of control and a disregard for checking current stocks before going shopping illustrated this. This tendency to overstock was common across perhaps ten of the households. In their waste diary, Georg had noted the following on the 1. December:

> *"Two bags of carrots, which were lying in the fridge drawer, underneath two newer bags of carrots…"*

Overstocking and not adjusting the provisioning practices is familiar (Davis 2012a). The amount of food provisioned supersedes the amount of food needed. With the unavoidable gradual decay of food, some will eventually get wasted, even if it is left in the freezer two years before it is discarded. No matter the technological storage facilities available, edible food is transient (Thompson 1979) and will continue its inevitable journey towards decomposition and decay. Additionally, the more food one has in stock, the level of control over the stock tends to diminish. Knowing how much the households have of different kinds of food, when it was bought, or its remaining longevity becomes challenging. It takes a certain amount of competence and a fair bit of time to keep track and make sure the households get good deals. Where it can be obtained most easily in terms of proximity related to household habits or living quarters is also relevant. In an environmental perspective, it is unfortunate that such diligent and focused efforts are typically not extended past the hunt for good deals during the provisioning phase.

When the complexity of everyday life, with its multiple desires and expectations, and the entrenched habits meet, the habits often live on. They can be hard to dislodge from underlying premises. As a consequence of the schizmogenetic (Bateson (2000 [1972]) tendencies in their habituality (See e.g. Bourdieu 1977, 1990), the habits live on in the interplay with structuring conditions of the institutional (low food prices, shortage of time to plan, too big pre-packaged bags carrots or large, well stacked fridges and freezers). We already heard of both local households and one in the UK (Evans 2012a) not adjusting their shopping habits even if they regularly overprovision and waste much of it.

Provisioning, Fetishism and Control of Stock

The logic of the market and an individualistic, economic rationalist perspective appear strongly influential in the decision-making processes of food management in the households, particularly the mechanisms of supply and demand. Another indicator is how prices are used in comparison to define the value of food[150].

Another influential perspective is the focus on individual pleasure, connected to the power of desire and commodity fetishism (Marx (1990 [1867]). This is also indicated by the abovementioned focus on the provisioning phase in the households, bordering towards reoccurring practices of hoarding. After acts of over-provisioning, enticed by numerous special offers or not, grounded in needs or not, wastefulness often ensued in the households. The actual act of disposal sometimes occurred in the shape of a bi-annual clear out of fully stacked deep-freezers.

With individual households rarely viewing their economic activity in a larger perspective, they remain mostly unaware of the aggregated levels of excess and waste from households. Consequences appear distant, even if they view unnecessary food waste as wrong. Graeber (2013) points to a perspective of games as a possible explanation of how people manage their contradictory behaviours mentally, behaviour that we could describe as cognitive dissonances (Festinger 1962). Such games can occur within isolated spheres of human activity where specific rules, stakes and goals apply. But behaviour, rules and goals within one sphere can explicitly contradict the goals of another sphere, or the values one embrace on the whole. The behaviour then appear cognitively dissonant from a birds-eye view.

[150] This will be further examined in Chapter 11.

As mentioned, a view that food should be cheap is dominant across the households. This has a slight irony, as the value of food is often based on economic terms – its price, rather than its potential use value as nutrition. Cheap food doesn't carry as much value as more expensive food, and thus has a lower threshold for being wasted. If provisioning practices are analysed as a somewhat isolated game (Graeber 2013), the goal would be to provide as much desirables as possible for the least amount of money and effort. The slightly contrarian underpinning is that the oft used criterion in decision-making in the households is based on valuing food by its price, and that cheap food is perceived to be of less value. Analysing the provisioning phase as an isolated game makes such contradictory elements more understandable - how regular consequences of common practices contradict ideals like avoiding unnecessary food waste.

Marcel Mauss thought that one possible reason for the propensity to over-provide could be found in the actual separation of producer and user, due to a state of alienation. The people who have taken part in the production of goods had been left with a sense of being exploited in this process, and would thus have a strong desire to pursue the products of their labour as the profit of their labour tends to end up elsewhere (Graeber 2001:162).

The more in stock, the more there is to keep track off. Less control and ensuing chaos is an increasingly likely consequence (Bateson (2000 [1972]). This lack of control can further contribute to additional provisioning, with spiralling overstocking. Georg illustrated possible consequences of overstocking. He threw away food to get room for what he had just bought, with the explanation: "something is going in, so something has to go out." His freezers were fully stocked. The later case with Georg replacing high-quality coffee with the exclusive "Lippe no. 2"-coffee shows another dimension of overstocking. It also illustrates the influence desire can have on consumption decisions in an accentuated way, and a fetish of commodities (Marx 1990 [1867]).

A more restrictive and sober focus on the provisioning phase could have a positive effect in lowering the amount of food waste in the households. But such restrictive and more frugal approaches are in disharmony with established habits of food management. Such a focus is also not in line with surrounding, dominant preferences of fulfilling individual and household pleasures and desires, for instance the desire for alternatives when it comes to the consumption of food, or not fancying what was initially planned. Such preferences are exemplified through several statements about "having different fruit or vegetables to choose from", having back-up options in

case a family member doesn't want something (See also Evans 2012a), or when opting for the "Lippe no. 2"-coffee instead of the current coffee. These priorities are seen as more valuable and meaningful to the person(s) in that specific situation (Graeber 2001). There is a short discussion between Georg and Josefine in the case about the "Lippe no.2" coffee, but they both express a desire for the highest sensory pleasure, which is what they imagine the "Lippe no. 2" will provide.

The tension between avoiding unnecessary waste and maintaining individual preferences appears to be a bit of a double bind (Bateson 2000 [1972]) for some household members. They will admit to their wasteful practices when we start discussing the issue. Labelling their common practices as wrong, stating how they make them feel guilty at times. But they do not appear to be sufficiently motivated to alter their behaviour. Alternative ideals and motivations, like the desire for pleasure or choices appear to take precedence over other ideals, be they moral, ethical environmental, political, economic, or a combination of these. These ideals are not individually concocted, but negotiated in continuous interplay with cultural and infrastructural macro-factors, also influenced by established routines and habits. What we could label the values that define what has value to us (Graeber 2001, 2013). With easy access to riches of food, and the subsequent taken for granted-ness expressed through the widespread wasteful practices in many households, one might expect that the provisioning phase of the household food cycle would not receive so much attention. Nevertheless, this is very much the case.[151]

Temporal Perspectives on Disposability and Turnover

In a historical perspective, Susan Strasser (1999) shows how the increased production of disposable products and a culture of disposability contrast previous cultures of thrift and austerity. Before the twentieth century, making the most out of resources and focusing on re-use and repair was essential. Contemporary short-term perspectives connected to disposability and fresh food as a standard stand in stark contrast to efforts of conservation and food management necessary in earlier times. Additionally, consider an overall higher longevity of products and a focus on repairing and sharing. Like a man in his late 80's told me: not every household needs to have their own electrical drill or other expensive tools. When he was in the process of building a

[151] The focus on the provisioning phase is an aspect that would be interesting to look further into in an interdisciplinary manner in terms of optimal foraging or hoarding theories.

house for his family, many others were in a similar situation. They were building houses in the same neighbourhood in Sør-Varanger in Finnmark in the decades after World War 2. Times were still economically tough. Materials were rationed, and they would just borrow tools they didn't have from their neighbors. They would share between them, and also help each other with bigger tasks that required the manual labour of many. Practices of aid, sharing, redistribution and austerity are also relevant when it comes to food management. We will look closer at how temporal perspectives and frequencies of provisioning influence the perception of food and its value, and subsequently, food waste levels.

To keep food waste levels low, checking the household stock and planning the provisioning, with an eye on current and future consumption levels, seems to be important whether you shop seldom or often. It is common for the households that shop approximately once a week to plan thoroughly. And as a consequence of the longer periods between each shopping-run, they also have a longer temporal perspective on their food management. For instance, they think through what to have for dinner in the next days, how resources can be combined and how this correlates with the longevity of the different foodstuffs they have available.

A hypothesis worthy of further exploration in this context is if frequent shopping, and subsequently an assumingly shorter temporal perspective on food management, also influences how disposable food is viewed on the whole. A perspective of disposability would directly affect the thresholds for discarding food. For instance, if a household has established a routine of shopping the dinner for the day in question on the way home after work, would this daily supermarket run lead to a short-term outlook on food management, one of disposability? Consider here Georg and his ritual of making the kitchen orderly by throwing away leftovers or the oldest fruit, before replacing them with fresher food. This ritual disposal is carried out when he returns home in the afternoon, after shopping food on his way home from work. A parallel to consider is the influence of disposable packaging versus packaging that can be re-used and re-filled several times. Today you get cartons of milk, compared to the re-use of milk-bottles made of glass used decades ago.

The shifting, more flexible everyday lives in the age of modern capitalism harbour several instability factors. This makes planning more challenging. Time is scarce within an environment of accelerated change (Eriksen 2016) compared to just a few decades ago. The values of instantaneity and disposability are emphasized when it comes to commodities, and we arrive at a throw away society (Toeffler 1970). This can

be illustrated through household practices like an increased frequency of provisioning, increases in single-portion packaging, a focus on fresh or instantly ripe products, seasonal products available all year round etc. These factors contribute to a sense of disposability of food, with new fresh supplies always available, in a volatile everyday context. Such an accelerated pace is the sign of an overheated economy (Eriksen 2016), similar to a postmodern condition that David Harvey (1989) labels a time-space compression. Accelerated turn-over times in the production of goods and services entail parallel accelerations in exchange and consumption (ibid:285). Here we could add waste. The transience creates temporariness in personal and public value systems, as there is too much happening in too little time (ibid).

In this context of accelerated capitalism, long-term planning becomes more difficult for households, and the particular inescapable transience of food is amplified. The readily ripe bananas and avocados or ready-made meals with shorter shelf life ensure the option of instant consumption or shorter preparation times. But these characteristics also grant a shorter time-span before the food becoming inedible due to entropy. I experienced that both daily and weekly shopping runs might produce high or low levels of unnecessary food waste. The waste levels appear to tie in with the levels of planning involved rather than the shopping frequency. However, inherently, a temporal perspective only consisting of the next day is likely to involve a lower level of planning, and thus, an increased likelihood of unnecessary food waste.

Instability Factors

Adding to the argument from the previous chapter where I looked at household changes in a life-phase perspective, I have identified a few reoccurring instability factors. These pose a challenge to frugal food management, and in consequence, fuel wasteful practices, either isolated or in combination with other factors.

Irregularities come in different shapes and at different times and appear to be a significant contributor to wasteful practices. Such irregularities can be: changing household roles and responsibilities, flexible work-hours and multiple work locations, an unpredictable daily schedule, shifting meal times, a varying number of household members to feed, irregular shopping frequency, visitors in the household with different preferences, or visitors who bring food with them into the household. I label these irregularities of everyday life instability factors, and within the scope of discovering reasons for food waste in mind I find the concept appropriate and useful in analysis.

Evans (2012:47) uses the concepts of fluidity and repetition to discuss the mismatch between the fluidity and irregularity of everyday life and the stability of routines when it comes to household food management. This is an attempt to conceptualise similar dilemmas concerning the management of transient resources like food in the rapidly shifting contexts and frameworks of contemporary everyday life.

One instability factor can be if a new person is doing the food provisioning or planning. This can just be someone else than the person who usually does it, or a visitor helping out. Visitors or guests in the households came up as an issue in many households. Older relatives, usually parents or grandparents, who visited would often contribute to the household by bringing gifts of food or going food shopping if visiting for a few days. I experienced how this brought a lack of control over what is in stock. It brought a degree of instability, with increased food waste usually ensuing. The food brought into the household was sometimes not desirable or wanted by regular household members. People have different tastes and preferences, and sometimes this food is left to linger a long time after the visitors have left. Such irregularities in provisioning routines increase household waste levels.

Another factor of instability that decreases the control of food management, and subsequently the waste levels too, is if household members are not eating at home regularly, are travelling, or generally are away from home for a period of time. We previously heard about single households where social activities were prioritised, and eating at home or household food management fell down the list of priorities. Households with flexible work-hours, going away for weekends or who travelled a lot through work. This is similar to what Evans (2012:50-52) found in his study.

Even gifts from friends and family members can ironically partially become matter out of place. Gifts of food can be more likely to end up as waste, even if they are simultaneously also treasured and highly valued through their social dimension. The gifts can represent contrarian aspects, on one hand being valued for their social dimension, reaffirming social bonds, or as something valuable to the household's sustainability, but on a practical level also being problematic as they can bring expectations, instability and unpredictability. [152] Food brought by visitors, gifts or not, can make the household food management more chaotic and mixed up, and speed up their voyage towards the status of waste, and a higher level of entropy. This happened with the sack of potatoes mentioned in the introduction.

[152] The concept of gifts from friends and relatives is discussed thoroughly in Chapter 13.

During one of our regular chats, Tor told me that Kaisa's mother visited them last Christmas. She would go and buy groceries for all of them, and Tor and Kaisa experienced less control over their stock. Kaisa's mother would also buy food they did not usually eat or that was unfamiliar. A large part of this batch of food ended up being wasted, thrown away at a later stage. People have a different taste, and often things are left to linger, long after the visitors have left.

In a later interview with Kjell and Jorunn, we were discussing how much topping gets wasted in their household. Kjell then points towards irregularities in terms of who buys food and more specifically, what visitors bring with them. They also had a parent visiting, Kjell's mom. She had bought some liver-paste that got wasted in the end. Normally, they do not eat liver-paste, or even eat it at all. It was left in the fridge for a while and thrown away later. Kjell also mentioned how some dressings they bought when they were having guests over got wasted. They don't use dressings themselves, so after the visit they were left in the fridge until they went off. Months later, they were thrown away when they decided to go through the fridge and tidy it up.

Visitors bringing food into someone else's household is a double-edged issue.[153] The motivation behind it can be complex: it can be done out of love, a wish to help, having too much at home themselves, down to one's own food preferences, due to social expectations etc. Bringing valuable resources into a household is per definition positive, and visitors also offer company and share other resources like skills, knowledge, entertainment etc. However, in households where there is a surplus of food or where lack of food is not a concern, it seems to bring elements of instability that need to be managed, irrespective of the original intentions. It is important keep in mind that visitors do not bring instability and a lack of control per definition. The instability relates to food management not being highly prioritised in the households. Food is available in abundance, and the extra food often messes with their everyday routines, or can sadly become an extra nuisance. Established routines and habits are influential, as indicated by different generational practices and the instability external factors bring. Nevertheless, when food is wasted, it is often an indication of the low potential value it is perceived to hold (Graeber 2001, 2013).

[153] My own role as a visitor, and the influence of my perspectives and the discussions I had together with the household members is discussed in Chapter 4.

The Concept of Entropy

Gregory Bateson's (1985 [1979]) discussions around the undeniably complex concept of entropy are very relevant in the context of instability factors and waste. I see entropy as an important underlying premise for food management practices. The concept is relevant in at least two manners. The first is how entropy entails, simply speaking, that there are more ways for things to be messy than orderly. The more factors involved, the easier things get into a mess. If nothing is done, things get gradually messier and mixed up, until their characteristics are not possible to distinguish anymore. Bateson (ibid.) discusses this with his daughter, claiming there are more ways that her room can be messy or untidy, than tidy and orderly. Entropy is also very relevant to this analysis in another manner; how matter, including food, will move steadily towards decay at different paces, towards a higher level of entropy, and in the end, to uniform matter.

Bateson (1985:241-242 [1979]) defines entropy as: "The degree to which relations between the components of any aggregate are mixed up, unsorted, undifferentiated, unpredictable, and random." The more possibilities that exist, the more potentialities there are for things getting mixed up, messy and disorderly, as everything drifts towards chaos and disorder. With food, this is not hard to imagine. We have been reminded about this by Thompson (1979), who pointed out the transient nature of food, its steady flow towards destruction and decay, towards a level of higher entropy.

However, entropy is a complex concept and Bateson's definition above originally stems from physics. In physics, this is a universal principle, namely what is known as the second law of thermodynamics, starting with the work of French physicist Sadi Carnot in the early 19th century, and carried on by Rudolf Clausius and Lord Kelvin amongst others. The Law of Entropy describes the degradation of the matter and energy in the universe towards equilibrium, the ultimate state of inert uniformity (high entropy). In thermodynamics, this refers to the heat loss in the universe, which in the end will reach a point where the temperature in the universe becomes equal (Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971]). In short, differences have an inherent tendency to even out over time. Eriksen (2011:121) illustrates this by several examples, one being this: if it is warm inside a house and colder outside, opening the windows will also make it a tiny, tiny bit warmer outside after a little while.

Georgescu-Roegen (1986:8 [1971]), a pioneer in what became the interdisciplinary field of ecological economics, stated that "Living organisms need energy, but also low entropy, nutrition which it sucks out from the environment, and

degrades into high entropy; waste." Graeber (2014:509) also acknowledges this principle's relevance in an ecological discourse in his critical and thorough discussion on the concept of consumption: "Certainly, everything we do (including production) expends resources and is subject to the law of entropy". The sun hurls an enormous amount of energy towards earth; the excess of which is wasted copiously in nature (Bataille 1991), an event which is as unavoidable as the cultural excesses he claims occur when a system (i.e. an organism) cannot grow further. They will then be spent gloriously or catastrophically, and he uses historical and empirical examples of sacrifice, war, luxury, gifts and waste. Bataille's (ibid.) theories also underline how the economy depends on the circulation of energy on earth.

The sun has a finite amount of energy, and will in the end turn into a white dwarf. Without a source of energy it will gradually radiate away its energy and cool. Georgescu-Roegen (1986 [1971]) argues that considering the finite amount of natural resources of low entropy, no matter how much capital, labour or equipment is invested into continuing obtaining these resources, the process of entropy cannot be stopped. In the context of current and increasing environmental challenges, as stated by the IPCC[154], popular and optimistic perspectives focusing on technological innovations and change to counter the climate changes cannot dissolve the fact that some natural resources are limited or scarce. Here Georgescu-Roegen (1986:13 [1971]) points out a challenge of scale, as the temporal perspective on the movement towards entropy might be different between an individual who is mortal, and humankind, who behave as if they are immortal.

Order, Categories, Chaos

The lower the level of entropy is, the more alternative outcomes are possible, and thus the bigger the potential for things getting mixed up or forgotten is, leading to increased disorder and chaos. A higher number of people, objects, and alternative courses of actions result in a higher amount of alternative outcomes. In our case: a higher number of household members, of alternating household roles, an increased range of foodstuffs

[154] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change. It was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988 to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts. http://www.ipcc.ch/organization/organization.shtml#.Uw4fBIXHIfw Accessed: 26. February 2014.

and preferences in terms of food, a high numbers of technological tools, and as a consequence more complex and numerous food management practices and options. The more instability and plurality, the more challenging it is to organise the food management of a household. In the households, we experience that instability factors make it is harder to keep track. There aren't many dishes to clean if you only have one, and if there is only you in the household, *you* are the shopper, chef and cleaner.

Instability factors contribute to increased food waste in the household. The more chaotic and mixed up the food management and the everyday lives are, the harder to keep things organized and orderly. Food moves towards decay regardless, towards a higher level of entropy, becoming inedible - wasted. The instability factors often increase the speed of the inevitable journey of food towards becoming waste. The food has not been converted to energy through human consumption.

Entropy and the logic of growth inherent in capitalism can bring a strong cocktail effect. Consider the accelerated modern lifestyles, the focus on consumption as a means of human expression, the ever increasing options of food available, the easier access to this food around the clock, larger packages and special offers like "3 for 2". These are all factors driving consumption and waste-levels, particularly when it comes to highly transient materials like food, as entropy flows with inevitability.

Matter out of Place

How one perceives and decides what is tidy or orderly though is culturally dependent. Although according to Douglas (1966) it is not all relative, as taboos and unpleasantness connected with human bodily waste like urine and faeces are seemingly universally human. Eriksen (2011:130) reminds us that one role of culture is to create a sense of order, by naming, categorising and structuring the world around us. This does not entail claiming nature to be chaotic per se, but that culture strives to create different kinds of orders and categorisations, which in turn are culturally dependent. When dealing with residue after a person's death, or when cleaning up in the fridge and freezer, the simplest thing is to throw it all away, or to keep it all. [155] Usually when it comes to food, a culturally relative categorisation and ordering process takes place.

Instability factors increase the spiralling tempo towards chaos, or in our case, foods movement towards inedibility. If nothing is done in terms of food management,

[155] Clearing out and sorting freezers and fridges will be discussed in Chapter 9.

all the foodstuffs in the households will continue down the unavoidable slope towards decay. Just think of not cleaning up your kitchen after dinner, not carrying out the waste, or just not opening the fridge at all in a couple of months. The once orderly and differentiated categories of both food and waste, in the fridge and bag respectively, would both decompose as organic life-forms are gradually broken down into simpler forms of matter (Eriksen 2011:132-133), matter of a more uniform kind.

Following Mary Douglas' (1966) perspective, "matter out of place" is a problem because such anomalies can cause disorder and chaos. They threaten the current social order, and because of this, society would strive to achieve order and stability. This is a structural-functionalist argument[156]. I found that stability and predictability in the practices and routines of the households makes it easier to maintain the order necessary to make the most out of highly transient resources like food. We will experience how foodstuffs can also become problematic and appear in highly liminal states as "matter out of place". Throughout the fieldwork, it became evident to me that stability and predictability in the household structure, size and routines are very important factors to avoid wasteful practices. A predictable everyday life makes it easier to keep things apart, marking and maintaining boundaries and categories.

Several households expressed that cleaning out the freezer or fridge was one way of regaining control and order. When households assess their stock and clean out their storage, they describe it as an act that gives them the opportunity to "start from scratch", "being on top of things again", or "being in control of what is in stock". Afterwards, they know that food they have there is most likely edible and ok. In short, they sometimes dispose to obtain order. For Jorunn and Kjell, the fact that they had to move the freezer also initiated such a process of taking stock and throwing away old food in the freezer.

We will continue these discussions further in the next chapter in relation to the disposal process of food. In the moment when decisions are made regarding the edibility of food, the concepts of borders, categorisation and order are highly relevant. Borders and categories will become unclear, transcended, disputed and anomalies will be discussed as they dangle in a state of liminality.

[156] The Structural-Functionalist perspectives were at their peak in Social Anthropology in the 1940's to 1960's. Briefly, the main conceptual idea is that society was similar to an organism, clearly inspired by Emile Durkheim's work. Society thus consisted of mutually dependent social and cultural institutions that existed due to their functions, functions that were reduced to maintaining the social order, solidarity, stability and regulating conflict. The approach was criticized for a lack of dynamism, and how such a perspective struggled to explain social change and individual needs (Sørum, in Nielsen 2000:23-29).

Summary

In this chapter we started the voyage of following household practices throughout the food management cycle, aiming to unveil "patternings" of wasteful actions (Graeber 2001). In an admittedly oversimplified linear perspective, routines of planning and provisioning have been the first steps. A clear gap in the approaches to planning was experienced in the households of study. This was connected to the frequency of their provisioning. Those shopping more frequently generally display a lower degree of planning, and consequently, higher levels of unnecessary food waste. There are some habitual aspects present when it comes to shopping frequencies, time of day, place and also what is bought.

Multiple issues in the everyday lives of the households contribute to waste, and mismatches between the inherent propensities of food and their daily chores and priorities. These are obstacles that to a large degree could be overcome. However, a lack of priority of food management means that over-provisioning, lack of time, non-ideal product sizes, poor quality products, and several other factors given as explanations for household food waste levels. Widespread wastefulness due to over-provisioning of food led me to introduce the concept of entropy, as food regularly goes off before it can be consumed. The rhythms of food and its longevity, household provisioning practices and consumption levels and frequencies are not aligned.

I also discussed the other side of entropy. When a large number of factors are involved, be them e.g. people, places, different foodstuffs or routines, this calls for an increase in planning, organisation and order to avoid chaos and subsequent waste, as food trickles along towards entropy and decay. This was exemplified through consequences of visitors getting involved in household food management practices and the recurring cycles in local households where they dispose of the content of fridges, freezers and other storage facilities to obtain a sense of order and control. When discussing the categorisations and borders of organic matter like food and waste, the entropy concept is useful as it shows us how the concept of "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966) should not be limited an understanding of a the symbolic order of categories to maintain social stability. Due to entropy, the highly transient organic matter of food quickly and explicitly transgresses the purely symbolic categorisations, ones that are interwoven with the material propensities of food. The dimension of entropy as gravitating towards chaos and disorder is also connected to discussions about emic instability factors driving waste and accelerated change. Different

manifestations of the growth logic and the compression of time and space inherent in the modern capitalist system (Harvey 1989) drives production, exchange, consumption and waste levels. In such a rapidly changing and flexible environment, making long term plans and sticking to them is challenging, particularly considering the high transience of food coupled with entropy.

In the next chapter, we will look at practices in the subsequent phases of the food cycle: cleaning up, the handling of leftovers (including any potential use of these) the redistribution and the disposal phases in relation to food waste. In addition we will explore the use of technology and the relation to knowledge.

Chapter 9 Disposal Practices Part I

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss and analyse specific practices in the food management process that take place after the initial meal. The focus will be on contextualised practices and decisions incurring unnecessary food waste. This will include practices like cleaning up after the meal, the handling of leftovers and the actual disposal phase. I will also discuss the uses of storage technology, and the process of tidying freezers and fridges. I then view food waste practices and the food management process as a whole, relating it to developments in relevant knowledge. I will touch upon the topics of edibility, longevity, storage and expiry dates. Here I will specifically discuss how the households manage the thresholds and borders between food and waste, and the categories they employ.

Cultural Ideals regarding Food Waste

Before arriving in Tromsø to conduct fieldwork, I wondered if someone would reject the ideal that it was wrong to waste food, regardless of the inevitability of waste occurring at least on some level. I wondered who would be opposed to such an ideal, and what they reflections and justifications might be. However, I did not meet anyone who questioned the legitimacy of this ideal. This is a pretty clear indication about its acceptance and strong position, at least in discourse, as I experienced widespread practices contradicting this ideal.

I hope to uncover how this widespread familiarity and acceptance of the ideals condoning the waste of food relate to the low levels of consciousness and awareness of the actual household food waste levels I experienced. The gut reactions I encountered when I told locals about my topic of study during the early days of my fieldwork were often “I don’t throw anything! I eat everything!” However, this appears to be connected to a low level of awareness around one’s own practices, rather than a refusal to admit to conscious wasteful actions, or a refusal to accept the moral ideal. In the households, I experienced an emic and explicit morality surrounding the management of food, and there are genuine concerns related to wasteful practices of food. I experienced how awful some of my informants felt when wasting food, as they found it to be wrong per definition. The fact that these sentiments and concerns don’t have a tendency to be

transformed into further reflections, or leading to changed practices, does not undermine or question the sincerity of such statements or emotions. Nevertheless, the consequences remain the same in terms of waste.

Picking up where we left off, let us now continue throughout the food management process with the cleaning up after the meal and the subsequent stages, looking at waste-driving familiarities I noticed across the households. The process presented here is clearly a simplification, following the common flow of the food management cycle in the households. In practice it doesn't necessarily appear as linear. I have chosen this outline for the sake of topical simplicity and presentation.

The Food Management Process - Cleaning up

After a good meal, physiological processes can play a part, as digesting the food can sap your energy for a while and you can become a bit drowsy and sleepy. One result might be the postponement of the post-meal cleaning up and the handling of the remaining food. This stage of cleaning up will typically also include rinsing plates, pots, cutlery and placing them in the dishwasher. Except in two households, dishwashers were installed in the kitchens. After the meal, other tasks often include re-stacking the ingredients used during the meal, in addition to the handling of leftovers from plates, pots and pans.

Similar to the barbeque I mentioned previously, and during special occasions like Christmas, the time right after dinner is a moment when the social aspects of a meal can influence the food management and contribute to increased waste of food. With a focus on the social dimensions, both cleaning-up and the handling of leftovers can be postponed. At such times the physiological and the social elements can also reinforce each other and contribute to a postponement of the management of the food involved in the meal. Being full can also drain one’s energy. As mentioned, Jon sent me a picture one night of leftovers from their halibut dinner sitting on their kitchen bench. The title was “Couldn’t get around to cleaning up, as I was so full afterwards.” Post-meal forgetfulness or different priorities was also observed in Evans’ (2011:437) study from Manchester, UK.

The Handling of Leftovers

First of all, what are leftovers? The Merriam Webster Dictionary[157] defines leftovers as something that remains unused or unconsumed. In our context, this refers to leftover food, served at a later meal, or as a snack or something subsequently discarded, partially or wholly. The first and the second part of the definition leave us with no clear conclusion with regards to our topic. It immediately raises questions like: Are leftovers all the remaining food after a meal, the surplus so to speak? Or are we talking about what gets through the post-meal filtering process and is deemed eligible for future consumption at that particular moment of categorization? I chose to follow the first definition, as it allows us to follow and analyze the household members process of selection and categorizations, rather than leapfrog these and go straight to what is kept on for future meals. This step is highly valuable to our understanding of the contributing and constituting factors of food waste. In addition, there is a more abstract point, as what is valuable and kept is relative to what is deemed less valuable or non-valuable and discarded. These are mutually dependent categories.

Albeit our chosen definition of leftovers; what remains unused and unconsumed, will also bring us into a bit of trouble. The subsequent categorizations of what is worth keeping or not will sometimes become a troublesome exercise, or *matter*, which is an exact point here. The disposal or guarding practices and judgments are central questions in this chapter. A starting question is; how do the households I studied define what is or isn't worth keeping hold of, and what are the main criteria involved? Can for instance food fit for a future meal or snack come from the actual plates of people who have eaten, or must the food come from the pots and pans or plates the food was served in/on? Can half a potato from a personal plate be kept, or does it have to be a whole, seemingly untouched and intact entity? We will revisit such questions as the analysis of the multiple dimensions and dilemmas of the disposal process as we advance.

As the topic of food waste is still a young and rather un-researched area in anthropology, this is also the case with leftovers and the handling of these. One exception is Benedetta Cappellini's studies (Cappellini 2009, Cappellini and Parsons 2013). In her study performed in the middle-class segment in the UK, she sees the leftovers in a holistic perspective in terms of household food management. This perspective is similar to my approach to understanding food waste in the larger context

[157] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/leftovers Accessed: 16. April 2014.

of household food management. One of Cappellini's (ibid.) main points is how leftovers are connected to both previous and subsequent practices in the food cycle. This is part of an argument about the circularity of the food cycle, and an attempt to move away from the prevalent linear thinking around the food management process. For instance, the future creation of leftovers can be a motivational factor in planning, provisioning and preparation of certain kinds of meals or dishes. A cyclic aspect is also present as the leftovers from previous meals become ingredients for future meals, or meals in themselves through a process of divestment and re-use.

The use of leftovers is one example of what Gregson (2007) coins as "moving things along". In her criticism of the "the throwaway society"-label, she illustrates a range of common household practices of re-use and re-distribution rather than disposal. The handling of leftovers implies a set of practices (classifying, selecting, storing, re-distributing and re-using) that transforms what is left after meals into food that is re-admissible to the table for consumption. I am reluctant to agree with labeling the practices of using and re-using food as a thrift practice that produces excess value for mainly two reasons: 1) there is potential value already inherent in the food by its capacity to quell hunger, and an even higher one, as both physical and mental efforts have been put into buying, transporting and preparing the food that constitutes the leftovers. 2) I don't see this as a particularly frugal set of practices, but more as practices that are rather common in the households I studied. There might be socio-cultural differences at play, as judging by the ethnographic material of Cappellini and Parsons (2013) the element of social stigma appears to be stronger in their households of study.

My findings are in accordance with her argument that familial bonds are sustained and perpetuated through everyday consumption practices. This includes leftovers and not just on extraordinary occasions. Cappellini (ibid.) argues that the consumption of leftovers is not something for guests, but rather a practice that requires admission into the inner circles of the family to partake in. In a sense, the closeness of relations necessary to be included in such leftover meals fits in with what David Evans (2012a) found; that leftovers are not seen as fit for public consumption. They should not be sent with the kids as their school lunches. The stage of social inedibility of leftovers, at least outside the intimate family sphere, is reached before the materially grounded inedibility arrives later. The latter categorization is more connected to the domain of perceived health risks, not social judgments.

Cappellini and Parsons (2013) see thrift as in making the most of your resources (See e.g. Miller 1998, Strasser 1999), not only on an individual level as practices of

frugality and saving, but also in terms of saving for the mutual good. They link this to an historical perspective of mutual savings unions and the like.[158] Here, I would like to draw the attention towards another perspective of theirs: that the handling of leftovers is seen to have elements of thrift, but that they see it as a middle-class disposition rather than a practice out of economic necessity (Cappellini and Parsons (2013:132). The perspective rests on a kind moral performativity that borrows inspiration from an ideal of austerity. An interesting argument from Cappellini and Parsons (ibid.) on thrift and the focus on it is how it can contribute to the concealment of actual wasteful practices taking place in the household. Practices of thrift then appear as a moral symbolic dimension, exhibiting control over household resource management, rather than being indicative of actual frugal resource management on the whole. This thinking hints at the thrifty practices being factors in a moral economy. Then these acts are not strictly necessary due to the excess of food, even if they are economically rational and part of a cultural heritage of austerity and careful food management. While this perspective is a revealing one when it comes to the performativity of thrift and the sustenance this moral economy, I would like to draw the attention towards the overall societal resource situation. I wish to put a stronger emphasis on the larger frameworks that actually enable the significant wastefulness suggested by our survey data.

The Sacrifices of Excess

In addition to interpreting the use of leftovers as thrift, Cappellini and Parsons (2013) also claim these practices contain elements of sacrifice. Briefly, their argument is that a sacrifice is made by the household manager, for instance through thrifty practices. Then, as a result of being thrifty, this person can express love and care and builds bonds through their use of money, time and energy towards presenting good meals to the family members. This is a fruitful angle coupled with a Maussian perspective on gift exchange (Mauss 1995 [1924]). This is particularly interesting when analysing close family relations as completely communal relations, relations without calculations or needs to balance out what is given or received, or with a view to an end of the relation.

That said, I find the argument and use of the term sacrifice (Cappellini and Parsons 2013:122-123), inspired by Miller's (1998) use of George Bataille (1991) and his

[158] This view on collective frugality and thrift has resonance in perspectives on waste which expands past the borders of the individual household which I experienced and is discussed in the case about Erika and Roger and their conscious decisions of choosing milk with two different expiry dates when shopping in the supermarket.

perspectives on sacrifice, to be taken out of the larger context. In my view, the larger context is key to Bataille's argument, rather than practices of thrift as a sacrifice where the household manager is saving and restricting their own spending to spend on those in close relations, be they family or deity. I find that Bataille actually sees the sacrifice as an effect of something diametrically different - as a consequence of excess, not thrift. Bataille's perspectives on sacrifice (ibid.), perspectives evidently operating on a more theoretical scale of analysis, are sometimes somewhat lacking a solid link between micro-level practices on the ground and more large-scale concepts. However, they are nevertheless framed by his overreaching argument of sacrifice. Sacrifice to him is one of several key cultural manifestations and outcomes of an excess of natural resources within a closed system, be it an organism, a family, a tribe, a society or the planet earth as a whole. Bataille sees an inevitability as inherent in the excessive and wasteful human actions, be them war, sacrifices, feasts or luxuries. Following this line of thought, the ongoing wastefulness of food in households on the whole, can be seen as one outcome of an excess of resources available. The ongoing performativity inside the households to uphold a moral ideal and an economy connected to past cultural practices of austerity, modesty and sacrifice, certainly remains. However meaningful, I find that this practice signifies yet another case of estranged household resource management. It illustrates household members who are distanced and alienated from the larger context, from the larger food cycle. The performative displays of such a moral economy in the face of such excessive actual practices on a larger-scale actually mask the uncomfortable inevitability that Bataille points to. The thrifty symbolic practices are like Cappellini and Parsons (2013) say not necessary, but the sacrifices of excess and wastefulness appear more inevitable, according to Bataille (1991).

With our households, the aspect of a moral economy suggests one possible explanation for the gap between ideal and practice. And even more so, as practices of food waste are laden with moral statements of condemnation and shame. This underlines a kind of double betrayal, to both rational economic food management and a cultural heritage of austerity. In a double negative, one wastes money, wrong in itself, but also in a culturally immoral way by needlessly wasting food from a household perspective. Here one should remain aware of the futility of attempts to fully explain the cognitive dissonances. These appear to be an inevitability that rests at the core of human practice. In the shape of a more contextual and empiric situationally oriented perspective, it might be that extra care in the management of leftovers is mostly a discursive exercise in some households. Another option is that this care is consigned

only to particular occasions, household members, or restricted to certain types of foodstuffs.

We will shortly visit some key-findings on how our households manage different kinds of leftovers, and how they are valued and re-valued in terms of different criteria. Unsurprisingly, a hierarchy of leftovers exists and such valuations can be quite complex. They play into the decision-making processes and possible future uses of the leftovers. Some criteria will be of the more material kind, like the longevity of the food, onwards to intermediate and more meddled cultural-material criteria like the deterioration in freshness and perceived quality. Others are grounded more in social dimensions as the likelihood of occasions for re-use. Also relevant is how food can become reclassified and socially polluted by previous meals (Douglas 1966), and how leftovers can have hold a social status not fit for public display (Evans 2012a).

A Hierarchy of Leftovers

The use of leftovers within the regular meal structure varies. They are often brought to the workplace as lunch. Sometimes they become an evening snack, much dependent on what kind of food it is and what kind of preparation is necessary. Leftovers can also become part of a new dinner, either as a stand-alone dish or with additional food prepared to make up a full meal. This can take place a following day if it is just kept in the fridge, or at a later stage if it is frozen.

Jon talks about the use of leftovers in their household in a manner that resembles a hierarchy of leftovers. A combination of factors enters the equation when the perceived value of the leftovers is established, and thus ranked, similar to a hierarchy. Jorunn and Kjell raised the exact same issue. What resides at the top of the hierarchy is tempting and convenient food that require little or no preparation. When discussing leftovers that always get eaten, pizza is at the top, whereas a couple pieces of fish that is not enough to make dinner of, or a couple of boiled potatoes, are not. These will often be stored in the fridge until they go off and are thrown away. The waste diaries also confirm this. The desirability and the perceived value of the leftovers, with the monetary price also factored into this equation, are some of the intertwined factors deciding if the food is likely to get used or not. Other factors of note are practical issues like the possibilities of the leftovers fitting into the dinner plans of the next couple of days, not to mention the daily household schedules.

The Social Status of Leftovers

Evans (2013:1129) describes how leftovers are associated with low status in the middle-class households he studied in the UK, and Cappellini and Parsons' cases and analysis (2013) also indicate this. One of Evans' (2013) informants tells us how leftovers are not deemed appropriate to send along with the children for their school-lunch. It is not proper food, and it is old food. Leftovers are thus also part of contemporary social concerns. They are seen as displays of care for the family, in this case the children, which could also reflect the social status of the family. In this case the social dimension is very important and puts the intrinsic value of food in the shadow.

Cappellini and Parsons (2013) find that these practices show how closeness in relations is necessary to be offered leftovers. Another interpretation is what Evans (2012a) recites to us: the reluctance to expose leftovers to the gaze of others, as a window into the practices of care in said household. Following Evans' findings, such front-stage (Goffman 1971 [1959]) concerns can lead to increased waste, but I did not experience this first hand myself. Admittedly, I don't have sufficient data to offer insights into the social status related to leftovers locally, and how this has relevance for occasions beyond the domicile or the close family. However, in the families with children I experienced how care for the children was expressed through food management patterns (E.g. Miller 1998). A certain competence is displayed and underlined through making sure the children eat proper, healthy and nutritious food.

The Ritual of Good intentions

Ingeborg and Svein find it challenging to make a correct amount of food for dinner, so leftovers are common in their household. Ingeborg usually disposes of excess food, but sometimes they have discussions about whether something should be thrown away or kept. They do not always agree. This can occur with meat-products, as Ingeborg has a poor sense of smell. This affects her approach and practices of disposal:

> *"I don't have any chance to decide if something had gone off or not, and I don't take chances, eating bad food. So then I make some margins of safety for myself, which he doesn't always agree on. Today, we threw away some rose fish which had been in the fridge since Tuesday last week, that is one week ago. That is too long for me…the plan was to eat it the next day, because I am very fond of rose fish, but something else popped up, so it didn't happen. And that is*

the kind of things we can disagree upon, if the limit has been reached after four or five days."

The initial good intention of making use of the fish does not come into fruition, and the leftovers get wasted in the end. This shows a common ritual I experienced in most of the households: a few days mandatory ripening in the fridge, before the leftovers can be disposed of more legitimately. When I conducted the fridge rummage with Ingeborg and Svein, we noticed that there were also some pork-chops sitting in their fridge. They told me that they had already discussed if they were going to throw them away or not. Ingeborg said Svein has to eat them if they aren't going to be disposed of. She cannot eat them herself, as she is extremely picky after having had stomach surgery.

Georg also admits that he often cooks too much food for their family dinners, a practice that regularly results in food waste, as the leftovers won't be eaten later. In their household, leftovers might even be thrown away straight after dinner because, as he says, "I know they won't get eaten". Alternatively, leftovers are left to mature for a day or two, and then they are thrown away. The same ritual is also uttered explicitly by Georg during a chat we had in their kitchen as he was cooking dinner. In general, Georg is the one who manages the food in their household and he is also the one who disposes of food waste into the bins. He admits that he has a lower threshold for disposing food straight away compared to his partner Josefine. During our chat he shares what he sees as a typical occurrence in this context:

"I will say, this here, we won't do anything with it. While she will say, that right there, I will bring with me for lunch tomorrow. Then she doesn't bring it along, and it gets thrown away later."

The road towards the waste bin is laid with good intentions, as Josefine's intention and actual practice differs. When we checked the contents of their fridge together, a discussion about how to make use of the leftovers from fish-meals ensued. Georg admits that leftovers of fish, which they eat several times a week, are particularly difficult to make use of. Jon also expressed frustrations about this. In addition to the common stay of ripening in the fridge for small amounts of fish, Georg also mentioned some apples he had thrown away earlier. They originally intended to make apple pie of them, but they never got around to it so they were thrown away at a later stage when they had gotten wrinkly. Now back to the fish, as Georg explains more in detail:

Georg: "Fish is usually put in the fridge where it matures for two-three days…then it gets thrown away.

Ant: Is there something particular about fish then?

Georg: No… yes, maybe a bit special for fish. An attempt will perhaps be made, to make it into a kind of lunch, or a small warm meal for the weekend.

Ant: And regarding the fish, what could have been the solution you think?

Georg: I guess one could have made gratinated fish or...what it usually ends up with is that…there is a little bit to make a dish out of it. Then you kind of have to buy a bit more, and then a part of it [the meal] is cooked, and some is not. Then it [the leftovers] ends up in a kind of limbo…and then I go to buy something completely new."

Like Svein and Ingeborg did previously, Georg points to the regular ripening ritual, the practice also well-known from the studies of Evans (2011, 2012b) in the UK and by Müller Hval (2012) in Norway. Evans (2012b:1130) labels this phenomenon as a "two-stage holding process". This means a certain period of ripening, typically in the fridge or freezer, before disposal. This ritual disguises and deflects the moral element surrounding the disposal of edible food. It simplifies the justification of the final decision of disposal. The food will be less desirable and of reduced quality, perceived as inedible due to an increased health risk of illness, or that it has indeed crossed the threshold and gone off. This ritualised practice has traits of an habituated act of managing a continuous excessive flow of food. Georg, Jon and Ingeborg all told me explicitly how this took place in their households, e.g. with leftovers of fish, statements confirmed through observation.

There is also a social component. After the initial good intention: "might find use for it" or "have it for lunch" and a period of storage in freezer or fridge, the leftovers reach the point of social or cultural obsolescence (Evans ibid.). For many foodstuffs, like dry bread or wrinkled apples e.g., this stage occurs before it actually becomes inedible based on health risk. As argued above, a stage of social inedibility of leftovers, at least outside the close family sphere (Cappellini and Parsons 2013), is reached before the food becomes actually inedible or risky from a health perspective. Not everything is fit to serve guests.

Through the extended stay in the fridge, freezer or other storage facilities, the moral ideal of not wasting food unnecessarily is circumvented, as the food after a period of ripening inevitably moves towards the category of unfit for human consumption. The category of these leftovers is then clearly defined. It is inedible, and has left any liminal or negotiable stage it might have occupied previously (Douglas 1966). We see how

Georg refers to the leftovers of fish as “in limbo” above. This “two-stage holding process” (Evans 2011, 2012b) can be interpreted as a ritual, a rite de passage (Van Gennep 1960 [1909]). It is a process to smoothen the transition of edible food towards its new status as waste. In this manner, it lowers the threshold to dispose the leftovers into the bin, a threshold that initially, during the cleaning-up process after the meal, was higher.

When it comes to fish in particular though, contrast the above practices of Georg to the practice of Erika. She belongs to the generation previous to Georg and Josefine. She had an established routine where she put the leftovers of fish in the same plastic bag in the freezer. Afew fish-meals later, they would have enough to make gratinated fish out of it. Still, Georg reveals above that he knows this trick. He just lacks the practical details and establishing the actual practice. Interestingly, it appears like Georg just doesn’t consider using the freezer. Consequently, the leftovers are left in a limbo, and later discarded. The use of the world limbo can be interpreted to reflect the “in betwixt and between” (Turner 1964) status of the leftovers, as they have entered a liminal phase on their way to becoming waste. It could also refer to the practical side of handling of leftovers, as they have just been part of one meal, and no real plan or idea of what to use them for afterwards exist. What meal they can now be a part of isn’t clear and they are left in limbo. Such a practical limbo can for instance also occur when the amount of leftovers from a meal is not enough to constitute a full meal, even for one person. Typically, this could be when there is enough rice, but not anything else to go with it, or when the kind of food is not suitable for an evening snack. A slice of pizza might be a suitable snack, whereas a piece of fried or poached fish might not be. Jorunn mentions this as a practical challenge, as she finds it hard to make use of leftovers unless you plan much stricter. She says that there are often leftovers in their household, but not enough of all the ingredients to constitute a full meal. For instance, there might be lots of potatoes left, but only one piece of chicken. It is not a full dish for one person. One has to cook more chicken for it to become a full meal, and since it then takes a similar amount of time to make a completely new dish, such temptations present themselves. This shows how food as a resource is not scarce, but how factors like time and taste appear more decisive. I asked household members if no leftovers got thrown away straight after a meal, perhaps with the exception being if there is only a tiny bit of rice left or if there is something they know they can’t or won’t use. Their responses made up to a list of exceptions, a list that grew longer as we discussed the issue of leftovers further. They remembered numerous exceptions to their rule.

In the continuation of this discussion on leftovers, Jorunn arrives at the conclusion that it is easier to estimate how much food to make when the ingredient is already a defined piece or portion in itself, like a loin or filet of fish or a chicken breast filet. It is more challenging for her to estimate how much rice, pasta or how much stew or soup to make. In the interview with Georg, he explained that he finds that cheap leftovers like potatoes, rice or pasta has a lower threshold for being thrown away straight after dinner is over. The way some of the households value leftovers is linked directly to the purchasing price of said foodstuff, a method of valuation that strongly influences practices of disposal.

Georg and Josefine's two freezers are also in the basement. Georg says they are not used very often. It seem they are not quite fully integrated into the everyday cycle of food management, the regular daily meals. He only mentions the freezer being accessed during weekends and special occasions when they are cooking something particular, or when they have forgotten to shop. This fits in with the observation that food often gets lost or forgotten in their household in the well-stacked freezer and fridge. The end result is that food gets wasted unnecessary. The physical constraint, the limited space in the freezer or fridge, could of course put a constraint on practices of handling of leftovers (Cappellini & Parsons 2013). And as we will discover later in this chapter, the distance to the freezer and where it is placed in the domicile actually plays a part here, not just its size, model or how full it is.

Expiry dates

Expiry dates is a topic that quickly surfaces in conversations about food waste as an explanation. Almost instinctively expiry dates get much of the blame for unnecessary food waste on a general level in Norway today. The households in the study relate quite differently to the expiry dates in terms of their own food management. But before we go into the household practices related to expiry dates, I will present the official regulatory framework of such labeling of food.

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority (Mattilsynet) is the official body responsible for the labeling of food. It is mandatory for pre-packed food to be labeled with expiry dates, with just a few exceptions[159]. There are two different categories for the labeling of expiry dates: "best before" and "last day of consumption". "Best before"

[159] Exceptions are fresh bread and baked foods usually consumed within 24 hours, fresh fruit and vegetables, salt, sugar, vines and liquor.

applies to food that is not so perishable (like flour, rice, yoghurt, coffee etc.), and the date refers to how long the foodstuff will keep without losing some of its quality. “Last day of consumption” is for foodstuffs that are perishable and can cause health risks due to this after a short time or if stored incorrectly. This includes fresh fish, chicken, minced meat, meat cuttings, offal, raw sausages etc. It is also mandatory to print information about correct storage on these products. It is important to note that the dates refer to the specific characteristics of the foodstuff and its quality, but only if they are stored according to the instructions and for un-opened packaging.[160] Expiry dates are set by the food-producers.

In 2011-2012 there were indications in Norwegian mainstream media that many did not actually know the differences between the two categories of expiry dates. It was stated that this could be a factor behind unnecessary food waste, as people would throw away food that was actually edible due to a lack of knowledge about the labelling. As a response, information was distributed and presented to the public[161]. This is also reflected in narratives about expiry dates that I collected. We will soon see how a lack of sensory competence to judge the edibility of food and correct storage also are factors leading to unnecessary food waste.

During our main interview conducted in their living room, Nina admits to have changed her practices after she learned the difference between the markings “best before” and “last day of consumption”. After she was made aware of the differences, she says she throws away less food. In her case, knowledge picked up from a programme on TV was decisive. Nina and others I spoke with also mentioned such experiences. Nina claims that some of her friends even throw food away before the expiry date is reached: “They just look at the date, they don’t smell or taste.” Jorunn also changed her approach after learning more about the expiry dates. She then understood that “they weren’t absolutes”. Perhaps this is something you would expect them to know beforehand through their upbringings, but a strong focus on health related risks in the media could be a factor here.

In the waste diaries there are a few entries where the expiry date has been put down as the reason for disposal, and the expiry dates often appeared as reasons during

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160 http://www.mattilsynet.no/mat_og_vann/merking_av_mat/generelle_krav_til_merking_av_mat/holdbarhetsmerking_paa_matvarer.2711 Accessed: March 13, 2014

161 http://www.aftenbladet.no/nyheter/lokalt/Best-for-og-siste-forbruksdag_-kan-du-forskjellen-2936518.html#.U0_NTVf27sY Accessed: 17. April 2014.

processes of tidying up in the fridges and freezers. When noted in the diaries, it referred to disposing of meat cuttings, condiments and sauces, as a result of tidying up and assessing household stock. Overall there weren't many entries in the waste diaries where expiry dates were put down as the reasons for disposal. The lists were dominated by fresh food without the expiry dates, like bread, vegetables, fruit and leftovers from dinners. Reasons given were just that the food had gone off. With food marked with expiry dates, like dairy products, typical reasons were: "had been forgotten", "only partially used, and then gone off", "become sour", "became mouldy" or similar. The top categories of food wasted according to the diaries were bread and baked products, vegetables and fruit and leftovers. This correlates with the results from the surveys conducted in Norwegian households in the extended "Food Waste"-project (Hanssen & Shakenda 2010, 2011, Hanssen & Møller 2013).

Erika claims that expiry dates are treated just as guidelines in their household:

Erika: "I don't throw anything just because the date is expired"

Ant: So, is there anything you throw away before the date has expired then?

Erika: "Not as long as it looks normal…"

Her comment indicates that the date is just an indication to her, not an absolute. She explains that her own knowledge and her senses will also guide her practices, and she can also throw things away before the expiry date if it looks or smells bad. As I observed their habits of food provisioning, they would sometimes buy food close to the expiry date, just to freeze it instantly when they got home for later use. Erika is well aware that the way food is stored, and if the packaging has been opened or not, is crucial to for the expiry date to still be valid. This kind of knowledge might seem elementary, but it is not necessarily present in all of the households of study. There were several admissions of a lack of knowledge to judge the edibility of certain foodstuffs or correct storage. The knowledge about correct storage and longevity to maintain the edibility of food, and also the knowledge to judge current edibility, is crucial in the process of avoiding food waste. Irrespective of this, the excess of affordable food has rendered much of this knowledge less crucial for the generally well-off households in Norway. Notwithstanding, the expiry dates holds much relevance due to its role as tools to avoid risks of illness and contamination, or as juridical tool for the supermarkets or food producers to manage responsibility.

The Abstraction of Knowledge

Roger told me a story about what he saw as loss of knowledge in the younger generation. I think he referred to his daughter in this case. I am not sure, as my notes were inadequate on this occasion. This younger woman wanted to dispose of some fish, as its surface was slimy. Roger said it wasn't slimy like fish is when it has gone off and are becoming sour. This was only the usual moistness on the surface of the fish, according to him. The young woman did not have sufficient knowledge to decide if the fish was edible or not. Due to this, edible fish risks getting wasted due to lack of fundamental tactile and sensory knowledge.

I also discussed the freshness of fish with Jorunn in one of our more informal conversations about food waste. She admitted to not knowing when fish is fresh or not, but prefers to ask at the supermarket or fishmonger how old the fish is, especially if they are making sushi at home. Jorunn also says she decides which fishmonger to go to dependent on what others have said about the quality of fish there. The knowledge she has is thus not first hand, but based on the reputation of the store. It is interesting to note that the knowledge is situated elsewhere, through other peoples experiences and advice. It is also interesting that the evaluation she depends on for her decisions is of the stores in general, and not the fish in stock. Her knowledge, if we can indeed call it that, is in a sense quite abstract and removed from the matter she plans to eat. She also has somewhat limited possibilities to evaluate this knowledge. However, if the fish actually smells foul, she can.

One can become dependent on the expiry dates, as previously common knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about the edibility of food isn't present anymore. Like Kaisa said during our interview – "I am so used to that date. If there isn't any date on it, I get very insecure. It makes me want to throw it away." As hinted to above as well, the use of expiry dates can entail an increased dependency on other people's knowledge, on knowledge of a more abstract and detached kind. In Jorunn's case, the lack of personal, embodied knowledge of a sensory and tactile kind creates a dependence on knowledge on a more abstract level. This kind of knowledge can be expiry dates or written or oral descriptions of how fresh and edible fish is or isn't supposed to smell, feel, look and taste. Unless she also attempts to use her senses to judge the edibility of fish, in addition to the advice of others, she won't accumulate the knowledge through experience either.

Deciding what is edible or not can sometimes be a tricky task. But you can tell by the smell if fish has started to rot, says Anders during our main interview held in his

living room. He has learnt this from his parents and grandparents, and by a bit of trial and error:

> *"I smell. If it has started to rot, you can smell it. It gets a certain…[he gestures with his hands as he cannot express it in words] then it is just to throw it away, because you can get ill as well. As a rule though, if food smells, fish and all those things, it is nothing dangerous, even if it is old."*

This sounds contradictory, so I asked Anders to try and be more descriptive so that the difference between the smell of the fish "starting to rot" and the one he describes as "nothing dangerous." He then starts talking about meat that has gone off, before continuing with fish:

> *"When we have been out on fishing trips, bringing with us meat. Then it has been hot and wet and the like. Then you can see that the meat is not all well, and it smells too, not mould, but…when the fish is a bit rancid and dry. It gets dry¸ like. You can also sense it by the smell, and you can feel that all the moist is gone, if you have not packed it properly and it has been lying too long in the freezer."*

It seems plausible to me that Anders has the necessary knowledge to judge if fish is edible or not. But still, the vagueness and his search for words to describe the smell, the feel and taste underline how tactile this knowledge is. When discussing the same topic with Georg, he also claims to have the necessary knowledge to judge the edibility of meat:

> *Georg: "With meat, I know that I can check that with smell and colour. I had a great-grandfather who was a butcher, and who was…you know…that thing with expiry dates he thought that was some bloody nonsense. He was very clear and concise when he said that these dates were there to get us to throw away food and buy new, instead of eating what we had. I don't think there is a restaurant here in town that doesn't serve meat that hasn't gone past the date. It creates…it gets tender. Tasty. I have a very relaxed attitude towards this.*
>
> *Ant: And you know when it is and isn't? Where did you learn this?*
>
> *Georg: Eh, yes. It isn't…I learnt it at home. Smell, a kind of feeling. It is hard to define. You feel it a bit when you rinse the meat under water…and feel that it becomes a bit sticky…on your fingers, that you get a bit of…that it hangs a little…becomes a bit glue-ish. A bit sticky…after I have rinsed it under water.*

That it becomes a bit… There lies a bit meat juice there. You have to rinse it. Because if you feel and smell it, then it smells bad so…

Ant: What about fish? Do you have a test there?

Georg: Nah, fish... Either it is frozen, and then I thaw it and then we eat it. It doesn't occur that I put frozen fish in the refrigerator, and that I thaw it there without using it. And when I have been out fishing, it is put in the fridge and it lies there. Fish you want to eat as fresh as possible. You know, I was out fishing with the boys here, and it was eaten within one hour. Meat is more often kept for a while. What is most difficult is chicken. It is hard to decide by smell. It smells anyway. It is so industrialised that…I do have a lower threshold for throwing away chicken. I think that there are dangerous bacteria, can be dangerous bacteria in it. …it is during the barbeque season that I buy a bit of large batches of chicken-breast filets. Then it gets used more. Otherwise I just buy two-three filets, because that is enough."

Similar to Anders, Georg has a slight difficulty in expressing how he knows and decides between edible or non-edible food. Again this indicates how tactile this knowledge is, and that the level of abstraction towards language can be a challenge. A common factor referred to above, and in other household conversations, is how something that is not edible smells bad. Per definition, there isn't necessarily any causality between smell and risks of illness or contamination, although you would expect some correlation. Mary Douglas does not mention smell much in her discussions in Purity and Danger (1966). She refers to what is dirty and what is clean, and how what is considered waste must be controlled and put in its proper place, away from food. For her, the context mostly decides if something is considered waste. As soon as it has gone off, the chicken filet sitting in the fridge is "out of place", and belongs in another place away from the edible. Georg, having a different threshold when it comes to judging the edibility of chicken, exemplifies how information in the media about dangerous bacteria like salmonella has influenced the daily food practices in households and the perceptions of risk.

The statement from Georg about his high levels of knowledge and his relaxed attitude differs from his story about the disposal of some nice wild-lamb's meat. He had forgotten to mark the meat properly with date and year before putting it in the freezer. When he took the meat out of the freezer at a later date, he was insecure and he could not remember if the meat was one of two years old. Due to this, he threw it away without any attempt to use his knowledge to decide if it was edible or not. If we follow Douglas (ibid.), the indecisive status of the meat represented something dangerous,

perhaps more in a symbolical and cognitive manner, threatening the cosmological order (O'Brien 2008) than in terms of the materiality of the meat and the risks of illness. It was considered to be in a liminal state (Van Gennep 1960 [1909], Turner 1964), as Georg was uncertain if it was edible or not. Consequently, he separated it from the perceived edible food still in the freezer and threw it away. Perhaps Georg decided to be extra careful as it was to be served to the whole family, including their two young boys? Nevertheless, this shows a gap between what is stated in discourse when discussing his knowledge about meat and his actual practices of disposal.

Both Georg and Anders' comments about "a relaxed attitude" and "not dangerous" also hints at a cultural undercurrent where one should not be too picky towards food, that you should at least try to eat what is on the margins. Their comments are a bit similar to Kåre's exercise of trying to finish the large batch of sausages he had bought, even if they had started to go off. Kåre, gladly stated that he "had eaten everything, everywhere" and claimed he had never been ill due to this. It is possible that this is a cultural trait that still holds some influence. It could be a partially display of masculinity, partially the ideal of making use of food regardless of it being on the margins, perhaps especially as meat holds a higher status due to previous historical scarcity.

Order, Chaos and Waste as the Remains of Practices

We have touched upon how Mary Douglas' (1966) perspective mainly focused on how dirt and pollution are cultural categories necessary to uphold order, rather than physical realties (O'Brien 2008) and not really digging into the materiality of the dirty and clean. As long as the matter is put in its place, order remains. But as the discussion around the entropy of food (E.g. Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971], Bateson 2000 [1972]) reminds us, all matter inevitably moves towards decay, and dirt is just a sticky reminder of mortality (McLaughlin 1971). The cultural and social contamination and consequence of urinating in public or serving guests leftovers are of a different dimension compared to accidentally drinking contaminated water or eating foul meat. However, these dimensions can also intersect on occasions, as the physical, material dimensions can also reveal a lack of knowledge that can have social consequences.

It is important to keep in mind that Douglas (1966) did not present a completely culturally relative argument regarding the borders between the clean and the unclean (Eriksen 2011:19). That would have been according to the trends in anthropology at the

time. Rather, she found that all societies have detailed methods for the handling of bodily wastes like sweat, urine, faeces etc., and she actually used this as a vantage point for her thinking about waste. Scanlan (2005) presents an argument in line with the principle of entropy as he puts the analysis of waste beyond the temporal domain of specific cultures. He reminds us that everything is eventually reduced to the condition of dirt (ibid:43), his main point being that modern western culture has a "will to order". He states that this is a cleansing and refining impulse which will also present a spectral double; garbage (ibid:58). The materiality of garbage represents a shadow object world, a leftover of life in a sense. This is along the same lines as the argument of Rathje & Cullen (2001) where social and cultural traits are reflected in the material waste of these societies. O'Brien (2008) goes on to state that modern societies remain blind to the reality that waste entails, as they have almost perfected their means to forget it. This is a parallel to how contemporary households are distanced from their waste, they are in a sense alienated (Marx (1988 [1932]).

But the scale of the remnant matter might now grow into an inescapable contemporary challenge. If not in a material sense of placing the physical waste, certainly in an intellectual manner as the material remains of individual everyday activity on a global scale cannot be marginalized and hidden in the sense of Douglas' notion (O'Brien 2008:143). We might even struggle to put all this "matter out of place" in its right place, and this forces us to rethink our practices when the unwanted and hidden resurfaces. For example, the oceans of plastic waste in the Pacific Ocean, or toxin levels in sea mammals and fish, are not static, but always shifting and moving like the global flows of food and waste today.

Waste is clearly not just a contemporary phenomenon, even if contemporary lifestyles bring it to the fore. Waste can be linked to the development level of civilization according to Rathje and Cullen (2001:38), although not in terms of the use of non-biodegradable materials, a category that is not a contemporary invention. Stone-tools, pottery, bones, shells and other matter are remains from ancient times still present to this day. There are of course different concerns related to industrially produced materials like Styrofoam, synthetic rubbers, plastic, plutonium etc. which has been disposed. In nature, these materials stand out and appear even more out of place compared to less processed and industrialized waste made out of wood, stone and shells. Rathje and Cullen (ibid.) also stress how waste, sacrifice and the disposal of perfectly usable objects appear to have been present in ancient cultures like the Maya's and is not just a modern phenomenon. This is a reminder of Bataille´s (1991) analysis of sacrifice and war amongst the Aztecs, and his argument of the ever presence of waste.

However, considering the scales of waste due to the current population levels, coupled with the current developments in waste levels per individual in the western world spreading out globally, we can assume that keeping things orderly and avoiding chaos might become increasingly challenging in the future.

Disposing to Reinstate Order

While having a chat with my friend Josef about generational differences and the urbanization in the North, he introduced me to a local expression in Troms, one that was probably not uncommon elsewhere along Coastal-Norway either. This was "å bære nokka neddi fjæra" (to carry something down to the seashore). This was done so that the autumn- and winter-storms would pull whatever you wanted rid of out from the seashore and past the shallows. It was typically done with old, cracked iron stoves or similar objects. This was a disposal practice common in the countryside. It was a simple way of disposing of something unwanted and making sure it was out of sight, compared to burying something into the ground. Order is reinstated (Scanlan 2005) by removing things, making sure that what is in Douglas's sense (1966) "out of place" is out of sight.

Disposing to obtain or reinstate a sense of order is a practice that I experienced through observation and which was also narrated in interviews. Members in several households expressed that tidying up in the freezer or fridge, a process which includes disposing of food, was one way of regaining control and order. Different levels of tidying up appear: The complete overhaul where one cleans the freezer or fridge and goes through the whole content, evaluating everything in the process, or just a quick tidying up and throwing out bits and pieces when returning from the store with new foodstuffs to store. When household members administer their stock and clean out their storage spaces, some of them describe it as an act that gives them the opportunity to "start from scratch", to "return on top of things", or "to be in control with what is in stock". Afterwards they also feel they know that all the food they have in stock is edible.

Ellen and Ivar, a student couple in their early 20's and one of the youngest households who took part, explain their motivations behind tidying up during our interview. We were discussing how, why and when they tidied up in their food inventory. Ellen said she used to tidy up regularly when she lived alone, whereas now, Ivar is the one who does it and she has no control what goes on:

> *Ivar: "I actually throw away…and things which I leave are actually glasses, and boxes with sour cream, crème fraiche and such. Otherwise, if I see that things like*

toppings and eggs, things which haven't gone off anyway, but which might be edible [they are kept].

Ellen: I like to tidy up and throw away in general. I can be someone who says: Hmm, can this be thrown away? To obtain a bit more space and order and such…Yes, the girl I used to live with, I used to throw away her things. No, she didn't mind, she was just happy, as she wasn't able to throw away anything at all. She was like, when something really started to smell in the fridge, I had to throw everything. We had each our vegetable drawer, so when I opened hers one day, it was all completely liquid in there when I came back from the summer holiday.

Ant: How often do you do this?

Ellen: If I get a new fridge, I am going to tidy once a week, and clean it."

Ellen's explicit statement of the practice of tidying up as a means to reinstate control, to obtain a bit of order in an increasingly chaotic stock of food, is of course relevant to our discussion of the dimensions of entropy (Bateson 2000 [1972], Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971]). It is relevant for the material dimension of entropy through the decay of matter, and also in relation to the ever recurring need to tidying up to resist the unavoidable spiral of increasing chaos as things get "in a muddle" as Bateson says. Her story about the vegetable drawer at her friends place displays both of these aspects of entropy comprehensively.

When discussing tidying up practices to avoid the ever-approaching chaos of entropy and decay of food, Douglas's (1966) concerns over matter out of place are highly relevant. We can see this through a process of evaluation of foodstuffs and their thresholds (Van Gennep 1960 [1909], Turner 1964), the categorizations and the discussions and discarding of liminal or marginal foodstuffs. Rather than disposing of Douglas' view (ibid.) as a culturally relative one with only marginal concerns for the material dimensions of food, this case of tidying up practices shows how the inherent material characteristics of food and its temporality are intertwined, to use Tim Ingold's term (See e.g. 2000, 2007) from his critical discussions on the nature-culture dichotomy. The cultural categorizations of foodstuffs are needed to maintain order and stability and to manage risks. After all, food will become part of the human body when consumed.

Additionally, with a cautious approach and not putting too much emphasis on these individual statements, it is quite interesting the way Ellen and Ivar express themselves above. During the actual fridge and freezer rummage with Ellen and Ivar, it

was clear that their small fridge was stacked to the brim. When evaluating food from their fridge, Ellen was asking herself: "Can this be disposed of?" - with an explicit aim of obtaining order and more storage space. Ivar follows up on this by actually making a point in mentioning what he does *not* throw away, not what he does throw away. They went through their stock with an approach as if something *needed* to be disposed of as it had gone off, or that the food was past the expiry date. This contrasted what was the norm in other households, examining if something still had use. For Ellen and Ivar it seemed like their inclination was to examine if their food had reached a disposable stage, as in looking for reasons to dispose it rather than exploring possibilities to keep hold of it. This manner of expression could of course be a consequence shaped by the occasion of tidying up is one of a ritual discarding of unwanted foodstuffs. Nevertheless, it still struck me as an unusual expression in the context of evaluating their inventory compared to how the other households expressed themselves in a similar situation. This is as far I can go without ascribing or projecting intentions to Ellen and Ivar. My data does not allow me to go any further.

At the time, order also had to be re-instated after an unscheduled weekend trip to Ivar's parents in Narvik. This was confirmed by multiple entries in the waste diary. Ivar did not pay attention to what he had in the fridge before embarking on this trip, so most of the fresh vegetables they had in store became inedible and had to be thrown away. In Ellen´s case there is still quite a bit of food left in her old flat and in the fridge. She says that everything there will have to be thrown away.

Rituals of Replacement

Disposal practices to reinstate a certain kind of control or order are not just a rare occurrence. They are also done as a part of the everyday routine. Georg´s pre-cooking ritual was mentioned in the last chapter. It is common procedure to tidy up the kitchen a bit and clear up some workspace before commencing with the cooking, to bring out the ingredients and some of the tools needed for cooking the upcoming meal. But simultaneously, as Georg is getting ready to cook, he also dips into the organic waste bin disposing of more and more food waste. He is throwing away leftovers from earlier meals, like breakfast, and fruit that has been sitting in a bowl on the kitchen table for a few days. Nothing too special at first glance, but this fruit is then replaced with new, fresher fruit that he has just bought. The majority of the apples that go straight into the food waste bin, and quickly fills it up, are still edible. Only one of the four or five that were thrown away appears to have a couple of brown spots. In the ten-day waste diary,

one of the entries noted was when Georg threw away two full green bags of food waste, consisting only of apples, oranges and bananas. Georg marked down "old, we buy too much" as the reason for the fruit being thrown away. This corresponds with the explanations given when he threw fruit away when he was preparing dinner for the family. "I don't do this with a happy face", he said to me while throwing the fruit away. But still, there seemed to be little considerations of alternative practices with the aim of avoiding such waste, either in the short-term, as in making an apple pie or jam, or more long-term; there were no subsequent actions taken towards changing the routines of provisioning in the household. He knows they buy more fruit than is consumed, and there is a mismatch between the longevity of the fruit, the amount bought and the consumption levels in the households. We have discussed this as the rhythms of everyday life and the rhythms of food (Evans 2012a). Additionally, there is an expectation of freshness that Georg and Josefine applies to fruit and to food in general. This is also an instrumental factor behind fruit ending up as unnecessary food waste.

This practice of replacing edible food with fresher food also applies to his homemade bread. Usually Georg bakes bread on Sundays. Come Monday, they usually have some of the bread made the Sunday before left. The oldest bread is then thrown into the food waste bin. Entries in their waste diary here state: "Made new and better one yesterday" and "Baked a new one, would not have been used". Even if the bread is homemade, and he has taken the time and effort to bake it, it still appears to get disposed of weekly without much fuzz. Food is disposed of when fresher alternatives are at hand. This also happened when he was unpacking the shopping one time. Georg was searching for space in the fridge for the bag of carrots he had just bought, and then discovered that they already had two bags of carrots in the bottom drawer of the fridge. During his fieldwork, Evans (2013:1131) also discovered identical disposal practices to make room in the fridge for food that had just been bought. The practice has similarities to the Georg's excessive wastefulness when he throws away food from an overstocked freezer to obtain the necessary space for some meat he has just bought. However, in that case the motivations appeared to be borne more out of the physical constraints of lack of space, rather than a wish to reset their food inventory to only contain what was perceived as edible, reinstating a sense of order and control.

Cleaning up before commencing the cooking phase can also have a wholly different motivation, not one based in symbolic interactionism and functionalist grounded categorisations related to Douglas's (1966) "matter out of place". We should keep in mind a more materially oriented perspective. For instance, if the kitchen resembles a biological war zone, overwhelmed with bacteria, fungus and other

unspeakables[162], hygienic concerns over the risks of illness might be legitimate. Clearing up before cooking can hold a high degree of temptation.

Technology, Knowledge and Practices of Storage and Disposal

The standard equipment and technology available to the households was presented in the previous chapter. I will now focus specifically on the use of storage technology in relation to the disposal phase. The role of domestic technology in relation to the household practices of food management is important and complex (E.g. Shove & Southerton 2000, Pink 2004, Silva 2010, and Jacobsen 2014). In terms of topics, I will touch upon the spatiality of the fridge and freezer internally, but also in terms of placement in the domicile. I will also look at storage technology and food in terms of temporality and space, the speed of circulation, and the element of trust in storage technology. These were all topics that materialized themselves during the maturing process of working with my empirical material.

In addition to cupboards, drawers, fridges and freezers, the use of other kinds of storage technology, like a range of containers and wrappings, cold storage rooms, cellars are also considered as storage alternatives. Then there is the local seasonal possibility of placing foodstuffs outside during the winter. The bulk of the data this part is based on was obtained during fridge and freezer rummages I did in the households and related discussions that surfaced both during and after these activities.

The Fridge and Freezer Rummages

Fridge and freezer rummages were as a rule conducted at the end of formal interviews or as a follow-up after going through waste diaries together with the household members. I would ask them if we could have a look in their fridge and freezers together, without them knowing about it in advance. We then discussed what they had in there, and if they felt they were in control of the inventory. This basically included knowing what was in there, and roughly how long it had been there or if it was edible or not. Usually, before opening the fridge or freezer, I would also ask them to list up in advance what it contained. There were one or two exceptions to this approach. In these cases the rummages were just done spontaneously when I was visiting the household and

[162] See e.g. Jacobsen (2014) for a recent Norwegian study.

hanging out. I will now highlight some of the most interesting findings from the rummages, with a view of uncovering dynamics behind household food waste generation.

Disposal and Disappearing into the Fridge

During an interview with Jorunn and Kjell we were discussing different kinds of leftovers, how some of these were easily thrown away while others were kept. This was down to them being perceived and treated as being more valuable:

> *Ant: "We were talking about leftovers, that you threw some of them and saved others. Is there any difference in terms of what kind of food it is?*
>
> *Kjell: We had that when we bought that lightly salted pork. We made a stew which just…*
>
> *Jorunn: The strange stew?*
>
> *Kjell: Yes.*
>
> *Jorunn: But it is in the freezer.*
>
> *Kjell: Is it? But there was another one which stood…it just disappeared into the fridge, so we surely had to throw it. It was perhaps another time?*
>
> *Jorunn: Yes, I think that was something else.*
>
> *Kjell: We are a bit dependent on that we can see it…because if it is over-stocked in the fridge, then the box with the leftovers from dinner is not visible. Then you forget it the next day, and then suddenly it had gone off. Exclusive leftovers - that is a point too.*
>
> *Jorunn: How good it was? Haha!*
>
> *Kjell: Now we had pizza, which would not be wasted.*
>
> *Ant: The strange stew, what was that?*
>
> *Jorunn: Haha!*
>
> *Kjell: You tried to sell it to me the other day.*

Jorunn: Yes, I didn't sell it to you very well…haha! It was, I bought something at Eide Handel[163]*. I think it was salted, or was it smoked? Because it was some kind of meat that was on special offer. So we were going to make a stew, with spinach, coconut milk and curry…so then I thought, it might fit well with that kind of meat in a stew.*

Kjell: But we didn't know it was salty. Because then you won't taste…

Jorunn: It didn't really fit. But I have made the same thing with chicken, and that was good! Haha!

Kjell: But we did make an effort…

Jorunn: We ate it, but when we had made it. I thought it was good that we had made a lot, but the leftovers ended up in the fridge. I tried to get Kjell to eat them. First I suggested that he could eat them when I was away for a week…but…

Kjell: We will see…if we at one time need the box…then maybe we…

Jorunn: It is nice to have things that are ready to eat. It is practical."

While we heard about the strange stew in chapter 6, this is another interesting exchange with several other points to discuss. First, let us look at the expression "disappearing into the fridge". This is a problem that Jorunn and Kjell share with several of the other households – food which "disappears" as Jorunn says, or gets lost behind other things in the fridge, only to re-appear later when it isn´t edible anymore. I find this to be a very good metaphor illustrating why food gets wasted, as the fridge is overbooked, overstocked. There is too much food in the fridge and a loss of control occurs. Due to this, it all "gets in a muddle" to follow Bateson (2000 [1972]). I interpret the disappearance metaphor as another expression of a loss of control of the household food resources, with an end result of unnecessary food waste. Later, I asked them to expand on this statement and what they actually meant when something was "disappeared into the fridge". In the end, this conversation cited below, turned into a dialogue about when they last cleaned out of the fridge - one late night before they were heading off on vacation.

When Jorunn and Kjell then showed me their fridge, Jorunn was quick to point out that it hadn't been tidied up before my visit. This is a comment which I also experienced a couple of times in the other households when I asked for their permission

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[163] Eide Handel is a well assorted, quality focused supermarket just outside of the city of Tromsø more on the expensive end of the scale.

to have a look. The response illustrates the cultural ideal[164] of keeping the home nice and tidy. This appeared to be of extra important, as they knew that I, a virtual stranger, was there to discuss their food waste practices. The dialogue between Jorunn and Kjell has several interesting elements:

Ant: "So, can we have a look at the fridge then?

Jorunn: Yes. [laughing] At least it hasn't been tidied up before you came!

[All three of us go into the kitchen and they open the fridge.]

Kjell: So, there are a few glassed stacked here [Commenting on what is on one shelf in the fridge-door].

Jorunn: And a bit of jam - orange marmalade, which we don't really use that much.

Kjell: That has to be something my mother has left behind.

Jorunn: Yes, that is what I mean, that on shelf there, there are things which…I can't really keep track on, which might be left there for a while.

Ant: What do you mean, being left for a while?

Jorunn: It might be things which you don't use that often, and then it's like it hasn't moved. Then you forget it.

Ant: Any surprises here, things which are ready to…

Jorunn: If you look a little bit further in here, I think there might be some of that, but, but further down here, I have complete control.

Jorunn: We have tidied…

Kjell: To get room for…

Jorunn: No, we tidied before we went away.

Kjell: Yes, and we had to find room for that one…[a large pan/bowl with some leftovers in it from what I can see]

Jorunn: Oh well. Yes, at least there isn't anything there which lies behind everything and is rotting away. That is ok."

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[164] We have discussed this ideal in Chapter 6.

This little dialogue is crammed with interesting points. Some of them could also be observed in other households I studied. Like previously, Jorunn first describes how some things just “disappear into the fridge”, as it is overstocked. Then she points out that some things are harder to find as “there is no movement” on one particular shelf or area of the fridge. As an example, she mentions how Kjell could not find something that was sitting there “right in front of him”. To illustrate her point further, she mentions this “special shelf” where the goods do not circulate as much; there is little movement. She says she seldom uses what sits in those glasses or jars, and this makes it harder for her to keep track of its edibility. On the whole, she finds that a lack of control is common with food that is seldom used. In the households where I experienced similarities to Jorunn and Kjell’s “messy shelf”, the shelf was for instance filled with sauces, condiments, sun-dried tomatoes, olives, feta cheese, jam and jellies etc. Jon mentioned different kinds of sauces he tried and some mint-jelly he bought for a special dish at Christmas, which afterwards was left to linger on the shelf.

This shows us that there are different tempi of circulation in different areas of the fridge, areas where certain kinds of food are kept. This appears to affect the focus of the users and their ability to keep track of their food, and as a likely consequence this influences the probabilities of food waste. I found that it is not just food with short longevity that run the risk of being wasted, but also food with longer longevity, consumed seldom. It slips out of mind, out of focus, often in over-stacked fridges, as the household members are not using these foodstuffs often. Hence, they can then become temporarily invisible in a sense, and when they are re-discovered and considered for the everyday food cycle again, the food might not be edible anymore. Jorunn also makes a comment about “matter out of place” (Douglas 1966). They don’t want something that has gone off, lying there rotting in the back of the fridge. This becomes messy, both materially and in terms of categories, and does not belong there. Throwing away inedible food, or anomalies that cannot be exactly categorized as edible or not, is often a part of the process of reinstating order by cleaning out freezers or fridges.

The Double Fridge Rummage

Jon and I did two fridge rummages in short succession together. During the first one he didn’t dispose of anything. He just gave his opinion on a few of the items that he doubted they would end up eating. He commented on the glass of mint-jelly that sat on a shelf in the door. He said had bought it for Christmas, but then forgotten it:

"I bought it because it was supposedly good with lamb. I don't like it, but we bought it for others, in case some of them wanted it."

This refers to the discussion above with the "messy shelf" getting overstacked with foodstuffs seldom used. We can add the factor of other people's preferences posing challenges in terms of avoiding waste in households in general. This example also relates to the point about visitors bringing food into the household, creating uncertainty. Jorunn also refers to this above, when her mother bought orange marmalade that they don't usually eat. These are two examples of what I coined as instability factors previously. Jon then pointed to a plastic-box with peeled shrimps sitting on one of the fridge door-shelves:

"Here is something which might be a bit dodgy. But at least they are pickled."

He picks up the box, looks at it, and then puts it back. About five weeks later we go through the fridge again. This time he does dispose of a few items, some of which we discussed the first time: a glass with ginger, the mint-jelly, a couple of tubes - one with béarnaise sauce and one with mustard. The tubes weren't completely empty, but he just took them into his hand, felt their weight, and then tossed them into a waste bag. He looked at a glass of jam, one he said he didn't think they would eat during the first rummage, and then puts it back in. The pickled shrimps get thrown away, but he has eaten some of them in the meantime. Unlike last time, he now checks the expiry dates. The first time we just had a quick peek into the fridge after an interview. This could have influenced his decisions not to dispose of anything at the time. This time, it was Jon's own idea to do a fridge rummage together as he told me he planned to tidy up there and asked me if I wanted to take part. However, this does not disguise the fact that I experienced this practice several times in the households - the admittance that something was not edible or not likely to be used, but nevertheless put back in. Postponing disposal was common for Jon. I also experienced this with Jorunn and Kjell, and Ellen and Ivar:

Ellen: "Yes, that one isn't old (a tube of mayonnaise), but we didn't like it, or we found one which we like better.

Ivar: It expires the 28th of November, so it is still ok for a while, but I don't think it will be eaten. We have bought three-four new mayonnaises even if we have this one. So…we buy others. The thing is that it won't get thrown away until the date expires…"

Ivar did not offer an explanation for keeping the mayonnaise, and we moved on to other items in their fridge.

After the rummage of the fridge and the freezer of Jorunn and Kjell, I also found it interesting that most of the food they discussed and questioned if was still edible or not was just put back into the freezer. Only a couple of things were put into the kitchen sink, perhaps to be thrown away afterwards. These items were not thrown away while I was there. I also experienced something similar when conducting a freezer rummage at Svein and Ingeborg's house. Ingeborg then commented on a sole (flatfish) they have in the freezer. She told me she doesn't like sole. She knows she will not cook it for dinner, but after telling me about her dislike, she still puts it back into the freezer. Svein observed the whole discussion about the sole, without comment. Putting this food back into the freezer or fridge can here represent unresolved questions of value (Hetherington 2004). This is interesting in terms of the theories of value that I make extensive use of throughout (Graeber 2001, 2013), or states of liminality (Turner 1964). After the period of ripening which Evans (2012b) also points out, the value and status of the food becomes clarified. Entropy has pushed the matter along towards the category of inedibility, and as such, makes it more acceptable to dispose of within the current moral cultural framework. Throwing away the food later, or not in front of others, could also be a way of managing the shame associated with excessive food waste. It circumvents possible public embarrassment or confrontation. However, the fact that the household members put the food back in, could also be influenced by the ongoing interview situation. We were not in the actual process cleaning or tidying their fridges and freezers together, but just going through the contents, except the session mentioned above with Jon. That was an explicit fridge cleanup.

Glasses, tubes and boxes, in general food contained in its packaging, appears to have a higher threshold for disposal compared to food that does not come in packaging. Food without packaging that has not been re-packed can create disorder if it gets in contact with other foodstuffs. It can somehow create a mess inside the fridge. It can smell, get mushy, soggy, soft, mouldy etc. On the other hand, whether in the original packaging or re-packed, I experienced multiple examples of how containers in fridges can act like coffins of decay (Evans (2013:1132). The coffins play a part in moving the food towards the waste streams when the food inside becomes invisible and forgotten. On the other hand, containers, bags, packaging, wrappings and foils are also invaluable for preserving the food, keeping it fresh and edible longer.

Moving the Freezer

Jorunn and Kjell have a fridge and a small freezer in their apartment. The freezer is rather small (from memory, approx. 50x60x90 cm) and top-loaded. When they bought some new shelves for their guestroom, Jorunn and Kjell had to move it into the kitchen due to space constraints. The freezer is now also used partially as a bench in the kitchen. After the relocation of the freezer, Jorunn says she found it easier to use the food in it. It was easier for her to remember the freezer, as it was more visible. Due to that, it was also easier to remember what it contained. It might seem banal, but by just moving it five-six meters it appeared easier for them to care for and include the food in the freezer in their everyday food practices. The freezer was close, but it was not top-of-mind, and easy to forget. It was disconnected from the everyday routines of food preparation and planning as it was placed in a guestroom they seldom visited.

It was not so easy to include it in the daily resource cycle when it came to food preparation. It drifted out of mind, as it was not regularly involved in the daily practices. The movement of foodstuffs in and out of it was more sporadic, parallel to what Jorunn and Kjell expressed about their fridge and the circulation and movement in different shelves of it. Afterwards the freezer was visible to them where they cooked. It stood in the corner of their kitchen. The physical and mental closeness seems to be important and connected. This also relates to my argument that the increased distance to the origin of food, food production and the larger food cycle these households' experience in current urban environments can make them disconnected or alienated (Marx 1988 [1932]) as food consumers. Similarly, as can the convenient disappearance, invisibility of, and blindness towards, household waste through the presence of the services of the municipal waste management company (O'Brien 2008). The freezer in Jorunn and Kjell's household had drifted out of sight. It was disconnected from their everyday cycle of food management. But through the accidental purchase of some shelves changed that. It brought it back, increasing its influence and participation in the household food cycle. This is an indication of how physical distance can matter even within the household, and how this distance influences the mental distance or presence. The freezer was out of sight, out of mind, even if it was just in the adjacent room.

Considering that this disconnectedness was taking place within the domicile of one household, it is not difficult to imagine similar effects following the increased distances in an increasingly global food market fostering a sense of alienation (Marx 1988 [1932]) and disconnectedness of households in relation to the lager food cycle. I find that contemporary household practices of food and resource management are

increasingly disconnected from both the sources of food and food production. Additionally, people are removed from the consequences of their household practices as household waste is removed on a weekly basis by the municipal waste companies. It is also clear that the disconnectedness of the freezer from the daily food cycle in this manner lead to increased food waste in Jorunn and Kjell's household. They had limited control over what they had in stock in their freezer, and how long it had been there.

After going through their fridge together, we moved on to the top-loaded, cylinder-shaped freezer. Its shape makes it quite hard to keep track of the content, certainly towards the bottom of it. The rummage could easily be described as an archaeological excavation, uncovering older and older layers of food the deeper we dug. Here is a part of the conversation that took place while we were going through the contents of it:

Kjell: "What is that?

Jorunn: Eh, that thing has been lying there for a really long time.

Kjell: What is it?

Jorunn: I don't know.

Jorunn: You could have tidied up a bit better…

Kjell: Are you denouncing the responsibility?

Jorunn: Ha Ha! Yes!

Jorunn: Wow! Here is some jam from last time I lived in Tromsø [a year and a half ago]. How long can you eat jam?

Jorunn: This is pizza-sauce, isn't it?

Kjell: Perhaps a little bit.

Jorunn: No! It is cloudberry jam.

Jorunn: Oh well, we also have some cheese. And spring rolls. A friend of mine taught me. These are spring rolls, aren't they? Those we can just defrost. Yum!

Jorunn: Here is some smoked salmon, which my mother brought. My grandfather has smoked it.

Kjell: Is that lefse[165]? That is something my mother has brought.

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[165] Soft, traditional Norwegian flatbread.

Jorunn: One?

Kjell: Or is it a cheese? It is a cheese! He he!

Jorunn: It was good that you came by!" [to me, indicating that they now got to tidy up their freezer due to my visit].

When we compared what we found with what they originally thought was in their freezer, Jorunn blushed. It became apparent that it contained quite a lot of food she had forgotten; food they both knew would end up getting wasted. She was ashamed. She also, half-jokingly, tried to shift the responsibility over onto Kjell. Another interesting point was how Jorunn also blamed Kjell for “not having thrown away enough”. Their wasteful practices were out in the open, making her feel ashamed or uncomfortable enough to try to shift the blame over on Kjell. Jorunn’s reaction corresponds as reference to the honour of the housewife[166], as culturally it is shameful to display a lack of control and diligence. On another level it is also morally condemnable in our shared environmentally charged context of the interview on food waste. Additionally, the wastefulness is also not desirable in an economically rational perspective on a household level.

Consider her choice of words: “not having thrown away enough”. She felt shameful, and it is likely that she wanted to present her home as tidier and less wasteful than it appeared. She wished that Kjell had thrown away more to obtain a certain degree of order in the chaotic and messy situation we discovered in the depths of their freezer. She wanted Kjell to throw away food that had gone off to obtain a higher degree of order, to maintain clear boundaries between edible and inedible food. These disposal practices have already been discussed using Douglas’ (1966) perspectives, fighting off the inevitable decay of food (Thompson 1989) and also the ever-increasing muddle and chaos of their food, both in the perspective of entropy (Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971], Bateson 2000 [1972]). Their dialogue above also shows a lack of good routines of labelling food.

The freezer is not a “Perpetum Mobile“

Kjell finds that Norwegians are very eager to stock up on food, and claims that we are most likely world champions when it comes to freezers in Norway. He thinks that many

[166] As discussed in Chapter 8: The Food Management Process – Practices and Analysis.

have freezers that are completely full, or even, jokingly, four freezers stacked full of all kinds of food bought in big quantities on special offer. He thinks it is likely that much of it is wasted. Jorunn chimes in on the discussion as well:

> *"But it isn't a Perpetum Mobile either, the freezer. I think too, that…suddenly you find something there that you have forgotten. You have to plan a bit more, and take up things if you are going to use it [before it goes off]. Then it takes a while for it to thaw. And [if you don't plan] suddenly, things have just been lying there too long, and then you have to throw it away."*

I experienced well-stocked deep-freezers and wasteful practices in some of the households. However, regardless of the level of validity of Kjell's assumption, Jorunn points the finger on an important issue that was often found to be missing in several of the households: Even with a deep-freezer, the storage of food needs planning, organisation and diligence. One cannot simply expect technology to maintain the quality and edibility of the food for as long as you decide. The process of entropy and decay can be slowed, and one can extend the longevity of food by the use of a deep-freezer. But this cannot be stopped entirely, as the food would have to be kept at a temperature of absolute zero. Like Jorunn says, the data shows that the deep-freezer is not a machine of perpetual motion. Rather, it can to some extent be viewed as a time machine (Shove & Southerton 2000), "helping households to circumvent some of the tensions created at the intersection of food's materiality and the rhythms of everyday life" (Evans 2011:436).

Jorunn and Kjell don´t always mark food properly before freezing. Jorunn thinks there is a tendency to be more diligent when it comes to self-produced or self-harvested food, ref. Marx´ alienation concept (Marx 1988 [1832]), placing a higher valuation on such foodstuffs (Graeber 2001). But similar to their projections of what was in their freezer in the first place, this did not prove to be wholly correct either when we went through the inventory afterwards. Several homemade or self-picked foodstuffs were not labelled. Jorunn then admits she does not necessarily know how long much of the food has been there:

> *Ant: "Are things labelled in the freezer?*
>
> *Jorunn: Some of it. I thought about it now when I made jam, and I marked it with year. We don't have such a large freezer though. On the whole, I have thought that I got control [over what is in there], but then I notice that, that just…when is this from?! How long has this been in here? And then I cannot remember. I don't*

know how long things can be kept there either. I remember we checked how long fish could be kept there…we had some tuna."

Usually, she does not label the food. And even if she did, the difference it would have made in terms of indicating edibility or not is questionable, as she also admits lacking the knowledge about how long different kinds of food can be kept in a freezer. A lack of both knowledge and diligence is present and lead to food waste. Jorunn also reflects around the limitations of food-storage technology, but their reflections around good practices of food storage and uses of technology are not so aligned with their actual practices. This appears to be another case of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962). Her reactions to the discovery of food going to waste in their freezer, telling Kjell: "you haven't thrown enough", also contrasts the cultural moral ideals they also subscribed to - that wasting food is wrong. Nevertheless, they appeared to be far from the most wasteful household.

An interesting topic is if households place an overly high reliance and level of faith in technology to maintain the quality and edibility of their stock. I cannot make such an argument based on my material. However, throughout fieldwork, I made observations through my participation in the whole food management cycle which indicated that a cycle of buy, store, forget, clean up and throw away took place in some households, perhaps also on a recurring basis.[167] The excess of food in terms of overstacked freezers in many of these households is relevant in this context. Svein and Ingeborg for instance, admitted to not having little control of what is in their deep-freezer, or for how long much of the food has been in there:

Svein: "A while back, we threw lots of whale meat

Ingeborg: We did?

Svein: Yes, you said it had gone past the expiry date. We should just have taken the whole freezer…[and emptied it/thrown everything away]

Ant: You don't know what is in there?

Svein: Some of it has been lying there for two years…"

Ingeborg cannot remember the occasion, even if she was the one claiming the meat was not edible anymore. They had forgotten about this meat for a long while after buying it. And then again, just a short while after throwing it away, Ingeborg had forgotten about

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[167] This topic could merit further research, especially in relation to the uses and perceptions of storage technologies and perceptions of longevity of food.

its disposal as well. This serves as another indication of how easily accessible food is, and consequently how low its perceived value can be. As we have already experienced in some of the other households, Svein also wants to dispose of food to obtain a bit of order, as discussed in relation to Douglas (1966). He wants to keep the categories between edible and inedible concise and clear, battling the gradual movement towards chaos and decay (Bateson (2000 [1972]). Svein would like to start from scratch by throwing everything away. It becomes harder to keep track of their inventory due to the large amount of food in the freezer, and this is amplified by the sloppy marking. With such practices the likelihood of a repeated cycle increases, a cycle of provisioning, storage, then becoming oblivious to much of the food, and in the end, throwing much of it away to obtain order. Such cycles of destruction have been interpreted as inherent factors to maintain the growth in capitalism, as old products have to make way for new ones (Graeber 2011a:492).

Lots of the food Svein and Ingeborg keep in their freezer is bought on special offer at local supermarkets. Going through it, we find reindeer meat, meatballs and barbecue-meat, all bought on special offer. They clearly stock up excessively on food considering the levels of consumption in their household. I ask them if the freezer ever gets empty. They say no. They doubt that ever happens. “We are not that organised”, Ingeborg says. Sometimes though, they decide to eat from what they have in the freezer, but she says they aren’t able to maintain this approach for long. They are yet another household with a strong focus on the provisioning phase, making deals that are a good value for money. The excess of food available in their household is illustrated through their lack of organisation and control over their inventory. These practices, leading to a high level of wastefulness, can be interpreted as manifestations of their valuation of their food stock (Graeber 2001, 2013).

Storage, Control, Circulation and Everyday Involvement

It is by no means my intention to present Erika and Roger as the ideal household when it comes to food management. However, through insights into their storage practices and use of standard infrastructure and technology, we expose a few key factors that contribute to their household maintaining low levels of food waste.

Similar to the houses built in the first decades after World War 2, Erika and Roger’s house built in 1989 have cold storage facilities, both in their basement and also a pantry next to their kitchen. Pantries were common in older houses, but not anymore.

Theirs is fairly spacious, with large shelves making it easy to keep an eye on and stack what they have in store. Their two deep-freezers, one regular deep-freezer and one freezing cabinet, are in the basement. Both are well stocked, containing mostly berries, meat and fish. They appear well organized. Roger gives me the grand tour. He explains to me what is in stock, exhibiting an air of control. Most of the food is marked with date and content. They only have a small, older refrigerator in the kitchen. They use the freezers and the pantry daily. These storage facilities have different characteristics in terms of space, temperature, and how different foodstuffs should be stored. It appears as they are using them accordingly, optimising their resource management. It almost sounds too good to be true. Erika and I discussed their use of technology in the first interview I did with her:

> *Erika: "We have a small refrigerator, and we have a cold storage room as well. And in the fridge we don't keep that much, only just what is used for breakfast and evening meals. No, we have a good overview of what we have in the different places. It is not like we have to go through what is stored to see what is still edible or not. We don't have to. On the whole, we are in control."*

Food for dinners is not kept in the fridge, as they use their pantry and freezers for that. They plan what to have for dinner at least a day in advance, and thus only a small amount of food is kept in the fridge, such as butter, milk, toppings for bread and perhaps foodstuffs for dinner taken out of the freezers for thawing. This means it easy to keep it organized, and it is not often something "gets lost in there", Erika says. The same goes for the freezer and a freezing cabinet they have. They might go through them once a year, but it is not really necessary, as nothing is stuck in there for ages according to them. "We are in control. There is circulation", says Erika.

Their narratives about how their freezers are included in the everyday food cycle matches the observations I made of their food preparation practices. The freezers are a mainstay, involved in their everyday practices. They are not just for the special meals at weekends when one has the time to make something special and more time consuming. With such an approach, it is easier to keep track of what is in stock, making sure nothing goes off and ends up being wasted. Such meticulousness does take a bit of time though. Their practices differ from most of the other households, including Jorunn and Kjell's use of their freezer even after its migration to their kitchen. In a similar manner to what Jorunn and Kjell expressed about their fridge, and especially the circulation and different tempi in different shelves and areas of it, it seems it is easier to forget about the deep-freezer when it is not part of the regular daily food practices. There was also a physical

barrier to consider as it was in a room seldom visited, but the practices of Jorunn and Kjell were wholly different compared to Erika and Roger. They regularly used their deep-freezers in the basement. One difference is that the routines of Erika and Roger were established over a long period of time, and their deep-freezers were cornerstones of their everyday food management. Additionally, their meal schedules were more fixed and predictable than in the household of Jorunn and Kjell. In the majority of the households this is different. Here the resources in the deep-freezers seem to be considered in a longer temporal perspective. And as Jorunn reminds us, some even treat it as a perpetum mobile, which it indeed is not.

The Distance from the Tray

We can draw a parallel between moving the freezer and moving to a new domicile. In a new domicile where it is either easier or more strenuous to get to the supermarket, or the food tray so to speak in the context of these modern household with little or no degree of self-sustainability. If it is easy to shop for food on a daily basis due to the supermarkets being close by, especially with Tromsø's high density of supermarkets, this makes hand-to-mouth approaches and daily shopping both more convenient and likely.

Imagine how current practices of small-scale daily shopping runs and a short-term perspective compare to the provisioning routines before the supermarket infrastructure was as widespread as now. Or consider households living on the countryside, where the food tray is further away. Then more time, energy and planning is required to obtain food. In this context, remember Jorunn's story about living on the countryside were food provisioning was more strenuous and they had to go by bus. This made them plan more thoroughly and they only went to the supermarket once a week.

One interpretation is to view the deep freezer as a food reserve, where households stock up on food bought on special offer and food received through informal local networks. This comes in addition to the more typical uses where it is a storage that makes it possible for the households to store bulks of fresh food (fish, meat, bread and berries etc.) that commonly fill up local deep-freezers. Observations point to the deep-freezers mostly being used occasionally, for special Sunday dinners, when one doesn't have anything in the fridge, or when one lack ideas of what to cook. Freezers are not part of the everyday routines in at least half of the households, but they are all fully stacked regardless.

Households in this study with relatively low levels of food waste like Erika and Roger and Ingrid and Fredrik, also stock up and buy food when it is on special offer. But a major difference is how the deep-freezer and its content is much more present. Rather than just being storage of household food reserves mostly used as an exception, it is part of the everyday food management cycle in these households. For Jorunn and Kjell, the fact that they had to move the freezer initiated a process of taking stock and throwing away inedible food in the freezer. In a couple of households I also experienced that after the freezer rummages, they soon afterwards went through their whole inventories and tidied up their freezers.

Storage, Waste and Distance

Before moving on to further discussions of disposal, it is fitting to cast some contextualising glances a few decades back onto the storage technologies and local traditional practices of storage and disposal. This serves as a useful reminder of different approaches and adapted practices, both in terms of consciousness and of the physical distances from the origins of food as a resource, and also by provoking reflections around changes in temporal perspectives towards food.

After we had eaten dinner together in their home, Roger told me that back in the day they used to rent a small freezing cabinet in the local shopkeepers large freezing room. This was during the 1960's, and both Erika and he can remember how the arrival of the deep-freezer in the local households changed a lot in terms of how households managed food. The most evident change was less conservation, in terms of salting and drying of meat and fish, as they could just put things directly into the freezer instead. They weren't so dependent on the seasonal variations of food availability and access. Fairly quickly their practices changed, as we have seen with the gradual move away from buying in bulk seasonally or buying whole or half carcasses of meat, as fresh meat is now available. Also, as time went by, the traditional knowledge about different kinds of conservation was not a strict necessity.

The locals would tell me stories about traditional practices of waste management on the farms they grew up on. This was on the countryside in Northern Norway, 30-50 years ago. Practices like putting waste and leftovers out into the woods or giving it to either wild or domesticated animals were said to be customary. This approach can be interpreted as practices with elements of re-distribution, but also as categorizing and ordering "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966), if the food was deemed unfit or

unwanted for human consumption. Commonly, food waste was placed in a nearby forest or close to the sea, so that the animals and birds could eat it. Or it was managed by making a compost pile, as the waste would then produce fresh, rich soil. In any case, food unfit for human consumption was going back into the cycle of nature. Such practices are linked to a more holistic or cyclic perspective on resources and the environment, on nature from which they originate, a world-view where food is indeed considered as life.

I have already put forward an argument on how the self-subsistence elements of the local countryside practices contributed to a closer connection between the steps in the larger food cycle and the cycle as a whole. This connection is maintained by practices like growing potatoes and vegetables, fishing, hunting, trapping, picking berries, and also the recently abandoned practices of buying whole carcasses of meat. These practices relate to the characteristics of the annual seasons, the nearby natural surroundings and the knowledge and skills of food management related to the locality, natural and social. On the other hand, there were also stories about leaving waste and old, outdated objects like ovens, washers, farm equipment etc. either in the woods or throwing them into the sea, as mentioned earlier in the chapter in relation to concepts like matter out of place and reinstating order (Douglas 1966).

The Redistribution of Waste in Nearby Surroundings

Redistribution can be done by returning wasted resources to nature, letting other living creatures make use of them, or for the improvement of the soil in the immediate surroundings. There are many comparative examples of similar practices in other cultures that can shed light on these local, countryside practices.

For instance, consider the Chewong living in the rainforests of Malaysia. They return parts of a killed animal to nature to ensure that it is replaced, to ensure future fertility, not rebirth. Signe Howell (2011) describes this as exchange activities between humans and non-humans. Burial practices and throwing away practices are not wholly equal or similar, but the parallel still shows a consciousness about the cyclic nature of events, of giving and receiving in a closer relation with nature. A point among the Chewong in particular is that the vitality of the dead person is redistributed into the different parts of the environment. We can interpret these local practices as re-distributing excess resources and food waste, from the households in the countryside of Northern Norway and into the surrounding fauna and soil to be. Interestingly, there is

no existential distinction between humans and non-humans in the Chewong world, and the conceptual and traditional dichotomy between body and soul entrenched in western religion and philosophy, or the one between culture and nature, does not fit in. Amongst the Chewong, man is "one" with all other species and objects in the world. Here we can also draw parallels towards Tim Ingold's concept of living organisms, including humans, being intertwined with their surrounding environment (Ingold 2000), a connection which contemporary infrastructure can render us somewhat ignorant of.

Another relevant contextual case is from The Duna people of the highlands of New Guinea. They are also a people with daily interaction and a very close relationship with their natural environment (Stewart & Strathern 2005). They have a sense of relationship and of connections within a wider landscape. And these connections, amongst other things, constitute their primary mode of consciousness about the dead (Ibid: 35). At cyclic intervals they make sacrifices to rejuvenate the environment, to sustain fertility of the land and also for the humans and animals living there. They believe the sacrifices also ensure good health and release sickness. This short example from the Duna shows an integrated relationship with the surrounding environment, with a high level of consciousness of the earth and its vulnerability. Lines can be drawn from their sacrificial practices to uphold balance, to current struggles to develop green economy or sustainability arguments. These arguments aim to curtail current levels of consumption and align them according to contemporary environmental concerns. Perhaps such a balance can inspire us to re-establish and strengthen the link between dominant human practices and the surrounding environment, countering the alienation (Marx 1988 [1932]) that I argue exists in many households.

This sacrificial practice also indicates a cyclic perspective towards living organisms and their relation to the environmental surroundings. This has similarities to the narratives about countryside households putting leftovers and waste out for animals to eat, or using them as fertiliser on the fields. We are offered a reminder that:

> *"People continue to construct and remake the environment through substance transformations."* (Stewart & Strathern 2005:37)

Fittingly, the Duna mentioned fire and flood as examples possible events that might alter the environment dramatically, although this symbolism might have been affected by Christian ideas (Ibid.). Regardless of influence, the link to contemporary scenarios on possible future environmental catastrophes is evident. Perhaps the Duna case shows something much of western civilization lost along the way of industrialization and modernization; that we should not lose touch with our natural surroundings and that

sacrifices have to be made to ensure sustainability and balance. Hopefully we can continue making "substance transformations, remaking the environment", but by maintaining a higher degree of balance, of sustainability. However, as we are reminded by the debate between formalists and substantivists in economic anthropology, the scale of the Duna society is wholly different from a modern city, and it is utopic to expect an even related closeness between the various societal dimensions and different fields of value (Graeber 2013). Amongst the Duna, the consequences of their waste related practices are very visible in their local environment. In the city of Tromsø, the household waste is picked up and taken away once a week and it's recycling and redistribution is removed from the households and their gaze.

Looking at both the food *and* waste practices of the households today, I will argue in Chapter 12 that in the urban environments like Tromsø, the link between the households and the natural surroundings is more veiled and hidden. This occurs due to increased levels of scale. An increased distance both between households and between the everyday practices of the households and significant parts of the food cycle occurs. Most households are not connected to what takes place before their provisioning and after the disposal phase. The wide-reaching market infrastructures of food production and distribution contribute to an increased geographical, physical split from food production, a split that contributes to and reinforces a distance from the origin of food witnessed in several of these city households. The everyday practices of food management in these city households appear as distant and split from both the previous and following parts of the food cycle. They are torn from both from their roots and their consequences, past and future, as household members do not participate in the production of the food they consume or waste, or the handling of the waste they produce. As such, I find the households to be alienated (Marx 1988 [1932]) as consumers, a state which the increased commodification (Marx (1990 [1867]) of the food market also contributes to.

In the context of the current discussions around disposal practices, the alienation concept (Marx 1988 [1932]) is also relevant considering the local waste management systems. Current infrastructures of waste-management conceal the link between household food and waste management and their social and environmental consequences. This link was previously maintained by the re-distributive practices of countryside households between themselves or into their close local natural surroundings. Their physical redistribution and re-arrangement of their matter out of place (Douglas 1966), their waste, is now outsourced to the municipal waste management, and understandably so due to levels of scale. Just as most of these city

households pay others to produce their food, they also pay others to manage the material consequences of their food practices. Centralized waste management is established as a necessity in contemporary densely populated cities, but not only with consequences for the households in terms of detachment and alienation. Seagulls, crows and other birds now also live in dense colonies, but mostly near the waste management facilities on the north-end of Tromsøya.

Summary

To briefly recapitalise, in this part I have analysed waste related practices in the households of study, starting with those taking place after the initial meals in a linear process of food management: the cleaning up and the handling of leftovers. We have seen how the everyday priorities tend to get in the way of initial good intentions and how ritualised practices help disguise disposal practices and make them culturally and morally acceptable. I have also argued that a wide-reaching dependency on expiry dates signifies an abstraction of household knowledge, with a resulting loss of sensory experiences and knowledge when it comes to judging the edibility of foodstuffs.

Observations in the household have also uncovered other wasteful rituals, where practices of disposal and replacements in cyclic fashions can act as a means to reinstate order and avoid chaos in the food inventory, maintaining borders between the edible and non-edible. Storage practices in the households have been examined through fridge and freezer rummages, investigating the relationship between technology, knowledge and practices of provisioning, storage and disposal. I have showed how the elements of control of inventory, circulation of food and the everyday involvement incur waste. Finally, I argued that this manner of waste generation relates to increased distances both in and between the households in a physical and mental manner in the context of the larger food cycle and our natural and social surroundings.

Chapter 10 Disposal Practices Part II

Introduction

In this chapter, we look at the infrastructural framework, knowledge, norms and practices related to actual practices of disposal. This includes discussing the cultural and moral regimes surrounding these practices and their foundations. In particular we will discuss how the cultural and material aspects of food management converge to draw borders between the edible and inedible or unwanted, and making food more acceptable to dispose of. Practices of excess will receive special attention. First, we take a brief look at the local infrastructure and recycling issues, before moving towards the actual local disposal practices and their permutations.

Waste Management Technology in the Household

"Remix"; the facilities of the waste management company of Tromsø and neighbouring Karlsøy municipality is located on the north-end of Tromsøya. The households have sorted their household waste since 1997, and "Remix" have provided optical sorting of the waste at their facilities since 2007. They estimate that 4 % of the household waste they receive is residual waste[168] (2015) – the waste that is left when everything has been sorted into the other categories for recycling.

The common waste management practice in our households consists of a two-stage process. The first part takes place in the kitchen, where unwanted matter is usually disposed into cardboard, plastic or metal containers - bins. These are often placed in a cupboard, located beneath the kitchen sink, or in a stand-alone bin in the kitchen. The municipality supplies different coloured plastic bags to ensure correct recycling. There are green bags for organic waste, orange for milk-, juice- and similar containers out of carton, red for paper and blue for plastic. In addition, people use one generic plastic bag reversed or white bags for the rest of the waste. Glass is recycled separately, delivered at special points, as is other special and dangerous waste like electrical waste, batteries, paints, solvents etc.

[168] According to annual statistics provided to me by "Remix" via e-mail.

The bins, as containers of disposal, help as people categorise what is considered residual waste and not, and what kind of waste it is. In the vein of Douglas (1966), the bins are handy tools to re-instate order and keep anomalies out of sight. They also hide the proofs of wasteful excess, as the moral dimension is seldom far away. At the same time, a bin seals off different kinds of materials and matter from the edible. Food waste is put in one place, reducing the risks of unwanted smell, mess, bacteria and contamination posed by the decay of food. The polluting or contaminating risks or effects on the surroundings or on other kinds of matter in the domicile are reduced. The bins are usually the last station in the household food management cycle within the domicile.

The second part of the process of disposal and waste management process taking place in the actual households is bringing the bags of waste, or waste itself directly to the larger waste bins. These bins are usually situated outside. In Tromsø the bins are made out of plastic and can hold up to 240 litres. They are supplied by the local municipality. The bins have lids to avoid animals and birds accessing the waste and potentially making a mess while looking for a meal, avoiding that leftovers become "matter out of place". These bins are usually placed outside of the domicile. Larger apartment buildings sometimes have a shared storage room for waste bins. The waste is subsequently collected on a weekly basis by Remix.

For organic or biodegradable waste there is also the option of having a compost container on the outside premises, or of having a compost heap in more rural areas or in gardens. This option has gotten some exposure in the Norwegian media the last five years or so. None of the households in the study practiced this to my knowledge, except for piling up garden waste like grass, leaves, branches etc. on a specific spot in their gardens. Compost heaps was common on the farms where some of the household's members grew up. What pets or farm animals didn't eat, which was not much, was left to there to decompose and become compost. Anders told me how he throws certain kinds of food waste straight back into nature, even if he is living in the city. This is a practice his grandparents were forced to abandon when they moved from the countryside into a more densely populated place. We will hear more about that later.

Kitchen-Grinders - Matter out of Place and out of Sight

Electric grinders installed in the kitchen drains are not common in Norwegian kitchens, and are not installed in any of the households. As the main interview with Svein and

Ingeborg drew towards a close, we sat in their living room discussing waste-levels and recycling. Svein then mentions kitchen-grinders. He told me that grinders were installed in all the houses in the neighbouring municipality of Balsfjord where he lived some years ago (he wasn't specific). He claims they were installed to avoid biological waste, and after going through the grinder, the waste went into the sewer-system and into the sea. Svein says he would prefer such a grinder at their house in Tromsdalen. Ingeborg expresses doubts, and starts to reflect aloud upon such a solution, and the negative environmental effects:

> *"I don't know. It depends on the consequences of what we throw into the grinder, which ends up in the sea, even if there is a purification facility. We still pollute just as damn much, it just gets invisible to our own eyes in the short run…"*

Svein's appears to perceive the biological waste as unwanted matter, similar to "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966). For him, a grinder can clearly help to dissolve this matter and make it disappear quickly, rendering it invisible. Ingeborg explicitly underlines the comfortable aspect of making the unwanted invisible. She also expresses scepticism towards such a solution, as the waste still ends up somewhere – they just cannot see it anymore. The morality surrounding the issue of food waste is again illuminated, indicating how the excessive food waste is connected to the moral, social concept of shame, and the preference would be for the evidence to disappear without a trace. Such shamefulness can also be an indication of the antisocial dimensions I connect to unnecessary food waste.

When reflecting on the consequences of their household waste in discourse like above, one of my main arguments on the thesis about distance and alienation from the larger food cycle can appear contrived. However, in the midst of actual everyday household practices, the perspective of the larger cycle slips into the background. The connection to the other steps is forgotten or even severed, as other alternative perspectives, concerns and practicalities come to dominate the decision-making processes. We could argue that individual, short-term practical concerns and desires are dominating decision making, rather than those related to the large-scale moral aspects like the environmental and social consequences.

The Expressed Effects of Recycling

I observed and discussed the practices of recycling household waste and its effects with all the households in the study. It was particularly interesting to see the practices and hear the views in households who had also experienced previous times when no publicly managed recycling or sorting of household waste existed. As discussed, there are multiple practices of classification, sorting, re-use and redistribution taking place before the decision of disposal is taken (e.g. Gregson, Metcalfe & Crewe 2007). Also, the future promise of recycling influences the following disposal practices in the food management cycles of the households.

Some of the households who had experienced both arrangements of disposal pointed out that the current sorting of waste had first of all led to an increased level of consciousness about what they actually disposed of and how much. They became more aware of the amounts of waste in the different categories (organic, paper, cardboard, plastic and general waste, in addition to glass, dangerous waste like electronics, batteries, paint etc.), compared to when most of it "went into the same big bag". The main extract from the observations and discussions on disposal, sorting, recycling and waste practices and systems in the households, is how these practices contribute to a higher consciousness about the waste levels their household produce. Anders comments:

> *"I think people might throw away a bit less, because it is so easy to throw away in the regular waste bags. Because now they see how much food they really throw away, in the green bags. My grandfather noticed this when sorting was introduced. Usually people threw everything in one bag. What was on the plate [leftovers] was just put into the one big common bag, and when one had to start sorting the waste, he could see how much ends up in each of them…"*

On food waste, some household members expressed views that even if seeing how much they actually produced was surprising. They found it to be a slight comfort that it would come to some sort of use. Stine thought it would be even easier to dispose of food if it was for instance used as animal fodder. In our case, the organic waste from the Tromsø households is composted and made into plant soil.[169]

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[169] http://www.remiks.no/behandling/hva-blir-avfallet-til Accessed: 28. January 2016.

Recycling can lighten the moral burden of wasting food needlessly. Household members expressed some comfort in the fact that some of the food waste would be converted into a resource for future use by Remix. Statements like "at least it is of some use" were common, even if the economic loss for the individual household remains. While not questioning the importance of recycling, a more holistic perspective is necessary. It is important to consider the food cycle as a whole, where one moves beyond seeing increasing recycling rates as adequate measures of success (Evans 2012b:1135).

Like Evans, I see focusing on the widespread practices of household over-provisioning (Evans 2011, 2012b) as a useful starting point for reducing household food waste levels. Consider the energy loss taking place when comparing the energy spent to produce a loaf of bread, to transport it to the domiciles and then back to the waste management facilities for the recycling of the bio-mass from said loaf of bread to take place, with the energy it then produces as fuel or plant soil. It appears more pertinent to start in the other end of the household food management process. We should aim to reduce the influx of food into the households, questioning the overtly strong focus on provisioning and aim for practices more aligned to household needs.

Trust and Distrust

Trust appears to be an important factor when it comes to the recycling of household waste. I encountered speculations of a conspiratory nature, about how recycled material just ended up at the same waste heap anyway. Thus, recycling then became meaningless in their view as the resources disposed of and sorted where not recycled at the waste facilities, but just converted into energy through incinerators.

I discussed the local recycling and waste management at length with Svein and Ingeborg. When it comes to recycling and sorting their waste, they are suspicious as to what the municipality actually do with it. Svein says he does not know what they do with all the waste they spend time and energy to sort. He claims that it all went into the same pile earlier, so their efforts to sort the waste had no function. He does not consider how sorting raises the consciousness about waste levels in the households. Ingeborg tells me how she was provoked by one of the managers at Remix who had said in the paper that all the waste went into the same pile[170], and that the main idea behind

the sorting of household waste was to teach people a better attitude towards resource management. Evans (2103:1133) also encountered differing levels of faith in the local waste management authorities. If Ingeborg's story is true[171], the statement did nothing to increase the trust in the waste management companies and local authorities or the willingness to recycle. They both express a wish for the waste to be recycled properly and to be made useful, but they do not reflect upon how the household recycling system that the municipality of Tromsø has implemented also helps to reduce unnecessary waste from their own and other local household. In this situation, they think in a linear forward movement, considering where their waste ends up next, not too strange considering that the vantage point of our discussion was recycling of waste.

Increased distance from the whole of the food cycle, and in this case the discarded matter, the waste, can add to such distrust. The households hand their waste over. They cease control of it, and cannot survey its future journey. This contrasts the re-distributive practices described by Anders, where leftovers and waste was handed out to pets, farm-animals, birds and foxes or as fertiliser in the immediate surroundings, going back into the cycle of nature nearby.

Thresholds, Categories and Borders

Disposal of food happen at different stages in the food management cycle of a household, and I have discussed these practices as they have occurred throughout the food cycle. We will now look at how the borders and thresholds (Douglas 1966, Van Gennep 1960 [1909]) between food and waste are managed, how these categories are dynamic, and to a certain extent, culturally relative. Half rotten, stinking meat or fish is not likely to be considered edible by most humans, discounting extreme situations of emergency and famine. We will also see how knowledge or the absence of it is pivotal throughout these processes of disposal.

As already experienced, disposal can happen during process of unpacking and storing food when returning home after shopping. For instance, it applies if some of the food is discovered to be mouldy, spotty or mushy. I experienced this with vegetables and fruit on a couple of occasions in the households. It can also apply to food already stored at home, as the threshold for disposing a half-used container or package of food,

[171] Not having seen the article, I cannot comment on it specifically. I do know after several visits at the REMIX facilities that not everything ends up in the same pile, and their website gives out specific information about what the household waste is turned into. http://www.remiks.no/behandling/hva-blir-avfallet-til Accessed: 28. January 2016.

or some wrinkly apples seems to be lower when the new, fresher product is in hand. Disposal can happen during the preparation of a meal, if for instance one discovers that an ingredient or parts of one has gone off and is deemed inedible. It can happen during a process of cleaning or tidying up in the fridge or freezer, when assessing inventory, or when just popping by the fridge for a snack. Then there is the management of leftovers and tidying up after the meals.

In the context of disposal, we are talking about when something is considered edible or not for humans, or when it is just unwanted. Simultaneously, this categorisation also defines whether it is culturally and morally acceptable to dispose of the foodstuff in question, if it has reached the stage of non-food. Such a transition is often necessary within the current cultural and moral framework, as the moral ideal that wasting food is wrong is still strong. Previously, we heard of the ritual of the two-stage holding process of leftovers, ripening and preparing them for the disposal. This ritual contains a transition towards the category of "non-food" making its disposal acceptable. The households adapt practices to acceptably manage the cultural and moral ideals around food and categorisations of it. The dynamic characteristics of these categories must again be underlined. For instance, the changed status of certain kinds of fish that went from being “non-fish,” not fit for human consumption, to delicacies. In practice, there are degrees of disposability to consider, influenced by contextual factors, e.g. access to alternative food sources.

In this regard, Mary Douglas’ (1966) work about dirt and pollution as cultural categories necessary to uphold order is again highly relevant, as is Arnold Van Gennep’s classic on “Rites de Passage” (1960 [1909]). I will draw upon both these classics throughout this section. There are thresholds and borders between the edible and inedible, which are culturally and morally founded. These borders are dynamic and subject to negotiation within the households as we have seen, and with leftovers, rituals to manage these thresholds exist. Uncertainties in terms of valuation lead to food having an unclear or undefined category or status. This uncertainty can appear socially, for instance if something is socially acceptable to share (Cappellini and Parsons 2013). Alternatively, the uncertainty can be materially grounded, in terms of deciding if the food having gone off or not, as a way of managing risks of illness. The food can also be put back into the fridge, its moment of disposal postponed. Douglas (1966:4) also openly admits to overstating the categories and borders, as well as an expressive over-systematizing, making social structures seem overly rigid. However, she argues that this tendency is borne out of the necessity to allow for an interpretation of the beliefs that order these social phenomena.

Separation is a central concept when it comes to the disposal of food waste, separating the wanted from the unwanted. Similarly to what Douglas (1966:11) states in relation to uncleanness and separation, the motivations for branding food as inedible, and thus disposing of it, can differ. They can for instance be physical and health related, like when a tomato is rotten or meat smells bad. The motivation can be religious, as in having to throw away some of the food which went off during Ramadan when a household eats differently. Or it can be social, as when one is on a diet. Then those tempting sweets will have to go. In addition to how these perspectives on pollution can act as expressions of social life and its order, Douglas (ibid: 3) also raises an important point where ideas of pollution can be instruments for social pressure. She says this can happen when laws of nature are used as justifications for moral values, to sanction moral codes (ibid.), like claiming adultery causes illness, or too much sugar causing silliness, as in low intelligence.

Sceptics could argue that this is not too far from what this morally situated work on food waste is endeavouring to do. The aim of the larger project is to influence household behaviour to reduce waste. The arguments are based on the scenarios of future social, economical, environmental and meteorological disasters, indicated by rising temperatures or an increasingly unstable climate. Although this development is based on quite substantial, growing scientific material. However, other politicians might urge you to be a good citizen by buying and consuming more to keep the economy going, providing growth and jobs. Through such an approach, they can claim this is a way of helping the millions of poor and malnourished in the world out of their misery.

Managing Matter out of Place

In what is also a methodological point, Eriksen (2011:216) states that dynamic borders, as in our case between food and waste, is a good topic of study to gain insight into cultural values and categories. In such cases, what is at stake and negotiated about comes to the fore, and cases of ambiguity are especially interesting. These situations can be seen as fractions of the ordinary that allows for alterity and difference, of contrasts (Leach 1961). These border cases offer people alternative courses of action that can reveal underlying and structuring principles of cultures.

Following Douglas' (1966) perspective, "matter out of place" is problematic because such anomalies or fluid situations can cause disorder and chaos. This threatens the current social order, and thus she claims a society would strive to achieve and

maintain order and stability. In practice, with uncertainties surrounding edibility or not, we have seen how foodstuff can linger in a liminal state. It lingers between the categories of food and non-food, and as such, a sense of lack of control beckons. In these situations, borders will become unclear, transcended, disputed and discussed as they dangle in a state of liminality (Turner 1964). They are between categories, and perhaps moving back and forth. We heard how order is reinstated by tidying up fridges and freezers in our households, separating the edible food from the inedible, or certainly, the unwanted.

Georg disposing of the un-marked lambs meat from their deep-freezer shows how the fluid and liminal status, neither food nor waste, is dangerous. Here the material and the cognitive are intertwined. His decision takes place on a cognitive level, as the categories are muddled - some of the food in the freezer might not be edible. That needs sorting out. At the same time, this case also takes place on a material level, as the meat could be a possible health risk, regardless of him not opting to check its potential edibility using his own senses. Their food stock was still rich regardless. Georg's clearing out ritual before he starts cooking a meal can also be interpreted as a way of making order out of chaotic culturally defined categories (Bateson 2000 [1972], Douglas 1966, Eriksen 2011:126-130). Simultaneously, this ritual is also to an extent grounded in the material, through hygienic concerns. Where the main emphasis lies on the scale between the cultural and material is likely to be influenced by a web of factors: knowledge levels, personal experiences, penchant for risks, up-bringing and habits, access to alternative resources, etc. There are a mixture of practical, psychological personal, cultural, moral, social and economic dimensions in play when these decisions are made. We could say that the individual consults their "imagined totality" (Graeber 2013) when making their decision – the sum of the opinions of everyone that matters to you, empirically real or imagined.

Jorunn's statement to Kjell about not having thrown away enough during our deep-freezer rummage, is another example of disposal to maintain clear borders between the edible and inedible, keeping entropy (Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971], Bateson 2000 [1972]) and the inevitable decay of food (Thompson 1979) at arm's length for a while. When evaluating food in this manner, Douglas´ (1966) and Van Gennep's (1960 [1909]) perspectives on categories, borders and thresholds, attempting to manage anomalies and food in liminal stages, are fruitful.

A multitude of different practices of removing of the unwanted, making sure it is out of sight, are in play. Lines between categories are drawn and re-drawn. Order is

temporarily reinstated, for instance by throwing an old stove into the sea, or giving fish-offal to the seagulls. It can also be done like Svein suggests, by using a kitchen grinder to grind all their kitchen waste into a generic, non-descriptive mass to be flushed into the sea, out of sight and invisible to him, but not gone. Generally in these Tromsø households though, food decay creates both a material and a categorical cognitive mess, for instance in the back of Jorunn's fridge, in Jon's fridge-shelf or in Ellen and Ivar's vegetable drawer. The unwanted matter is then placed in large waste-bins outside, to be taken care of by the local waste management. Order is reinstated. The unwanted and dangerous is out of sight, in its proper place.

The argument is that these borders between categories rest on a combined fundament, an amalgam of political, cultural, social, moral or material, intertwined and interrelated. Christian Sørhaug´s following observation (Sørhaug 2012) expresses the intricacy of such a fundament poignantly. In terms of being socially or culturally inedible, food can become socially polluted by previous meals (Douglas 1966), or not just physically contaminated by the surroundings, but also culturally. This was expressed though Sørhaug's astute observation from the Warao of Venezuela (Sørhaug 2012:123). Here the anthropologist catches a glance of a Warao-girl drinking from a Coca-Cola bottle she just found on the enormous landfill they migrate to, gathering whatever they can make use of. Upon becoming aware of the gaze of the anthropologist, the young woman stops drinking and turns away in shame, and tosses the bottle. As another Warao-woman expressed in relation to their problematic relationship with what edibles they found on the rubbish heap, even in times of starvation: "We are Warao - we don't eat rubbish!" (ibid:124). Culturally, certainly socially, when found on the landfill, the Coca-Cola bottle rests in the category of inedible. It has left any liminal or negotiable stage it might have occupied previously in another location (Douglas 1966). But not only the cultural and moral categorisations and classifications can change, as aspects of the sensory can also be negotiated over time. One can become habituated to the nauseating and repulsive smell on the landfill (Sørhaug 2012), just as the memory of the sensory experience of the taste, texture and smell of sour milk can stay with you for years, as one of my acquaintances in Tromsø pointed out to me. Due to this experience, he never took any risks with milk, and disposed of it if it was close to the expiry date without even checking if it had gone off or not.

Cultures of Categorization of Matter

As touched upon in the last chapter discussing entropy, it is the role of culture to make a sort of order, by naming, structuring and categorising (Eriksen 2011:130). It helps us to avoid "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966), and to slow the inevitable movement from order to chaos (Bateson 2000 [1972]). Culture creates borders between the clean and the dirty. These borders say something about a society, according to Douglas (1966), and where people are allowed to put their waste, in the constant struggle to avoid "matter out of place". These categories, and what constitutes order, change through both time and space, as we experience in the discussions about the redistributive practices on countryside farms and in the city of Tromsø. Anders told me that his grandparents could not put their waste out for the seagulls anymore after they moved from the countryside and into the local centre Skjervøy in Northern Troms. Their old habits had to be left behind in this more densely populated area.

Eriksen´s reminder above (2011:130), about one of culture's roles to create a sense of order, does not entail claims of nature being chaotic per definition. However, culture strives to create different kinds of orders and categorisations that are culturally dependent. As with dealing with residue objects after a person's death, or cleaning up in the fridge and freezer, the simplest thing is to throw it all away, or to keep it all. Usually, there is a culturally relative categorisation and ordering process that takes place, as how one perceives and decides what is tidy or orderly is culturally dependent. Although, according to Douglas (1966), it is not all relative as taboos and unpleasantness connected with human bodily waste like urine and faeces are seemingly universally human. Even inside the main sorting hall of the Remix waste facility, they tried to run a tight ship and keep the different kinds of waste where it belonged. Occasionally, some of the seagulls from the large colony lurking nearby outside the facility, feeding of the scraps from the carcass of excess, managed to lure their way in. They entered through the open gates as lorries came to deliver waste picked up from their routes. When I was shown around the premises, I noticed that in the control-room, situated high above the ground floor where the conveyor belts and the machinery sorted the arriving household waste optically, they kept a light rifle with a scope in the corner. I asked them what that was for, and I was told with a grin that it was for shooting the seagulls that entered the hall looking for a snack. "They make such a mess", said the production manager. The seagulls messed up their cultural categories of waste.

Different Times - Changing Categories

Susan Strasser (1999) describes how thrift, repairs, re-uses and the like was widespread in US-cities in the pre-industrial and early-industrial times of the late 19th century. At that time, it was more common to take care of objects in case they could become useful sometime, objects that would nowadays perhaps be seen as obsolete or partially defunct. These practices of thrift, re-use and such clearly still exist to an extent. They also manifest themselves through some of the food management practices I experienced. Categorisations and borders between the edible and not edible are drawn differently by people (and animals), be them in different cultures, classes, countries or generations. Prosperity and cheaper foodstuffs through post-war industrialisation of the food-production (E.g. Evans, Metcalfe and Crewe 2007) contribute to thrifty practices being less in focus today. However, the ideal is still present and re-affirmed through stories from 20 years or so ago, from Ingrid and Fredrik, Svein and Ingeborg, and Erika and Roger. These narratives paint a picture of a different standard of living when their children were young. They had more mouths to feed and a tighter household economy.

In an interview I conducted in their home, Svein and Ingeborg told me how they would use dairy products that had gone off in the times when their children were young. They would make waffles or bake something, makeing sure it all came to use. Nowadays they don’t do this, and this was also referred to as a practice of the past in another household. The sour milk or cream would be seen as useful back then. Other households also confirmed that this was a common practice for them previously. Categories for what is edible or not, or waste or not, change. Let us look further into these differences and dynamics.

The oldest households I studied would often point their finger towards the younger ones, claiming they were pickier; throwing away food that was still edible. We recall Ingrid’s stories from her upbringing about eating sheep’s bellies and even the comb of the hens they slaughtered. Back then, almost everything on the animal had its use. Discussing this with the younger households, they would often hold their hand up and agree with the assessment that they are indeed pickier, as they are in a position to be so. That said, there are also such tendencies in the older households today, in times of a comparatively higher living standard to the days of their upbringing.

Jonas, an acquaintance who was in his early 20’s, told me a story about a friend of his who was out fishing with his father. They caught some flatfish, and his father

wanted to throw it back into the ocean straight away, stating that it was "ufesk"[172]. His son, who has lived in Denmark, said that kind of fish is really expensive down there and that it was very tasty. They then decided to keep it for food. Through the sons contact with other cultural practices, the "ufesk" was at least temporarily transferred to the more valuable category of edible fish. Anders does not follow this traditional approach about "ufesk". He says that regardless of what kind of food it is: "It is just that it has a different taste. Nothing is bad. Nothing is good. I eat everything." This approach is also reflected through his other statements and practices. The point here is not the quite atypical frugality Anders conveys, rather that the categories are dynamic and evolving. Contrary to the development of an increased pickiness, certain kinds of fish were previously not considered fit for human consumption. It was rather thrown out into the ocean again, or given to the cat. Now some are deemed delicacies, e.g. wolf fish and monkfish. On the contrary, offal like kidneys, lungs and liver, including the sheep's bellies and the combs of the hens that Ingrid referred to, is not so popular for dinner anymore she tells me. This was confirmed through narratives from the other households as well, discussing the menus in their upbringing compared to current ones.

For some households, a piece of cheese or bread with a bit of mould was deemed inedible and thrown away at once. In others, it was kept after cutting off the piece containing the mould, with a buffer-space of varying size. For some households, or household members - as here there were different practices internally in the households too. This depended on individual perceptions of risk, habitual practices and the like. For some, a whole loaf with some mould was already waste. For others it was more of an anomaly, matter at a liminal stage that could sometimes rescued and moved back to the category of food after the mouldy part was cut off and disposed of. For instance the liminal state of cheese is of a quite relative nature, as Jon will just cut off a piece and keep the rest, while Gry will throw the whole cheese away upon discovering the mould. What is waste or not are cultural categories, unequally distributed. This unequal distribution and dynamism, as seen through re-entries into the category of the edible shows how problematic thinking in binary oppositions, like lean:unclean or nature:culture, can be. Additionally, we are reminded of the dominant human-centric

[172] "Ufesk" is an old and familiar term in Northern Norway. It translates directly as non-fish. It refers to kinds of fish that were typically not considered fit for human consumption. Although, several kinds of flatfish is from my experiences certainly not considered "ufesk" by locals and is sold in local fishmongers, and has traditionally been caught in the region for generations. (See e.g. Lien 1987).

view on the world, but we do need reminders that someone's trash can indeed be someone else's treasure (Reno 2009).

Anders and Ingrid both shared illustrative stories about the re-distributive practices on the countryside farms. Anders says he still maintains a perspective and practices adapted from his grandparents, preferring to throw some of his food waste down by the seaside for the seagulls, especially if it is fish that has gone off and has to be thrown away. Anders does not throw fish that has gone off in the organic waste bag. He rather drives down to the seaside and throws it there, stating: "what people could not eat, one gave to the animals". What was not fit for human consumption was re-distributed. The household pets, the farm animals, the nearby seagulls or the foxes would all get their shares of the food-spoils. The distribution was decided by how far the food was along its inevitable path towards chaos and decay – a higher level of entropy (Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971]). A quick look into the organic waste-bag after a week and it is evident that the different categories of food become blurred towards more uniform matter as the process of decay continues. You also cannot fail to notice the heat energy the decomposing process produces if you open the lid on the organic waste bin. Still, on the farm, what is left after the animals and birds have had their pickings, feeds the worms and the soils reproductive capacities aided by the sun and rain, and the cycle goes on. Anders says this is the way he was brought up; the fish comes from nature and should go back to nature. In such a holistic perspective, different kinds of food, inedible to humans are still life rendering - the essence of all life.

Recovery and Redistribution – Borders and Distance

It is not all bleak. There are still recovery practices within the households, discussions if something can be "saved" from its inevitable journey towards inedibility, or if it can be re-domesticated after slipping into the categories of waste. I did not experience this first-hand, but it is not farfetched to assume how different opinions on edibility within a household can lead to the recovery of disposed food, picking it back up from the waste bin. Remember how Kåre made an effort to finish off his sausages that were past their date. We can picture the sausages going from being on the margin, as marginally edible, to being liminal and ambiguous, perhaps like the box of shrimps Jon put back into his fridge when he checked inventory, on the journey towards the status of inedible.

In a similar sense, consider "the strange stew" Jorunn and Kjell made an attempt of recovering. It was something they found to be ambiguous, not inedible. It just didn't

taste very good. It was unwanted, but they still chose to freeze it. Jorunn wanted Kjell to have it for dinner while she was away. Kjell might have different thresholds for what he considers edible, and like Kåre and his sausages, the reason can be just as much a cultural and moral threshold as an individual sensory one. Clearly, such thresholds are unequally distributed both within and between households. A Norwegian saying goes; "Everything goes to the pig," but there is indeed some common ground when it comes to definitions of inedibility. Like Douglas (1966) argued, there are universal communalities that transgress the culturally relative categories of pure and dirty.

The practices of redistribution, like the countryside practices of yesteryears of redistributing food unfit for human consumption into the environment near the domiciles, maintain a first-hand involvement with the larger food and resource cycle. The remains and consequences of ones resource management are more visible. Inedible or unwanted food is redistributed. It becomes food to pets, domestic animals, farm animals, wild animals and birds, or fertilizer for the nearby fields. This is also a first-hand reminder of how what transgresses the borders, and enters the categories of non-food, is still a resource. In cities like Tromsø, many of the familiar locations in nature where waste is "not out of place" have been moved further away from the city domiciles. The matter is now handled by local waste management facilities, spreading out even globally through the vast networks that different materials flow through. Along with recycling, controlling contamination and disease risks, managing hazardous waste or waste in general due to levels of scale are clearly a positive consequences.

However, I find that the nigh on invisibility of contemporary household waste after it leaves the local households adds to a sense of distance and alienation.[173] The physical remains of household food practices are conveniently removed, but it also adds to the tendencies of removing it from people's minds. The household members lose sight of the consequences of their own consumption practices, not to mention that the discarded matter can still be a resource. Notwithstanding the necessity of structured waste management in densely populated areas like Tromsø, removing the consequences of local consumption practices from their larger holistic context hinders an understanding of sustainable resource management and alienates (Marx 1988 [1932]) the households and their practices from large parts of the food cycle. I find that this increases food waste.

[173] This is discussed further in Chapter 12.

Stories of previous local redistribution practices were shared with me by informants who grew up on combined countryside farms; stories about efforts to make use of all the food they had, and how more or less everything went back into the cycle of nature in some way. A degree of romanticism might be present in these narratives. Regardless, they reveal an ideal that is still a powerful one, reaffirmed and reproduced through these ongoing narratives.

As Eriksen (2011:216) remarks, when you throw away your old video camera instead of repairing it since it is cheaper to buy a new one, it is difficult to imagine that the new camera you have just picked up contains metals extracted by a Chinese child at an enormous scrapheap. Nothing in your immediate surroundings reminds you of this. There are still traits of similar recycling taking place in Norway, as scrap-dealers are not completely obsolete and outsourced to the other side of the planet yet. Second-hand markets and shops can be found in any Norwegian city, although still carrying the label of lower status on the whole, bar within certain life-style segments. Nowadays though, many western countries export their waste. This also contributes to the alienation of western consumers and an increased distance from both the origins of what is bought and the disposed remnants.

Meaningful Actions of Disposal

Reasons for contributing to unnecessary food waste being wrong are several, as touched upon in the introductory chapter. To quickly reiterate, a few key ones are: wasteful food practices harm natural resources contributing to water shortage, deforestation, loss of wildlife etc., it contributes to negative climatic changes, it drives up prices of food at the detriment of the economically disfavoured, it is problematic in a humanitarian perspective due to famine in the world, and it is also seen as wrong to waste food needlessly as it is seen as wasting money (See e.g. Stuart 2009). Against such a canvas, it can be argued that practices leading to excessive food waste are antisocial practices on several levels, and we have seen several empirical examples where the moral dimensions related to unnecessary waste are materialised through expressions of shame or acts to avoid such. In Chapter 12 and 13, we will return to discuss the dimensions of waste as antisocial further in the context of the argument of alienated households.

Rationalizations, explanations, excuses or what you want to call them dependent on the moral perspective applied on food waste, are common when food discussing wasteful practices. Some explanations clearly reveal unnecessary wastefulness of one's

own making, and there are few available options of shifting the blame, whereas others can be outsourced with a varying degree of conviction and moral accountability attached.

Personal reasons can be as simple as not fancying what you bought for dinner when preparation is due. Something else is chosen, and in the end what was originally planned for dinner ends up as waste. A common explanation I experienced was the lack of time to manage the foodstuff in the household properly due to other commitments. In both these cases, alternative courses of action are available. The chosen alternative might be habituated, or perceived as the most meaningful and valuable one (Graeber 2001) due to a multitude of factors. There are many factors that frame the different alternative courses of action and influence what is seen as most meaningful and valuable course of action in food management. The factors can be based on a combination of imagined pasts and perceptions of an imagined future. These can for instance be ideas about what kind of food is considered more worthy of keeping hold of, like meat, which is most risky in terms of food safety, which is most likely to be eaten before it goes off as a hectic work-week is coming up etc.

Individual knowledge levels about food safety and personal penchants for taking risks, past personal experiences of food poisoning or bad tasting milk, are also factors that to my experience influenced disposal practices in the households. These are factors shaping which course of action is seen as the most meaningful alternative. Another important factor is the presence of children in the household, exemplified by Georg who disposes of the lamb's meat, as he is unsecure of its edibility. He doesn't want to take risks serving it to his family.

Relational factors are also an influence; if the food was received as a gift, made by hand, caught or harvested by one self or a family member. Something's history also influences the valuation (Graeber 2001), and thus the household disposal practices of food and the thresholds involved.[174] How desirable the food is also matters. How much pleasure it is expected to bring, how nutritious or how fresh it is perceived to be and the degree of preparation it requires were other relevant concerns. The valuations are situated in terms of past, present and future considerations, individual and shared. The valuations the household members make are also related to common cultural and historical factors. For instance when meat holds a higher potential value due to previous scarcity in the region decades ago, when the standard of living was lower. Shared

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[174] I will expand on the influence of the relational dimension on food practices in Chapter 13.

cultural and moral ideals like the imperative to make use of food rather than waste it is an overreaching and influential factor. The access to food in general guides whether food in general is judged fit for disposal or not, and also the food in question in particular dependent on its perceived relative value within a hierarchy of food.

Georg threw away a cake because it contained too much sugar, even if it was a gift from his old mother. Kåre ate the sausages that had gone past the expiry date. He didn't want to waste them as meat holds a high potential value. Add in a little bit of machismo perhaps. It was even risky in terms of illness. Clearly, the valuation of food is a complex matter. So when a decision to dispose of food or not is taken, this myriad of factors on different levels of communality and habits combine. They make up an intertwined web, an amalgam that forms the basis upon which the most meaningful, habituated alternative is carried out.

In some households, I experienced how explanations for food waste were assigned to previous steps, or combinations of steps, in the food cycle. These steps were situated external of the household's own actions. The accountability was for instance assigned to the food producer (poor quality, poor packaging, wrong packaging, bad taste etc.), the supermarkets (already gone off, inferior quality, poor storage), the food itself (tastes bad, poor quality – e.g. "the fruit just cannot deal with a short stay on the kitchen bench or in a bowl on the table"), or other household members ("You didn't wrap it properly", "You left the milk on the table again."). It could also be assigned to others outside the household. For instance, if someone had said something was a great and tasty new product, but they didn't find it to be so. Or if someone else said that their local fishmonger was the best, but they got fish of inferior quality there when they their advice was heeded. Over the next pages, I will look deeper into some cases offering such explanations to see which cultural and moral regimes come to the fore and shape food management decisions.

Personal Thresholds

Household members have different thresholds for disposing of food that has partially gone off in different ways. They discuss what can be rescued from the bin or not, or what can be diverted towards other uses where the freshness of the food in question is not influencing the final result as much. Jon and Gry often have such discussions. They have different threshold of edibility. Jon explains how he sees their thresholds for disposal:

Jon: "She is quicker to throw things away. I am more like: 'No, no. One can still eat that.' Her son is even worse than her: 'No, the date has expired.' But I am conscious about what I can eat. Seafood and chicken (shakes his head and makes a face as to show he smells something bad), I don't touch it when it is past its date. I just cut it off if there is mould on the jam, and with cheese as well. Just cut it off.

Ant: Does she do that?

Jon: She does, but her son would never have done it. Yoghurt and those things that have expired. I am not sure about her, but I gladly eat yoghurt that is a couple of weeks past the date. It just contains these healthy bacteria that evolve. It is after all written as "best before" on it and not "last day of consumption", so it is ok.

Ant: So, do you smell it then or?

Jon: I look at it, and smell. If we are talking about something that has been left open, like half a portion of sour cream with a bit of mould in it, then I don't use it. But if the sour cream has gone past its date, and I have used half, and it is not mouldy, smells ok, then I use it. It is after all a sour-milk product. That is no problem."

As Jon here displays, in these instances it is not just the knowledge about food, its longevity and edibility that play a part. Personality is also relevant as some are more sensitive towards food and get ill easier. Some are pickier and more risk-averse than others and will throw something away without looking, smelling or tasting. Whereas others in the household will say, "No, you can eat that, no problem." Such attitudes are likely to be based on both upbringing and personal experiences, like allergies and how sensitive your stomach is towards food "on the threshold". Keep in mind how my friend mentioned above was still disgusted by the sour milk he drank. How he never even dared to smell milk that had expired to see if it was still fit for consumption after accidentally drinking sour milk when he was a child. By relating just to the abstract symbol of the expiry date, he is hopefully relieved from such vile smells.

Sometimes, Jon explains, they might have the idea to make use of something, but he "doesn't eat it there and then". When he revisits the idea a couple of days later, he smells it and says "no, now it is not possible to eat it." These kinds of revisits are not uncommon. They are similar to the postponement rituals concerning leftovers (Evans

2012a: 1030) that smoothens the transition to the bin, making the disposal more acceptable, morally and culturally.

Bread and baked products top the statistics of categories of food wasted unnecessarily in Norwegian households (Hanssen & Shakenda 2010, 2011, Hanssen & Møller 2013). Bread is a mainstay in Norwegian diet, and the households discuss how significant portions are wasted in this category. Anders told me about the practices of his friends. He thinks they have a completely different view on food compared to him. They waste a lot of bread. And then, the next day, they just go and buy more. Referring to his own waste practices, Anders thinks moulded bread gets wasted most often. He firmly believes that cutting loafs of bread in halves and freezing them is a great way of avoiding wasted bread. It also keeps the bread fresher, and his mother always advocated this practice with her homemade bread. Anders claims that he eats bread that is two days old, but he has friends who would never touch bread that is two-days old. It has to be freshly baked. Both through the waste diaries, interviews and participant observation, it was confirmed that bread was wasted regularly in most of the household. Often some would waste as much as half a loaf at a time, replacing it with fresher and more recently bought or baked loaves.

When the preference for fresh bread remains just a question of taste and preference, and when it crosses the threshold and enters another category, becoming a legitimate concern, is a matter of discussion. Such thresholds are illustrative of how a culturally and economically founded preference for freshness relate to the inherent material aspects like mould, rot and fermentation that will occur with time.

Explanations for Disposal

During one of our conversations we had about food in their home, Jorunn points to what she finds to be a common problem in Northern Norway; the poor quality of fruit and vegetables:

> *"The quality of the stores here in Tromsø, it varies. You buy things which are just on the...it can look good when you buy it, but then two days pass and it has gone off."*

Compared to further south, it takes a long time to transport food that is produced abroad to Tromsø. This is especially a problem with fruit and vegetables and other food with short longevity. Jorunn, who has just moved up from Trondheim a few months ago, finds the quality of vegetables and fruit to vary quite a lot. She underlines how

important it is to check its quality in the supermarket, as much of it can be on the brink. When in a rush, she doesn't always remember to do this. Sometimes when she gets home later, inspecting more closely, what she has bought is not considered edible due to mould, or that the vegetables have started getting soft and spotty. She said this had happened with some pepper, asparagus and spinach lately. Jorunn also told me she bought some plums, and expected them to last for more than three days. Jorunn blames the quality of the fruit and the supermarkets for poor routines, as they have not removed the food that had gone off, or was of poor quality. The food she mentioned was considered to have "gone off" or to be "bad" already when it was picked up in the supermarket. So even the time she refers to being in a hurry when shopping and not checking the quality of the food properly, which indicates she prioritised spending her time on something else than the food provisioning, she finds it more convenient to place at least a portion of the blame for the food getting wasted on the supermarket. She admits she should have checked, but so should the supermarket staff have done according to her. Jorunn and Kjell then continued the discussion:

> *Kjell: "It might be that the store down here (the local Coop-Market) waits longer before throwing things away compared to Rema 1000 (in the city).*
>
> *Jorunn: Well, that is good in one way, but it is annoying if I have to throw it away instead...haha! I try to think, ok now I have half a broccoli in the fridge, and then try to make something where it fits in, so that it is used, instead of starting afresh. Not just make food on the basis of what you have made before, but what you actually have."*

Jorunn's statement above illustrates the common view of being most concerned with their individual household and what they waste, and not so much if the food is wasted in general on an aggregated level.[175] Jorunn then shares her ideal way of making use of what is at hand.

Concerning storage practices and reasons for food going off "before it should", several of the households point their fingers at the food itself or the poor food management in the supermarket. The comment "it was of poor quality" is often mentioned during such conversations. Household members might admit to having limited knowledge when it comes to food storage and treatment, and also know when

[175] This is an important point. The development of such an individual perspective on household and resource management will be discussed at a later stage in relation to cultural and social macro-developments, and the relationship between the perspective on the household's everyday concerns and larger scale, common concerns which expands past generations, like environmental issues.

their food has been handled sub-optimally, resulting in the food getting damaged or going off quicker than necessary. However, there is still a tendency to place the blame on factors external to oneself, such as travels, being busy at work, the food itself, or on the store where it was bought. Quite often, there is a lack of will to assume personal responsibility for the waste of food, or there are attempts to shift the blame. This again affirms that the morality surrounding the issue of wasting food needlessly is still very much present, regardless of the vast access to cheap food. We have already heard how Jorunn blamed Kjell for not having thrown away enough food. She was ashamed, as much of their food would end up wasted. A range of surrounding cultural moralities and ideals are relevant in relation to general household management too, just as well as food management. When we were going to do a fridge-rummage with Ingrid and Fredrik, Ingrid quickly quipped: “Is it clean there, Fredrik?”

During a shopping run with Ellen, we discussed her food provisioning and management. While walking through the supermarket, she offers several excuses to cover up or to legitimize her wasteful practices. For instance, she points to a lack of time due to social priorities or school commitments as reasons for food ending up as waste. She admits to throwing away quite a lot of bread regularly. She says it gets dry and doesn’t taste good. When I ask her why she doesn’t use the freezer and portion it, she responds that she has a toaster on her wish list. If she had one, she wouldn’t waste bread anymore, she claims. The blame is placed on insufficient technology and other commitments getting in the way of food management, eating up her time.

The moral aspects around food waste also include the supermarket staff. There are several rationales on offer to explain why supermarket companies keep their waste-containers and bins locked. Regarding the store where Jon worked, he told me “they kept the shame behind locks”. Other local supermarkets leave their waste containers open, welcoming dumpster divers.

Anxiety, Health and Risk related Disposal

We have already touched upon how health concerns are an influential factor behind the disposal of food. The perceived risks and fears of getting ill due to food is something household members have to manage on a daily basis. Food safety continuously receives quite a lot of attention in Norwegian mainstream media. The articles appeal just as much to consumer fears as offering them useful information about food related risks. Thus, the concerns around consumer food safety are quite pronounced. As food is

relatively cheap for the households participating in this study, there are distinct tendencies to err on the side of caution. In his study from Manchester, UK, David Evans also found that anxieties related to food safety tended to win-out over concerns about wasting food. Food safety was a more pronounced justification for binning and wasting food (Evans 2011:437). Health concerns thus constitute a context where food is evaluated as currently or potentially unsafe. One consequence is that edible food is sometimes categorised as waste and disposed of. In this context Douglas´ (1966) cognitive categorisations and need for order intersect with the materiality of the food, keeping danger at arms length.

We heard how Kåre who didn't like to waste meat in particular tried to finish a pack of sausages he had bought. He stated it was due to economic reasons, as he had paid for them. Another dimension worth considering is the cultural historical factor of meat having high status. In this case, health and food safety concerns came out short in the dilemma between wasting the sausages that were past their best and risking illness. Kåre might also not be a very risk-averse person.

There are also certain foodstuffs that household members associate to carry a higher risk of illness. This especially applies to chicken, which along with meat, shellfish, unpasteurised milk and eggs, contaminated vegetables and spices do indeed carry risks of salmonella poisoning if not stored or prepared correctly according to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health.[176] Similar to Evans (2011:437), I found that the risks related to other kinds of foodstuff, like bread and its threshold for disposability, were more related to a decline in quality, taste and appeal than an actual fear of illness. Generally, the rapid decay of food causes its value to decrease during its life-span (Thompson 1979). This relates to freshness and desirability, but also to edibility. Dependent on the foodstuff in question, the total holding process in the household seldom expands beyond a five-ten day period in the households, unless the food is placed in a freezer. The lifespan is short, and some of the food will inevitably end up as waste as it moves towards a perceived value of zero, at least as human nutrition.

The transient nature of food towards decay expedites its movement towards lower value, and also towards the bin (Evans 2012b:1130-1131). I would add that there is also a gradual movement towards a higher perceived health risk that inevitably

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176 http://www.fhi.no/eway/default.aspx?pid=239&trg=Content_6493&Main_6157=6287:0:25,5499&MainContent_6287=6493:0:25,6833&Content_6493=6441:82847::0:6446:106:::0:0 Accessed: 26. March 2014.

presents itself.[177] Food that isn't fresh anymore or perceived as excessive can be troublesome matter, even anomalous. Its status as such is somewhat confirmed when attempts to resolve excessive household food through practices of redistribution are not seen as socially or culturally acceptable. I experienced no attempts to redistribute excessive food or leftovers that were close to expiring to other people outside of the household, only to pets and animals. All redistributive practices and gifting of food in the households consisted of food considered fresh and of good quality. It was fit for sharing. In his article about the movement and placement of surplus food David Evans (2013) argues that many household strategies for getting food back into circulation and avoiding the waste stream are quite problematic. This is mainly due to reasons like health risks, illnesses, but also down to social risks.

The Social Risks of Redistribution

Evans found that the social and cultural practices were intertwined with the material aspects, as the materiality of food and the knowledge of its transient nature lead to concerns about making others ill. Social risk is not only actualised in relation to common meals within the household itself, but also in relation to the possibilities of redistributing excess food from the household to others (Evans 2012b:1143). The social risks can also be expressed in how leftovers is not acceptable to share with guests or someone outside of the closest social relations, like Cappellini and Parsons (2013) found in the UK households they studied. If leftovers were shared with someone from another household, they argue that it would be a true indication of intimacy and closeness of the relation this person has to the household. I do not have material suggesting that the sharing of leftovers took place outside of the sphere of the immediate household members.

The topic of social risk does however carry some relevance to a gift exchange that took place. Georg accepted a gift from his old mother, a cake that she had made for Christmas. Accepting the gift was the culturally acceptable and expected thing to do. However, afterwards he quickly disposed of it without even tasting it. Based on previous experiences, he said the cake was inedible; too much sugar as "she has lost her touch in her old days". The duty to receive the gift (Mauss 1995 [1924]) though was duly carried out by Georg. Without having seen or tasted the cake in question, we are most likely not

[177] Of course some foodstuffs need to be ripened, otherwise they represent a risk of illness earlier in their lifespan to, e.g. with fruits.

dealing with food seen to be inedible or that carries a pronounced health risk, or a risk for serious illness. It was more likely a relative question of taste, rather than the cake being beyond the edible.

Not accepting a gift of excess food from another household, be it a neighbour, friend or relative, would certainly also carry a social risk due to the obligation to receive, just like gifting or making efforts to re-distribute excessive food that isn't fresh would in a personal relation. Offering someone scraps of dried bread or old brown bananas is hardly going to be interpreted as an endorsement of a close and valuable relation. Gifting and re-distribution of excessive food does occur, and it has gotten increasingly popular, as the topic of food waste has gained attention in the public eye. However, it usually happens through intermediates who act and work on behalf of welfare organisations for the poor or similar. There are categories of social stigma too that can be communicated through gifts.

Both a social and a material dirtiness or risk can be present, and these two can be closely entangled. This mix of the social and the material helps push the surplus of food into the waste stream as culturally acceptable redistributive mechanisms are often absent. This push often occurs via detours, like the rituals of handling leftovers where the food is left in the fridge to ripen before it is acceptable to dispose of. The materiality of food and its transient nature then makes it more culturally and morally acceptable. This can even occur at the earlier stages in the foods process towards decay, as there is an inevitable end station: "It will go off soon anyway".

Disposal and Invested Labour

In the households of Georg and Josefine and Jorunn and Kjell I also experienced that homemade food like bread and jam was wasted, even if generally household members expressed a reluctance to do so. The reluctance was linked to homemade food being perceived as more valuable than food bought in the local supermarkets. The common reasoning was that homemade food had superior taste, but the invested time and labour was also mentioned as factors increasing the perceived value of homemade food. To my knowledge, Georg did not express such reluctance when it came to the bread he usually bakes. In the waste diaries, he just stated that had made new, fresher bread, so then he threw away the oldest one. Kjell also told me that they loved picking berries, and how the berries and jam they made was treated more preciously. Due to this, they would sometimes even struggle to find an occasion deemed good enough for these

berries to be consumed. Rather, they bought jam in the supermarket for their waffles, hoarding the more valuable homemade jam. Kjell admits that this approach has even led to them forgetting they had it, and some of it then became inedible and was subsequently wasted. Few suitable occasions arose for these valuables. Austerity can also lead to waste, as we will see another example of shortly when it comes to coffee.

In this context it is interesting that leftovers do not carry the same status as said, homemade bread or jam or similar, as leftovers are also the result of an investment of energy, time and money. It appears that what is left after an initial meal becomes second-grade in a sense, and loses its status. From a rational economic point of view, leftovers should be highly valuable, as they consist of readily prepared food. They are the closest to being ready for consumption, and the result of a line of combined investments - working to pay for the food, planning and buying it, transporting it home and preparing it. But both sensory and psychological dimensions, in addition to social and cultural ones, are also likely to influence the constitution of what is seen as the most meaningful alternative (Graeber 2001). Making up the basis of the valuation and subsequent decisions can for instance be a wish for fresh food, for variation, as in not eating the same as last dinner, or the rather under-communicated label of the low status attached to leftovers, or a combination of such factors.

During an interview I conducted in his office, Georg and I talked about some fish he had caught, and why he threw it away and how he felt doing it:

Ant: "You mentioned that lambs-meat earlier, was there something else you threw away then?

Georg: There were other things getting thrown away, un-identified bags of fish. It is pretty often that I find such plastic bags with coalfish, and if it is nice cod, or if it is really nice coalfish, that kind of self-fished fish, then I use to make filets out of it and treat it in a nice way. Very often, I have been fishing and caught a lot of coalfish…out at "Hella[178] *and…there is an insane amount of coalfish you see. Then I have a tendency to …those coalfish that I should have thrown out into the sea again when I caught then, they go into my bucket. These fish are too small to make filets of, and they are cut into slices, and then they are never eaten. There is a bit of self-fished coalfish, which doesn't bother me. I should have thrown it away earlier.*

Ant: You don't feel that you have harvested from nature, and…

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[178] Hella is a well-known local fishing spot in Kvaløya, about half an hour's drive outside of Tromsø.

Georg: No. Well, I have grown up with such riches. There have been so much coalfish. I have no…there isn't, there isn't any work behind it. Like with that meat that I worked with. I was cutting nice pieces, cutting off the membranes, and which you have paid money for, even if it is much cheaper than the meat in the store, you kind of have a relation to it. While that coalfish, well…it is pulled out [of the ocean] and…the nice fishing experience is far behind me already, and here and now, we don't really have anything to do with it."

Reading these quotes, the way Georg's invested labour and the fact that he caught the fish himself relate to his food management practices appears somewhat complex. Invested labour is mentioned in relation to the wild lambs-meat he bought, and also related to some of the fish, as he deems it worthwhile to make filets. But whether he caught the fish himself or not does not appear to influence his decision to throw it away or not considerably. Perhaps the excess available and the emphasis on good food in their household mean that he focuses more on the actual quality of the meat and fish.

The way Georg mentions paying for the meat in comparison to the fish, points to how the economic value also influences the disposal practices, in line with the arguments in the next chapter. Its price makes it more valuable, somehow, even if homemade food is generally considered to be of higher worth. The excess of coalfish available lowers his valuation of it. This influences how he treats the coalfish, even if fish was essentially the foodstuff that historically made life and survival in Northern Norway possible. The ambiguous relationship to fish and how this is reflected in local practices is also discussed previously.

At first glance one can get the sense that Georg's practices of throwing away food he has caught or made himself contradicts the argument I build up about the household members as alienated consumers who are not in touch with the larger parts of the food cycle, as here he *is* indeed more connected to it. We should however keep in mind that this is a recreational exception from their usual routine of food provisioning. Fishing coalfish is not how Georg or Josefine provide food for their family. Nevertheless, we must also assume that portions of food was also likely to be wasted on the countryside farms of the past generations, where the household members were indeed in contact with the larger parts of the food cycle and where food was not necessarily a given.

The argument is merely that the contemporary alienation and increased distance (Marx 1988 [1932]) these urban households can experience is only one important factor that contributes to unnecessary food waste today. In this context, we also need to

consider how the increased accessibility of cheap industrialised food has contributed to what I interpret as a process of gradual devaluation and re-valuation of food, a process inter-connected with, and reinforcing the very same alienation. Consider also the influence of the excesses and what imprints the excessive practices have over time on the practices and habits of food management in households such as Georg and Josefine's. They now appear accustomed to wasting significant amounts of food, homemade or not. Whether the food has been homemade or not doesn't singularly define its threshold for disposal. Some gifts, homemade or not, also ended up as food waste, perhaps as a result of which alternative the household members found to be the most meaningful one to them. But these experiences also stood out, as the memory of such wasteful acts was pronounced, perhaps connected to their social history and higher perceived value.

Consequently, even if the food has a higher perceived value socially, like the received gifts of homemade jam or cakes, or culturally as the mainstay of traditional diets, or economically due to highly priced food, I experienced that food was still disposed of due to sub-optimal food management. All these considerations, in addition to others, come together shaping a totality making up the perceived value of the foodstuff in question. I experienced that these various dimensions of value influence the disposal practices concerning food, but I also found that there are always exceptions. These are often borne out of everyday practicalities, like the aforementioned instability factors. In terms of social factors, I experienced how food management slips down on the list of priorities in competition with other daily activities. This can be due to the access of fresher or more tempting alternatives, or just a like-for-like replacement for the food that has gone off due to suboptimal prior food management practices in the households. There are clear indications that the ever present-ness and access to food is a central factor. The supermarket shelves are always full and close by, brimming with affordable food.

Excess and the Desire for Exclusive Airborne Coffee

During a conversation in Georg's office, I asked him if he could remember a time when Josefine and him had disagreed about whether food should be thrown away or not, or if they ended up having a discussion about it. After a second or two, he starts talking. He refers to some freshly ground coffee we had bought together at a coffee bar a few days ago when we went food shopping:

Georg: "Because when I bought coffee, espresso at "Kaffebønna"[179]. And we also got this coffee which we had ordered from Oslo, with…which is very good. Lippe. Lippe no. 2. And it was…sent by airmail. Sent the same day as it was roasted and…and she said we should just throw away the coffee beans that we had bought.

Ant: Those we bought in town?

Georg: Yes. Then we had a small discussion, where I meant that it was pure excess. Throwing away good…lots of coffee. But…we did it.

Ant: Why did she want to throw them away?

Georg: I think mostly it was that…Well, we had already poured them in, we had poured those beans into…

Ant: Into the container on the machine?

Georg: Yes. So then…I think…there was a…it wasn't really any other argument from her side than the fact that she wanted the Lippe Coffee.

Ant: That she wanted to swap?

Georg: Yes.

Ant: Was there any talk about keeping those beans?

Georg: No…it is a bit like, when they have been in that container. It isn't just to pour them out, to put it that way. What I did was that I grounded them up and threw it away afterwards.

Ant: Now that was pretty interesting.

Georg: Well, it isn't like... I am also there craving hard for that no. 2. It wasn't a heated discussion, with strong opinions or anything…

Ant: More like, are we going to do that?

Georg: Yes. Talking about coffee, shall I go and get us one?

Ant: That would be nice."

A few things stand out on first reading. First of all, it serves as a quite blunt example of excess, considering the ensuing wasteful and quite peculiar practices. The definition of

[179] "Kaffebønna" is a local coffee bar that also sells freshly ground, high quality coffee.

excess is: “the state or an instance of surpassing usual, proper, or specified limits”, or “undue or immoderate indulgence”.[180]

Leading up to the excessive practices of unnecessary disposal in the above case, the lack of planning and the sporadic nature of logistics and provisioning are evidently contributing factors. First of all, they buy different kinds of high-quality coffee at the same time. Nothing wrong there, so to speak. In their household they have enough money and easy access to high-quality coffee. However, the wastefulness of the original coffee is the reason for me coining this as an excessive practice. In the end, Georg defends his wife a bit when the moral elements of the wasteful practices surface during our conversation. Using a practice-oriented perspective, along with the concept of fetishism (Marx 1990 [1867], Graeber 2001), I will also apply a psychological perspective on what drives excessive food consumption. This will contrast some of the previous macro-oriented resource management perspectives. Next, I will use another case about coffee to show how morally and culturally situated practices of a diametric nature, of both excess and austerity, of indulgence and restraint, can also induce food waste albeit in different times.

Drawing on the value-in-practice approach of David Graeber (2001, 2013), the argument is that feelings of pleasure and satisfaction are fundamentally desirable for human beings. As a consequence, what brings these feelings and sensations hold a high potential value for us - these entities will often appear as the most meaningful to us. Specific sensations are felt when the inherent features of food and drink meet the human sensory system, and they can create feelings of pleasure and satisfaction. I assume coffee-drinkers can, without much difficulty, identify. But this material, intrinsic, tactile dimension is but one part of a multisided equation of what makes drinking coffee meaningful. On another level, the relational and social aspects of this act of consuming coffee can be linked to identity aspects of lifestyle. Consumption can act as a vehicle to create whom someone wants to be seen as, both in one’s own eyes and those of others[181]. Such an imagined audience does not necessarily have to be empirically real. It can just be an imagined collective of everyone whose opinion matters to us (Graeber 2001:86-87). Coffee drinking can be part of a shared social happening or an ingredient in an important local cultural ritual (See e.g. Lien 1987, Døving 2003).

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[180] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/excess Accessed: 4. April 2014.

[181] Here there are a multitude of studies in a topic receiving much attention especially in the 1990's and onwards. See e.g. Bourdieu 1984, Friedman 1994 and Featherstone 2007 [1991], 1995).

We know from the household summaries that Georg and Josefine take an active interest in good quality food and ingredients. And socially, perhaps they also want to see themselves as competent consumers when it comes to food, enjoying the riches of life. The story about their children not eating sausages and using Balsamico instead of ketchup certainly points towards an aspirational, differentiating and competent display of practices in terms of food consumption and taste. Graeber (2001:114-115) argues that it is absence that motivates people to act. After dinner, Georg and Josefine crave for the fresh, airborne gourmet coffee, the “Lippe no. 2”. And what a person desires is a mirror of who he is, or the imagined whole he believes the desired object can make him (Lacan 2006 [1966]). In this case, what holds the higher potential value is what is most desired. It is imagined to give the highest pleasure. Here this is enjoying the “Lippe no. 2”, both in terms taste, effect, and perhaps also in terms of self-affirmation compared to the other coffee; a coffee that does not seem to hold the same allure as an imagined experience anymore, as this coffee has already been tasted in the past.

The fetishized objects become mirrors of the beholders manipulated intentions (Graeber 2001:115). If we follow this line of thought, an interpretation of their preference for the “Lippe no. 2”-coffee would be that it reflects their intentions of enjoying life through what they eat and drink, an enjoyment which they in this case might find through drinking the best coffee available. If such enjoyment can truly be achieved through such consumption patterns, and how influenced this is by market actors for instance, can of course warrant further discussions. The fact that Georg does not keep the old coffee that was already in the coffee machine is what makes him refer to the act as wasteful afterwards. The gap between the ideal practice of keeping the old coffee and his act of disposing of it is one out of many examples of cultural contradictions I experienced. A conflict occurs between the cultural and historical ideals of treating food respectfully, which he expresses explicitly in our conversation, and the actual act of wasting the coffee needlessly. This contradiction in practice can also be said to represent a gap between the ideal image a community has of itself, and how a community actually works when a multitude of concerns influence our actions (Graeber, 2001:87). This is in line with Evans’s (2012a) argument of how everyday life gets in the way of food management. Simplistically, we can term this as a value conflict between the expressed ideal of not wasting food and an individual desire and wish for a high level of pleasure, enjoyment and, debatably, self-affirmation through lifestyle consumption. In this particular situation their dual desire for “Lippe no. 2” is strong.

In an attempt to interpret why this wasteful practice takes place, we can use Graeber’s (ibid.) practice-oriented perspective on value and raise the question of which

alternative courses of action were available to Georg and Josefine when they made a decision. Here that would be which coffee to choose, and their decision deemed as the most meaningful course of action seen in a larger context of what they find important in life, while also considering constraints like their current and future resource availability. In the context of this household, what is meaningful in this situation could be experiencing and enjoying good food and drink. However, the reasons for not keeping the original coffee remain somewhat unclear to me. Was the slight hassle the labour and time it would take getting the old coffee out of the machine and re-pack it at that time actually an example of everyday getting in the way? It might be. Perhaps Georg and Josefine wanted to enjoy their coffee-moment together, a short break in the hectic daily life with two small boys, so in a sense this priority was a result of their lack of time in busy everyday life?

Another interpretation can be that a combination of a bit of extra hassle to empty the coffee-machine, which Georg mentioned, the un-reflected and established daily habits (Bourdieu 1977, 1991) of wasting edible food, something they can easily afford to in their household. Nevertheless, by Georg's own admission, it is an exercise in excess, judging by current cultural and moral ideals. Excesses of riches are readily available, so waste will inevitably occur (Bataille 1991). In the end, their chosen course of action could be seen as, all in all, more meaningful than the alternatives (Graeber 2001). They both crave for the "Lippe no. 2", and thus opt for it instead of the other kind of coffee. They remove the beans from the grinder and dispose of the oldest coffee. Then they replace the coffee, as they already have the alternative they desire more strongly at hand.

Indulgence

In this analysis of consumption and wasteful practices, it is important to note that over-consumption or over-eating can also be interpreted as a form of waste. Eating more than needed in terms of the equation between energy intake and activity can be considered excessive. Waste is not necessarily just about what is *not* consumed, but also a question of excessive consumption. In the case about the "Lippe no. 2" coffee, we are not talking about over-eating, thus a more expansive perspective on gluttony has a degree of relevance here. Gluttony is defined as excess in eating or drinking, or greedy or excessive indulgence.[182] It is known as one of the seven deadly sins in traditional

[182] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gluttony Accessed: 1. April 2014.

Christianity. In ancient times, when the origins of these sins were formulated, we can assume that scarcity of food was a more pressing matter for many. As a glutton deprived the needy of food by his own indulgence and excess, gluttony was deemed a selfish, immoral act. In both a local perspective of our households of study, and even in a larger western contemporary one, the concept of scarcity of food hardly holds validity in the same manner compared to ancient Christian times. There are estimates that just half of the food wasted in the United States today could feed the about one billion malnourished people in the world (Stuart 2009).

In Summa Theologica, Saint Thomas Aquinas (Part II-II, Question 148)[183] writes that gluttony was indeed the obsessive anticipation of meals, arguing that it could both include this anticipation as well as the constant eating of delicacies and excessively costly foods. In the description above from Georg, both he and his wife are sitting there in the sofa after dinner, craving for the "Lippe no. 2". So, in the case in question, all the three elements described are present, as the coffee is a delicacy; it is costly, and highly anticipated. They are searching for sensory pleasures, in contrast to the temperance that would be more in accordance with the traditionally strong ideals of austerity, moderation and restraint. But this would be missing the point slightly, as it seems that it was the disposal of the old coffee that was at the core of Georg's own moral condemnation in this actual episode. This appeared to be the act he saw as highly wasteful and excessive, not their subsequent indulgence of luxurious and expensive coffee. Such indulgence now appears quite accepted culturally, but the wastefulness of the act, driven by both habitual disposal practices and the excess of coffee in their household, is still encapsulated in cultural-historical moralities. Waste of coffee also occurred in a wholly different context. Here the wastefulness had its basis in the opposite of excess and indulgence - the traditional virtues of temperance and austerity in times of scarcity.

The Sack of Brazilian Coffee beans[184]

During the winter of 1940, young Miss Johansen from Tromsø managed, quite by chance as I recall, to get hold of a ten-kilogram sack of coffee beans originating from Brazil. The beans were transported to Norway before the start of the war and she brought it into

[183] http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/18755/pg18755.html Accessed: 2. April 2014.
[184] This story was brought to my attention by an exhibition at Perspektivet Museum in Tromsø in 2012.

their household before the strict rationing of food and other household items was implemented. Miss Johansen never really found a good enough occasion to use the exclusive beverage. Instead, she served the "wartime replacement-coffee" to her guests and hid the exclusive sack of coffee in the attic, like the treasure it was at the time. This is similar to how Jorunn and Kjell struggled to find an occasion good enough for their homemade jam.

When peace arrived, the rationing gradually ceded and the once so sought after coffee beans were gradually rendered less valuable, due to increasing availability and a loss of quality. Most likely, Miss Johansen forgot what was once her big secret and precious treasure. Because over 50 years later, when Gerhard Knudsen was cleaning the house after the death of his aunt, the sack was still lying there, unopened in a dark corner of the attic.

(Image from Perspektivet Museum, Tromsø. www.perspektivet.no)

Georg and Miss Johansen both ended up wasting their coffee, just for very contrasting reasons. Miss Johansen, the story does not give us her Christian name, was frugal in the times of war and scarcity, whereas Georg does not have to be concerned about where the next cup of coffee is going to come from in an everyday life framed by excess. Both the practices Georg and Miss Johansen were to a considerable extent situated according to fairly similar moral and cultural ideals, even if enjoyment and indulgence is much more widely accepted today.

The ideal that wasting food is essentially wrong is still conveyed by all the households in the study during out conversations. This ideal was present in both cases, even if we are talking about a period of 50 years between them. An important point is that the contextual surroundings were very different, especially as the access to food was completely different in the two cases. The factor of continued and expected access to foodstuffs is pivotal when it comes to practices of food management, and subsequently the levels of waste, but exceptions present themselves. With this sack of coffee, perhaps it occurred due to a combination of individual restraint, a lack of social occasions presenting themselves and plain forgetfulness.

Times of Excess and Wasteful Practices

Throughout this journey, following the food through the food management process of the households, there have been numerous examples revealing the excessive amount of food available. We have heard how routines of provisioning often take place without consideration of what is already in store at home, resulting for instance in cases where three bags of carrots, yet to be opened, are discovered in the bottom fridge drawer, by surprise. There are examples where household members express that they wish to throw away the whole content of their deep-freezers or fridges to obtain a sense of control and order, only for the process to likely repeat itself with regular intervals due to a repeated lack of planning or knowledge about household inventory. Food is cheap and easily accessible. These practices indicate a lack of motivation t plan, related to a lack of need to plan. Other activities appear more meaningful than spending more time than necessary on food management. On other occasions, we have seen how desire wins out, as what actually needs to be eaten before it goes off, or what was bought with the intention of being today's dinner, lose out due to a strong desire for something more temping, something fresher than originally sought and bought. As Jon so pertinently expressed, one fancies something else and is, due to over-provisioning, overbooked. At times, households are also overbooked in another manner, temporarily rather than materially, as the temporal demands and the instability factors in the everyday life of the household members win out over the demands of a more careful and meticulous resource management.

The standard of living has increased dramatically in Norway the last 50 years. Food has become considerably cheaper, with a much smaller portion of household income on average being spent on foodstuffs. During my interview with Svein and

Ingeborg in their living room, Svein makes an attempt to summarize what has happened since the levels of food waste are so high nowadays:

> *Svein: "We are living in a bit of a welfare-society, where we got to have the little extra…where we aren't so good at restricting ourselves, and then much is wasted because we cannot manage to look after it [the food] and…*
>
> *Ant: Why don't we look after it then?*
>
> *Svein: Because we have too much… Now you can eat Sunday dinner every day…Sunday used to be the highlight with a good dinner, like Pork chops and sauerkraut.*
>
> *Ant: What did you eat during the week then?*
>
> *Svein: There was quite a lot of fish, much of it fished by ourselves."*

Svein refers to what I interpret as the presence of a strong desire and fetish. This leads to over-provisioning of food in a society of riches. This is in tune with my findings in several other households, and what David Evans found (2011, 2012b) in his recent study from the UK. It is interesting to note how the Sunday dinner has turned into the everyday dinner in just a few decades. Nowadays pork is usually the cheapest meat available in the local supermarkets. We also saw how Ingrid was astounded by the lack of planning and inventory checks in relation to food provisioning as a symbol of the excesses of today, just to recapitulate a bit:

> *Ingrid: "You can see it in the stores today…what are we going to have for dinner today? I don't know, they say…Ha! Imagine that they don't know!!! They have food in the freezer, go to the supermarket, stand there, looking around. What are we having for dinner?! [shakes her head]*
>
> *Fredrik: They just buy fresh, fresh food, meat, fish and the like.*
>
> *Ingrid: It is terrible. It is a tragedy! And it is really poor economy."*

The next case can act as a metaphor for much of these practices of excess I experienced, practices that led to high food waste levels. The case is about Georg wasting lambs meat. During a chat with Georg, as he was preparing dinner in his kitchen, we were discussing food waste. I then asked him about the last time he felt really bad about throwing away food, just as I had when he told me about the abovementioned wasted coffee during an interview. First, he could not really recall, but then he remembers a time he tidied up in the fridge. This is something that doesn't occur annually, but more often he says. He continues:

Georg:" Not long ago so…there was this friend of mine who has a farm in Voss. He usually brings with him some slaughter, so we buy some off him - both lamb and calf meat, from ecological animal husbandry. Then I became uncertain if the meat was from the autumn of 2009 or the autumn of 2010. Then I threw it away. It was bad. It was irritating, because I felt that, it had been a bit too long…considering it wasn't cut at a butcher. I cut it. It is probably more hygienic there, less handled. It had been on a car-trip and…I got uncertain about this meat. It isn't often this happens though, but that is perhaps the time this year where I have though, damn it, this is wasteful! But generally, when I throw things, it has expired with a solid margin, so it is only to get rid of it.

Ant: What made it so special?

Georg: That I had been cutting it myself, taking care of the parts, doing the job properly. On the other [meat] I had marked it, and had a good feeling about the meat…it was probably nice meat, but it was. Most likely, if I had taken it out and defrosted it and prepared it, it might have been ok, but I felt that I could not trust it.

Ant: You didn't defrost it and…

Georg: It is this kind of situation where you have to tidy up and find space…so it wasn't like. Yes…

Ant: You are tidying up, finding space…and you got something there and you are going to…

Georg: you know, something is going in, and speaking of our freezer, something has to go out. Very often. It is a bit odd with it when it has been put in the freezer, when we talk about if one has control over what one has in the fridge. And then something might be there, in the bottom level of the vegetable drawer, which is a bit vague to me, otherwise I have decent control. But I have damn poor control of what happens in the freezer. I argued strongly for us getting a freezing cabinet when buying a new freezer for the basement. So that it just didn't get stuck down there.

Ant: That it didn't get stuck in a hole like?

Georg: Because it is so much more visible when you pull out the drawer and look, but it hasn't really worked out that way.

Ant: You have a freezer where everything just disappears into then?

Georg: No, we have a cupboard. I insisted on that, to get that overview, but then it is so seldom that I am down there. It is Sunday morning when one has forgotten to shop for Sunday dinner, or if someone is coming for a visit and you walk down to have a look. It is sporadic.

Ant: So, is it fully stocked there then?

Georg: Pretty much, but a lot of it are things that we have made during autumn, jam, berry-cordial. Quite a lot of that. It takes up much space there. And we use it regularly. Frozen fish, frozen meat. It gets stacked on top of each other, and one doesn't have the overview.

Ant: So, you didn't consider using the fish today then (as we have just returned from shopping fish for dinner together). Did you think in that direction?

Georg: No, not at all."

Georg bought high quality lambs-meat, straight from the farm. Then he spent quite a bit of time to portion and pack it properly before freezing it. However, it seems he did not check his deep-freezer beforehand. And as it was packed to the rim, he had to throw lots of food away to get enough room for the newly acquired meat. But as he so pragmatically put it: *"Something is going in, something has to go out".* This shows the excess of food available in this household, and how this influences their practices of resource management and contributes to significant amounts of food waste. Georg is also disposing of food to obtain space or room for newly provisioned food (Evans 2012a:1131), although it is not a practice comparable to disposing food obtain order as previously discussed.

Georg expresses how he had invested time and effort into the preparation and packing of this meat, and how this made his threshold for disposing it higher. Contrary to the numerous small coalfish previously discussed, this meat was seen as more valuable. Alas, in this case, both the labour and time he had put into it and the status of this kind of meat as food combined to enhance its perceived value even more. Similar to what occurs with gifts, the history of the meat and its traces of labour heighten its threshold for disposal, illustrating the detachment and alienation (Marx 1988 [1932]) experienced amongst consumers when it comes to the common, industrialised commodities of food bought in the supermarkets.

But no matter how high the potential value, he also sees the potential health risks associated with eating meat that has potentially gone off as too high. In this case the most meaningful alternative for him is to dispose of the meat, with a heavy heart.

On the other hand, he did not even defrost it to evaluate its edibility, using knowledge he claimed to have when we discussed how to judge the edibility of fish and meat previously. Then he also underlined how he found expiry dates on beef a bit odd and misunderstood. His opinions on judging the edibility of meat were communicated through the story about his grandfather who was a butcher and knew how to judge meat. Georg says he was also taught this. In this case though, he chooses to follow his gut feeling. The knowledge uttered and ideal practices were not exhibited by Georg in practice. On this occasion at least, statements and actions were contradictory.

Georg and Josefine's newly acquired freezing cabinet only sporadically contribute in the everyday circulation of food in the household. Sometimes it is considered as a backup solution. Perhaps the placing in the basement has some parallels to Jorunn and Kjell's experience where they changed their practices due to moving their freezer to a more visible location. In its new location, it was increasingly included in their daily food cycle and not so distant and disconnected, nor from their frame of mind. It seems Georg placed a certain level of trust in the newly acquired storage technology assisting them to keep things more orderly, improving the overview of their inventory. However, in terms of avoiding food waste, it still has to be used with diligence as Jorunn reminded us: it is no perpetum mobile.

Additionally, Georg's statement about food wasted in their household usually being way past the expiry date is interesting. His explanation and reasoning here hints at an approach which yet again differs from judging food through one's own senses. His approach is closer to using the expiry dates as the deciding factor, one that even gives added legitimacy to the disposal of food judging by his way of expression on this occasion. But regardless of the rationalisation he offers, that most of the food he throws away being way past its expiry date, it still counts as food waste. The fact that the food has expired and isn't edible does not make the discarding of food more acceptable by the cultural and moral ideals surrounding food waste, ideals that he himself also expresses agreement with during conversation. The expiry does however render him some legitimacy for disposal within the boundaries of more contemporary practices, deflecting the attention from one's own wasteful practices towards the expiry date as the key factor.

If anything, the mentioned practices illustrate the habitual, excessive and wasteful nature of food management experienced in their household; they waste significant amounts of food, and that there is little planning involved. This kind of wastefulness did not limit itself to their household exclusively.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the actual disposal practices in the households and their interrelation with current cultural and moral ideals, and how the underlying premises for these practices are acted out through the management of food. In this regard, I have sought to explain the borders between edible and inedible and its relation to cultural and material dimensions. The local everyday practices that generate unnecessary food waste have been the focal point in particular, and how decisions household members find meaningful are taken in situ. I have discussed how the dynamic thresholds and borders between the wanted and unwanted, especially in relation to categories, help the households to manage "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966) through sorting and separation, also including redistribution.

The influence of cultural perceptions of freshness, health risks, redistribution and excessive indulgence on household waste levels has been mapped out. I pointed to a widespread state of excess being present, and connected wasteful practices due to this excess to fetishism (Marx 1990 [1867]), providing a more individual and psychological perspective on drivers behind excessive food consumption and waste.

The junction between the material intangibles of entropy (Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971], Bateson 2000 [1972]), the access to material resources of food and the culturally, socially and morally based categorizations of it was also explored. This is a contextual pallet against which these households of different generations attempt to make the most meaningful decisions (Graeber 2001, 2013), typically intertwined with habituality (Bourdieu 1977, 1991), connected to values and established practices from their upbringing. Finally, with an empirical case as the starting point, I touch upon the oft-presumed tension between individualized and excessive short-term household practices and more long-term collective concerns. I introduce this topic here to prepare the reader for upcoming discussions. These will analyse if and how the relationship between what I see as mostly alienated households (Marx 1988 [1932]) with penchants for individualized excessive consumption, dovetailing contemporary dominant economic paradigms, can be re-established. One considered approach is through a re-alignment of currently unsustainable, isolated household practices towards a more balanced ecologically oriented ideology of a holistic and sustainable nature.

Fredrik: "The children don't know what money is, what they are worth.
Ingrid: That isn´t their fault!
Fredrik: No, it is the development in society. It is not good."

Chapter 11 The Relationship between Food, Money, Value and Waste

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss how food is valued in the households I studied. The empirical vantage point is everyday household practices, and how valuations of food are reflected and manifested through these. Drawing upon a range of theories of value, I will analyse and contextualize these local practices in the light of changes in macro-factors that have taken place at an accelerated pace in the post-World War II period. These macro-factors have roots back to the Industrial Revolution and beyond and shape valuations, and the values defining these. We will see how ideals grounded in an economic logic are strongly influential. The scale of measurement to estimate the value of different kinds of food in the households appears predominately to be an economic one, closely linked to a monetary representation - its purchasing price. Price is an important discourse surrounding the practices of food management[185]. This emphasis pulls the definition of the value of food away from its potential use value as nutrition. A key point is how these valuations of food vary across generations.

The Hierarchy of Food and its Value

Cheap foodstuffs such as rice and pasta was regularly wasted in the households, even though they are not among the top categories of waste food identified through the quantitative studies of the larger "Food Waste"-project. When asked to mention what they considered wasteful practices, informants would tell me how it was difficult to measure pasta or rice correctly, or to make use of a surplus at a later stage. Jon (42, male) told me that rice and pasta do not cost much anyway, hinting at a price-value correlation. A more pronounced reluctance towards throwing away food that is more

[185] Invested labour and the social relations food is obtained through are other key defining factors for valuations of food, the latter which we will return to in detail in the final chapter.

expensive also exists. When chatting over a daytime coffee in their living room, Jon shared a story: "I was making food together with Martin (the 20 year old son of his partner Gry). Then he asked me why I had not cooked more rice, and added: “Just make some more. It doesn’t cost anything anyway.” Jon says he finds it difficult to prepare the right amount of rice and pasta:

> *“I don’t really know. It varies a bit how much rice people eat. So, usually, there is something left. I have been getting a bit of stick when it hasn’t been enough [rice] a couple of times. Well, it is an interesting explanation. Rice is so cheap. It doesn’t really matter if you throw away a decilitre or two. It doesn’t matter. It is so cheap. To try and prepare so that it will get eaten up, but then I get told off when I don’t make enough, so the result is that it is usually something left. This also happens with pasta. More is made than is…salad too! But then I put it in the fridge for the next day, but it happens that salad is thrown away now and again, because then it isn’t eaten the next day anyway.”*

Jon further explains how he finds that there are different thresholds for wasting cheap and expensive food:

> *Jon: “So, if you have bought yourself some expensive steaks, you don’t want to waste them.*
> Ant: It is easier to waste rice?
> *Jon: Yes, absolutely. It is easier to throw rice away, because you know it costs nothing. You go and buy yourself a steak. It is expensive. And then waste it? That is not so easy to do. That is why it ends up in the fridge [in contrast to the rice or pasta], with the wish that someone will make use of it. But we are not so good at making use of leftovers. We keep it if there is enough for dinner for two or three people. Then we eat it. The only time we kept it [when there was less left] was when we were at Gry’s parents place.”* [186]

Jon perceives rice and pasta as very cheap food, and it does not really matter much if some of it is thrown away. Its price is used as an indicator as to how valuable food is. Subsequently, this is reflected in food management decisions all through the food cycle, from provisioning to the re-use or disposal of leftovers. Its value is manifested in practice, through action (Graeber 2001, 2013). It appears sensible and meaningful to

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[186] It is interesting to note that Jon and Gry applied different practices when it came to the treatment of leftovers when visiting her parents household. This could however be coincidental, and I wasn't there to observe the situation.

manage the more expensive food more carefully. Money is a scarce resource, so expensive food is, in what can at first appear to be quite a banal point, treated as more valuable. This close attachment between value and purchasing price can be a problematic abstraction. I will return to this.

Both the comments above illustrate poignantly something very common in several households – the dominance of an economic rational perspective on value. The potential use value of rice and pasta as human nutrition is pushed into the background. The current disposal practices and valuations are a far cry from those narrated from yesteryears by the older households. The purchasing price is now predominately used as the yardstick, the metric for placing different kind food in a hierarchy of value. The more expensive the food is, the more preciously it is treated, and vice versa. Other aspects do matter and influence practices as well, such as the levels of sociality, or the time and effort invested in procuring different foodstuffs, be they homemade, self-fished or gifted. Its social history and labour so to speak, is important, in addition to its perceived future potential. Regardless, the price is still central in the establishment of the value of food in households, manifested through their everyday practices. During daily food management practices, I experienced few environmental or moral concerns over waste levels enter into consideration, nor the fact that meat indeed comes from animals. This brings us to the topic of meat, meat that is considered to have a high value, certainly compared to rice and pasta.

The Value of Meat

> *"I remember at my grandparents place during the 80's, they would serve meat to their guests while eating fish five or six days a week. Meat was more precious then, and my grandmother used to make us x-meat[187] to be kind to me, because she knew how much I loved such meat." Georg (40, male).*

Talking further on the topic of meat, Georg tells me about "The Kilpisjärvi Meat-Run", a fairly known local phenomenon:

> *"I was a typical meat-kid. One could get a higher meat-quota [allowed amount of meat when returning to Norway from across the Finnish border, from Kilpisjärvi, about 170 km from Tromsø] if you were four in one car instead of two. So the kids had to tag along to Kilpis when buying poor quality meat. It*

[187] What kind of meat he referred to was inaudible on the recording of this conversation.

isn't good meat that you get there. Tromsø nowadays is more quality oriented with several delis and butchers."

The quality of food is quite important to Georg. Today they can easily afford to buy food of high quality for himself and his family. However, these quotes serve to illustrate how meat was indeed expensive and carried high status when he was a kid during the 1980's. Meat was coveted, often saved for special occasions. Families drove, and some still do, to Kilpisjärvi to buy meat and other foodstuffs in what was considered to be good deals.

Other informants, typically above the age of 35 or so, also tell me that having meat for dinner was not so common when they grew up. Usually, they only had a meat-based dinner once or twice a week. Fish on the other hand was available in plentiful, and could usually be provided easily and cheaply, often by personal means. The common weekly dinners consisted of fish-based products with potatoes four-five times a week. Being scarce, meat was precious and thus held a higher perceived value. This is also reflected in its higher cultural status. This valuation of meat is probably also connected to elements of class, and is certainly not exclusive to Northern Norway. However, the main point here is that the high cultural status of meat in comparison with alternative food prevails. While still maintaining much of its status, many processed meat products or certain kinds of meat are now cheaper than fresh fish in the supermarkets. Fish was, and is still, often provided through combinations of self-subsistence or informal networks of friends and relatives by many local households, at a fraction of the prices in the local supermarkets. The typically Norwegian dish fishcakes were not on sale in local shops on the countryside until in the 1970's according to some locals. The contextual backdrop is developments in the regimes of production, as the scales, centralisation and specialisation in the food industry increases in the decades after World War II. Slaughtering and butchering is increasingly not done on the farms anymore, but at slaughterhouses. Regulations contribute to benefit larger scales of production. The catching and production of fish is gradually centralised benefitting larger vessels, with distribution becoming increasingly dominated by formal market infrastructures.[188]

The cultural value of meat remains high, even if prices are significantly lower compared to e.g. the 1980's. Even if household members refer to price as the key-factor

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[188] See: St.meld. nr. 12 (2002-2003) – «Om dyrehold og dyrevelferd». https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-12-2002-2003-/id196533/?ch=5#KAP5-1 and «Hva du trenger å vite om Norsk Fiskerinæring 2004.» https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/hva-du-bor-vite-om-norsk-fiskerinaring-2/id88052/ Accessed 18. March 2016.

deciding their practices, their management of meat are not purely guided by price. There is a cultural back current from previous times, when meat was an expensive and scarce commodity. This cultural trait still holds some significance. Meat appears to hold a higher cultural value than its relative price should indicate, and it is often talked about and treated as being more expensive than it is in economic terms compared to other food. Overall, meat still appears to rest at the top of the hierarchy of food in these households. This resonates with Claude Lévi-Strauss (2008 [1997]) point that meat was at the top of this hierarchy.

The Ambiguous Value of Fish

In contrast, the value of fish can be somewhat ambiguous, drawing our attention towards the variable of availability - the scale between scarcity and abundance. In Northern Norway, the availability of fish is currently not in question. Dependent on season, different kinds of fish have been available in abundance for the local population to harvest. Traditionally, fish has been the mainstay of local diet, along with potatoes. This was basically what made survival possible in Northern Norway in the past times of the self-subsistence economy of combined farming[189]. When I discussed the perception and potential value of fish with the households, the responses varied. Fish was both ranked as the most important and precious resource; one they were very reluctant to waste, to one they were not overly bothered by, as fish was always available in abundance fairly close by. However, these diverse responses can just as well be a reflection of the approach towards resource management in the respective households on the whole and how frugal it is. It could also be connected to how they acquire fish in the respective households, for instance the relationship between the parties in the actual exchange than related to fish as a foodstuff per se.[190]

During our main interview, Stine (38, female) told me about the difficult economic situation in her family when she grew up. They didn't eat much meat, and also different kinds of meat compared to now (e.g. whale, offal, more low-quality meat). This corresponds with data from other households in the same generation. Furthermore, she discusses her valuation of fish in this context:

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[189] Animal husbandry, hunting, gathering and reindeer herding are also important elements in the regional food supply.

[190] How food acquired through personal or kinship networks is treated differently and more precious down to what I term a higher level of sociality, and hence meaningfulness, is discussed in Chapter 13.

Stine: "We didn't have much meat, perhaps pork-chops on Sunday. I don't think I saw a steak before I was seven years old, that might be a bit odd though [laughs]. But we had lots of fish. The fish was almost free, and right outside! I really miss that. Fantastic fish. High-quality, fresh fish in abundance. I would very much have liked that today, yes. But it wasn't that long ago…but I had at least gotten one such dinner now but…Well, I managed to get hold of that fish today at least. It is hard to find good fish today, if you remember what good quality fish really tastes.

Ant: What has happened?

Stine: It was easier before. We lived right next to the fishery, and the supply chain was much shorter than today. My parents also made lots of fish based products themselves. It is harder for me to throw away fish. I don't like throwing away fish and I have a huge respect for tapping into a stock of fish in the ocean, or from breeding. It might be worse for me to waste fish. I have another relation to fish than meat. I have experienced how much less fish there is in the ocean near the coast today, compared to when I grew up. The handling of the resources of fish in the ocean is not like it should be."

Older household members in their 60's have also told me that during times of plenty, there could even be a lower threshold for wasting fish, even if it didn't mean that food was taken for granted in their household on the whole. Also, keep in mind the possible limitations in terms of storage and technology previously, and the possibilities for re-distribution. However, Stine touches on another aspect of fish as a resource, referring to a combination of the cultural and historical significance of fish and environmental considerations and developments since her childhood years. The practices of managing fish still contain aspects of moral and cultural importance, similar to meat, but from a diametrically different angle. Meat was scare and exclusive; fish available in abundance, a resource life in the region depended on. Stine also explicitly points to an increased distance between the source of food and her own household, an important aspect that we will return to.

I argue that such cultural changes in the conceptualisations and valuations of food come to the fore through such differences in generational practices. Ingrid and Fredrik, and Erika and Roger describe how they grew up in rural areas where self-subsistence was a significant part of their food provisioning. Being the immediate and daily environment (Ingold 2000), it strongly influences how people and households relate to resources like food. It appears practices have changed due to increased distances to the origin of food and food production. With more convenient resource

availability, very close nearby at almost all times, households subsequently prioritise differently and adapt new ways of managing, or not managing, their food. Nevertheless, in critical discourse, all households in this study maintain a core of the ideals of the past, of austerity and a careful management of food, valuing it highly.

Household Practices and Dimensions of Value

To show the complexity of the process of estimating the emic valuations of food, I have made a table below. Schematically, it illustrates some of the dimensions that are present to a varying degree as household-members mediate the value of different foodstuffs. These valuations are manifested through practices, their management of said foodstuffs, and consequently their levels of wastefulness.

Figure 11.1:

Example	**Factors**	**Dimension**
Dry bread has lower value than fresh. Dried meat *can* hold a higher value than fresh meat.	Hunger, Taste, Freshness, Longevity, Availability, Longevity, Weight, No preparation needed	Sensory, Economic, Physical Practical
Cheap rice holds lower value than expensive meat Wild salmon holds higher value than farmed salmon. Food providing a high number of meals has higher value.	Price, Availability, Volume, Nutritional content Taste, Availability, Status, Tradition Hunger, Price, Availability	Economic, Material Sensory, Physical, Economic, Social, Cultural Physical, Economic
A gift of food has higher value than food bought. Meat has higher status than fish.	History, Sociality, Status History, Status	Social, Cultural, Political Cultural, Social

Pizza leftovers hold higher value than fish leftovers. Vegetables have lower value than fish	Preparation time, Role in meal[191] Role in meal, Nutritional content, Status	Practical Practical, Material, Cultural
Food not available is desired Variation in diet is desired	Desire, Availability Desire, Availability	Psychological, Economic Psychological, Sensory, Econ.

Looking at the table, its limitations and simplistic categorisations are evident. The different dimensions of value can be both related in various ways and deeply intertwined. For instance, take how fresh meat has a high status locally. This status is also dependent on economic factors like limited availability and thus high price, as well as material factors like nutritional content, fresh taste and short longevity, compared to dried or frozen meat. Then there is the status due to the local cultural history of meat, a dish previously exclusively for Sundays. Also, there is a hierarchy of valuations of different kinds of meat. To add to this complexity, the longevity, weight and nutritional content of dried meat raises its value if the availability of fresh meat changes. There is dynamic interplay between material, social, cultural, temporal and spatial factors. The perceived value of different foodstuff is shifting and complex. When a decision of what to eat is made, the most meaningful alternative is chosen based on a complex array of factors, and the dimensions of the non-reflected, embodied and habitual aspects must also be considered (Bourdieu 1977, 1990) here. For instance, Kaisa and Tor say they choose the cheapest in-house brand "First Price" on principle, due to their economic situation. However, only if it tastes OK, according to Kaisa.

If the main factors in establishing the value of different foodstuffs are a combination of the abovementioned webbing, let me exemplify the emic valuations of different foodstuffs based on only one of many factors within each dimension:

[191] The notion of role here refers to if the foodstuff is seen as a central component of the meal or an accompaniment.

Figure 11.2:

Value Dimension	**Factor**	**Foodstuff**		
		Rice	Pizza (frozen)	Meat (gift)
Material	Nutrition/Sensory	Low/Medium	Medium	Medium
Social	Status	Low	Medium	High
Economic	Price/Availability	Low	Low/Medium	Medium
Practical	Preparation time/effort needed	Medium	Low	Medium
Psychological	Desire	Low	Low/Medium	Medium/High

Clearly, these rankings can be scrutinised. However, the aim of the table is again to illustrate complexity of value, rather than to pin specific categorisations to the different foodstuffs mentioned. These fluctuate. During her fieldwork in Båtsfjord in the neighbouring county Finnmark, Lien (1989:121) found that the time, place and social setting decide which dimension related to food is emphasised and brought into the foreground. This can be observed through the eating habits in our households. Rice for instance, is also a fairly anonymous and generic foodstuff compared to meat or fish received as a gift or locally produced cheeses or jams. The social history and status of the foodstuffs influence its thresholds for disposal.

As discussed in previous chapters, the valuations of food also fluctuate dependent on where in the household food cycle the foodstuff is situated. Unsurprisingly, the purchasing price of food as a mean of valuation is very strong in the provisioning phase. Nevertheless, it is also quite dominant in the disposal phase, considering if something should be discarded or not, as what one has given up to obtain it becomes more relevant and highlighted again in the moment of disposal. In between these entry and exit points of the household's food cycle, the social dimension is very much present. When the food has been provisioned, we enter the phases where management, distribution and consumption take place, and sometimes redistribution before disposal. During the redistribution and consumption phases, the material dimensions are also especially important. For instance, consider the potential satisfaction brought by taste and freshness, in addition to the social aspects of what fits the occasion and is fit for sharing. Practical dimensions like the preparation time, effort and skill needed are also important. Here the price is not in the foreground in the same manner as during the provisioning phase.

After the food is bought, the focus is on the management, storage and redistribution of it, and on the occasion to consume it. E.g. how costly or precious is the food, and if the occasion is significant enough for it to be served. Its social status and price does still matter. It can be actualised when considering the right occasion for consumption, rather than being omnipresent like during the provisioning phase.

The provisioning phase attracts much of the attention in the media through advertising by food industry, distributors and retailers. Household provisioning is pivotal, as without food the household starves, so the price focus I experienced in terms of valuation is not very surprising. However, the omnipresence of price as the dominant metric of value during provisioning leads to a distorted perspective; that it is mainly when provisioning food that you can save money. The fact that you also can do so by managing you food more carefully often remains in the shadows. The strong focus on the provisioning phase can also lead to the illusion that the practice of provisioning equals the act of consumption.

During the disposal phase, how much was paid for what might be disposed of becomes more important again, as exemplified by Jon and his low threshold for wasting rice contrary to expensive meat. During the disposal phase, the reluctance to discard foodstuffs with a high level of sociality or history also becomes visible. This will depend on the relations or experiences it was obtained through, or on the energy and labour spent to obtain or prepare it. Its value becomes manifested through practices, previous and planned, like when Jorunn finds it harder to throw away the homemade jam received from her mother.[192]

We also need to consider other actors in the field, the Norwegian welfare state, commercial supermarket-chains, nutritionists, chefs and different kinds of consumers, individual and groups. They will have different conceptualisations of which factors constitute the potential value, and thus the desirability, of different kinds of food for households. This makes up a framework of values that define the valuations of food through practice in the households (Graeber 2001, 2013). The supermarket chains appear to focus on volume, how much of different products you get per Crown. Specialist shops and delis focus more on competence, quality and service, whereas the welfare state institutions might focus on a combination of factors, like number of meals, nutritional value and health benefits. Preparation times will be important for families with small children, as time is often very scarce. Chefs are likely to focus more on the sensory taste and pleasure brought by the end result, presentation and the quality of

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[192] Mauss (1924 [1995]), Marx (1867 [1990]) and Graeber (2001) are all pointing towards the influence of such a variety of dimensions in terms of valuation.

the raw materials used. Poorer households look towards number of meals obtained per Crown, while children's desires are often driven by their sweet tooth.

The amalgam of these aspects making up the valuations of foodstuffs is manifested through practice, in choosing the most meaningful alternative in a given situation (Graeber 2001:66-67). E.g. when Jonas chose to shuffle the leftovers from the pasta meal straight into the bin, or when Georg chooses to dispose of the coffee in his grinder when he replaces it with the more desirable alternative. Both practices are manifestations of a low valuation of these foodstuffs, regardless of the practices being habituated or not.

Excess - Budget Not Necessary

Without exception, it is fair to say that all the households partaking in the study could afford to waste 30 %[193] of the volume of food bought into their households. I did not attempt to measure their waste-levels, but by my estimates some of them wasted even more. This is might be a symptom of food management being given low priority, and thus a manifestation of the low value they attributed to their food.

Excess is widespread, as even a young student couple with relatively low income can afford to waste significant amounts of food, without really considering how much money they spent on food. One household where both were on unemployment benefits also had not set up a food-budget, and continued to waste a lot of food. The household of Kaisa and Tor, a young couple with a small baby, who had to change their shopping habits due to less income, have no real idea of how much they spend on food monthly. They expressed that it was necessary for them to save money, but did not actually change their routines much, nor did they set up a budget. They also had not made a conscious decision to prioritise food over other things, rather the contrary. Even with the new economic situation due to Kaisa not working anymore, they could still afford not to be overly concerned about food expenses or unnecessary food waste.

Georg and Josefine have discussed setting up a maximum budget for their food expenses. Both of them earn pretty well, and the plan has not materialized yet. Georg also told me that have plans to only shop for food once a week to save both money and time - to "buy big" as he put it. These plans aren't put into motion either. They just cannot seem to find the time to plan properly. Then again, as Georg says, they don't

[193] The average level of unnecessary food waste from households in Norway (Hanssen & Møller 2013)

actually need to change their habits. They can afford to keep up their wasteful food practices. Georg knows it is wrong, and he says he does it with a heavy heart. Still, he shuffles kilos of fruit and parts of his homemade bread down into the organic waste bags regularly.

The wasteful practices in Georg and Josefine's household stand in clear contrast to the diligence shown by e.g. Erika and Roger and Ingrid and Fredrik, as does the temporal perspective they have on food management. These are different generations. Georg has a day-to-day focus towards their household's food management, whereas the households who are more diligent are more likely to shop in bulk and thus plan with a longer period in mind. Based on the practices I observed in the different households, a shorter temporal perspective on provisioning can contribute to a conceptualisation of food as something that always is available whenever you want it, and highlights its status as transient matter (Thompson 1979), factors lowering its perceived value. Based on my data, I can only be indicative towards such a connection, and if this temporal perspective and provisioning routines increase the likelihood of wasting food needlessly. I am not just referring to higher waste-levels due to poorer planning and management of the food. I put forward a hypothesis that such a short-term perspective of frequent provisioning, without planning, without seasonal-connections, also creates a platform for food to be increasingly taken for granted and perceived as disposable, thus less valuable as nutrition. The constant access, lower relative prices, a shorter temporal perspective and less contact with the larger food cycle, are key-factors that all contribute to a murky cocktail with the possible effect of food being re-valued or even devalued as a resource in contemporary households; a valuation manifested in the local practices.

Provisioning and Priorities

Discussions about shopping-lists and the use of them are another common topic that reflects the emphasis on economic motivations for wasting less food. Only three of the households I followed used lists with any kind of regularity. Others mentioned that they sometimes made one and then forgot to bring it when going shopping. A common rationale for using lists was to avoid temptations and buying too much, with the underlying motivation of saving money. This motivation was also mentioned explicitly on many occasions when I went shopping together with the households. Saving money is stated as the main factor deciding the choice of supermarket. But interestingly, the potential savings by choosing between the different low-price supermarket chains is not

significant, considering the low percentage of average income spent on food in Norwegian households (11.8%)[194].

Regularly there are articles in the consumer sections of Norwegian newspapers where the prices at most common supermarket-chains are compared. This is usually done by listing up a selection of common foodstuffs, what they cost at each supermarket and the grand total. Then the conclusion is presented for instance as: "Save 120 kroner by shopping at Prix instead of Spar!" These articles are helpful, but they also capture a huge share of the attention at the expense of other parts of the household food management where savings can be obtained. The supermarket-chains that get favourable results in these rankings also use these articles actively in their marketing.

Much due to a focus on cheap food that has evolved the last decades, many households remain ignorant of how little these actual choices between supermarkets matter for their overall household economy. 120 NOK[195] only makes up 0.33 % of the average monthly household budget in Norway (36 333 NOK). The differences in food expenses between choosing Rema 1000, Prix or Spar are not significant seen in the larger context of the average household economy. The households can easily afford to be unaware of this, even if the effort to choose the cheapest supermarket receives a lot of attention compared to lowering food waste levels. Such an argument is supported by other indicators in the household food management process, for instance the low levels of planning or research to find good offers, buying in bulk, the almost non-existent use of shopping-lists, close to no use of budgets or keeping track their spending on food, and last and not least, very wasteful practices in most of the households. Based on the average budget and the 11.8% average spent on food monthly in Norwegian households, wasting 33 % of the food needlessly would amount to 1415 NOK monthly. Many households can afford to be unaware of this too. Still, food prices is a common topic, one that is given much more attention and consideration compared to other food management practices in the household, practices with a much higher potential for savings. This reflects the dominant role of the concept of prices within the discourse of food on a household level in Norway. Household members often told me how expensive they think food is. To make sure they get food as cheap as possible, there is a widespread focus on shopping at these low-price supermarket chains that dominate the local food-market.

[194] http://www.ssb.no/193950/utgift-per-husholdning-per-ar-etter-vare-og-tjenestegruppe.2012.kr-og-prosent-sa-196 Accessed: 8. 12. 2015.
[195] Norwegian Crowns.

Erika and Roger have just returned from vacation when I join them to go shopping. They usually go by car to shop at the Rema 1000 supermarket at the Pyramiden shopping mall in Tromsdalen. They choose it due to practical and habitual reasons, and because they find it to be cheap, even if the SPAR Supermarket is closer. Roger tells me he is not really sure how cheap it actually is. Their children have moved out, and with two full incomes they appear to be in a very stable and secure financial situation. A couple of observations illustrate this. Just as we had passed the register after one shopping trip together, Roger asked Erika how much the total amount was. "I don't remember", Erika said with a smile, just a few seconds after paying by card. Erika claims this is down to their established habits. They plan their food management and usually buy the same kinds of food every week so she knows approximately how much it totals up to – about 800 Crowns. It is nevertheless quite interesting that they are more or less free to buy what they want, don't need to think too much about the prices, and the total sum paid at the register doesn't really stick. Still, even if they express doubts about the food actually being cheap in discourse, both food and money are still treated as being scarce and highly valuable in their household. There is a strong link between their practices and ideals and the potential use value of food, as the source human life, a fundamental necessity. Their practices reflect their valuation of food, and appear rooted in a larger context of values (Graeber 2001, 2013) brought along from their upbringing, one where food was precious.

In the household of Svein and Ingeborg, who are in their 50's, their choice of supermarket is apparently also motivated by food prices, even if there appears to be no real need to save money for them either. They have arrived at the conclusion that the local Spar supermarket is more expensive, so they choose Prix that is a little bit further away, even if they think the fruit and vegetables at Spar are of superior quality. They claim prices decide their choice of supermarket out of the three situated within a short distance from their home. However, they don't consider what these three different options mean in terms of their total household expenditures. Their practices do not appear to be in touch with the fundamental use value of food in the same manner as with Erika and Roger. They are much more wasteful, and do not to prioritise food management in a similar way, even if Ingeborg especially grew up in a household where dinner every day was certainly not a given.

By contrasting the practices of the more frugal of the older households to what I witnessed in some of the younger households, the link between practices of food management and food having a potential fundamental human use value, only actualised through consumption, appears different, weaker. Ingrid claims that the young today

don’t know what money is worth. Ellen and Ivar focus on having a wide range of choices of vegetables. Kaisa and Tor do not set up a budget even if Kaisa is now working 50% and they now also have a child to care for. Georg and Josefine continue their wasteful ways, shopping daily, and buying more than they consume without their plans to budget or shop more systematically coming into fruition. Such acts of wastefulness are manifestations of the excess in this generation of local households. This excess is related to changes in large-scale societal macro-factors. At the same time, the prices are indeed used as a yardstick of value amongst this constituency as well. Prices have increasingly become lower, measured against the average income levels. This has contributed to households treating food as less valuable in itself, compared to the older households. Predominantly, prices are used to rank foodstuffs and ascribe value onto it, and simultaneously, the easy access and these low prices allow them to be wasteful.

You would think that with such a strong focus on the provisioning and prices, they would take steps to plan better, but this is seldom the case in the younger households. Price is important, but for most households, only in clearly defined contexts, for instance when choosing supermarket or choosing between different alternatives in the store, and less so when considering their household economy as a whole. Food provisioning can be perceived as an isolated, defined context, an isolated value sphere, a game with a set of rules and stakes that also allows for contradictory orientations and perspectives (Graeber 2013). Price as an influential token of value leaves and re-enters the food management cycle at different stages and contexts, but remains key on the whole.

In general, there is low consciousness about the waste levels in households, and how much they could potentially save by lowering these. However, there is a strong focus is on the provisioning part of the process. The focus is on obtaining the best possible deal from an economic point of view, contrary to their actual management of food which is wasteful. This leads to a distorted view - that it is mostly when buying food you can save money, not by managing your food more carefully to avoid waste, for instance. The focus on the provisioning phase only reinforces the attention given to prices.

Economic Motivations - Wasting Less to Save Money

After admitting that food is wasted unnecessarily, the conversations in the different households would often turn towards motivations for changing the current practices.

Almost without exception, saving money is explicitly stated as the primary motivation for wasting less food. This is quite a striking contradiction and an example of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962). All households expressed in discourse that they found it morally wrong to waste food on combinations of social, environmental, moral or ethical grounds. Clearly, this does not transfer to practice, but when discussing practical household economics, these elements are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Lowering waste-levels can benefit the collective through lowering the environmental strain, and at the same time lower the strain on the individual household economy.

Whether informants talk about shopping less frequently, buying less, planning their provisioning better, or making better use of their resources, their main motivator for reducing their waste levels is saving money. The motivations for reducing waste are also almost exclusively limited to their own household. Other concerns, larger-scale, collective or social ones like environmental consequences and world famine, are seldom mentioned. Informants themselves mention how reductions can be attempted by making shopping-lists, getting a good deal by opting for special offers, buying in large quantities, having a specific “leftover day” etc.

Ironically, several household strategies geared towards saving money when provisioning actually result in quite the contrary, in significant portions of this food getting wasted. This can for instance be the result when households chose to buy large quantities of specific foodstuffs on special offer, or when smaller households opt for large family-sized packages due to lower price per kilo. They “buy big” to save money, which appears the most meaningful and valuable of the alternative practices (Graeber 2001) during the provisioning phase. But during subsequent steps in the food cycle, other priorities and concerns appear to be more meaningful.

During our main interview held in the living room of their small attic-flat, Nina (21, female) told the story about the time Kåre (40, male) bought a large portion of sausages. Kåre ate them even if they had gone past the expiry date. Nina does not approve of this, and claims it was just because he had paid for them. Kåre admits he has been a bit off target with his shopping a few times. The initial idea of buying large quantities to save money did not pay off in the end. Nor could the fact that it was a meat-product, still holding a high cultural status, alter this outcome.

The Limits of Economic Rationality

A critical look at the limits of perspectives based in economic rationality[196] is particularly interesting and relevant in the context of leftovers. Following such a line of thought, leftovers should be very valuable due to the time, skill, money and labour invested. Not to mention the low level of effort necessary before it can be consumed. However, other aspects can come into play. However rational it might be to make use of leftovers; to maximise the return of one's investment, I experienced that leftovers were often not fancied due to a wish for variation in diet, or that the food is not perceived as so fresh and tasty anymore. The economic dimension of value, of optimal resource management, is pushed into the background, as other alternatives are present. What appears the most meaningful and valuable alternative might not be the most rational choice economically. Leftovers are often perceived to have a lower potential value overall considering a multitude of factors. This exceeds the isolated perspective on the invested time and energy as decisive. It could really be as simple as having something more tempting in the fridge.

Even if an economic rationalist perspective is by no means dominant when it comes to all the steps in the food management cycle, or when it comes to saving, it is highly influential in many situations. It can also enter and leave at different stages of the food management process, as we can see here from Kåre's story:

> *"But waste…I don't know. The times where one had to throw away food, those times, in a way: this here was a cheap, good product, and then you bought this fresh food. And when you buy fresh food and don't freeze it. Sometimes I bought these large packs of pork-chops and thought that I was going to eat them in a certain amount of time. I don't know how large they were, probably a couple of kilos. But then we also had a dog, a German Sheppard, so he was fond of pork chops… Because you see, it was cheap, and I then ate it for 2-3 days, but then half of it was left you see. Ok. I can save money by eating pork chops all week, but it wasn't done that way."*

As with the sausages, there was an initial strategy of buying big to save money, another indication of the overtly strong emphasis on the provisioning phase in household food management and the focus on prices. But the pork-chops were not repackaged and

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[196] Economic Rationality refers to choosing between alternatives with the aim of maximizing economical gain. See for instance Paul Weirich (2004): The Oxford Handbook of Rationality. Oxford: Oxford University Press. One problem with models of rationality is that they can seem impossible to falsify, as any given activity at any time can be defined as maximizing some kind of value, even if it is work or leisure. What is rational depends on the motivational basis, what one defines as important, or valuable following our value-theory based perspective here.

stored properly, e.g. in meal-sized portions in a freezer. Then Kåre's ambitious plan of eating pork-chops all week was abandoned after only two-three days. There are similar occurrences in other households I studied. Plans of shopping large quantities or of cooking large meals to last the whole week were abandoned or often faltered as household-members got fed up with eating the same food several days in a row.

Here the sensory and the psychological dimension of value, akin to desire, appeared to be more meaningful, similar to when Georg opted for the more recently arrived airborne coffee of gourmet quality. In that case, perhaps the abundance of coffee pushed the moral or economically frugal dimensions into the background. In Kåre's case, it is likely that the pork-chops went to the German Sheppard. The dog might also get fed up with eating pork-chops every day, but I suspect it might take more than two-three days. Older household members implement similar strategies to save money. They hunt for bargains. They also buy and prepare large quantities of food, but the outcome would usually be wholly different.

To summarize, several practices show of how economic rational thinking dominates, how prices are influential mental tools, almost towards holding a status as the equivalent of something's overall value. The low focus on food management and on practices avoiding waste confirms a state of excess where household practices can, and are, deviating from their own discursive moral condemnations surrounding unnecessary food waste. The state of excess mainly brought about due to the Post-World War II macro-changes previously presented, indicates a devaluation of food, or certainly a re-valuation. The potential use value of food as a necessity for human survival is less in focus, as the emphasis is increasingly on food as a mean to reach other ends. As basic physical needs are covered, food can fill social roles and functions, be them displays of competence, marking status and boundaries, or offering gourmet sensations etc. Marx (1990 [1867]) argues that this movement away from use value towards an emphasis on prices as the fundament of value is to be expected in modern capitalism.

Nevertheless, valuations are still complex. As with leftovers, the abundance of fish and its status previously discussed shows practices that enable us to see culturally complex practices, identifying the limits of an economic rationalist approach. Fish can be understood as somehow sacred, as the continued livelihoods in Northern Norway depended upon it for generations. Fish was both socially, economically and physically defining for local people, it was embodied. In such a sense, wasting it can be interpreted in a local context as selfish, as an antisocial[197], shameful and immoral act. Wasting the

[197] Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of antisocial: 1: averse to the society of others : unsociable 2: hostile or harmful to organized society; especially : being or marked by behaviour deviating sharply

source of life needlessly contradicts life. Moreover, in a comparative perspective of the concept of "*hau*" amongst the Maori (Mauss 1995 [1924]), local beliefs saying if you waste your catch of fish, you will not catch fish again in a long time are quite common.

Meat, previously scarce and exclusive for Sundays, is now fairly cheap. Still, the past status sticks, an emotional and cultural memory, seen for instance when Kåre insists on eating his overdue sausages. The status of meat partially remains, contrary to a more rational economic perspective. While economic rational mechanisms connected to supply and demand and to prices remain dominant tools for establishing the value of foodstuffs, diverting local household practices illustrate the complexity of the concept of value, linking the value of foodstuffs to both the past and the future.

From Use value and Exchange Value to Price

Karl Marx' theory of value (ibid.) is designed to provide explanations of how value is established, but specifically in a capitalist society. This can make the application of the theory somewhat limited. Marx' theory focuses on labour, on the creative energy and the proportions of it on an aggregated level; how much of this energy is invested in an activity compared to other alternatives. For instance, how much energy a human being, or a society, invests in food production and the maintenance of such a production, reflects its relative importance compared to other activities like education, housing and defence etc. Thus this also reflects its value (Graeber 2001:55).

Marx (1990 [1867]) elaborates on the concepts of use value and exchange value, and the origin of this discussion can be tracked back to Aristotle's work "Politics" (1981). Aristotle here outlines the difference between 1) trading to obtain what is needed to cover the basic needs of one's own household and 2) trading for monetary gain. He states that what held value to a household were goods covering the natural needs of a household. Aristotle saw covering these needs as something natural, and to obtain such goods by trade was not immoral. Such economic activity was all part of what he saw as the natural household management. However, there are limits to how much a

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from the social norm. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/antisocial Accessed: 05. Sept. 2015. I use the concept of antisocial as descriptive of a harmful disregard for the needs of fellow humans and shared societal concerns, not as relating to behaviour deviating from the norm. I present a discussion of the antisocial dimensions of food waste in Chapter 14: Concluding Remarks.

household needs, and he saw trade to earn money[198], to gain, as being against nature. To him it was limitless, excessive and unnatural.

Marx (1990 [1867]) emphasises that something's use value is determined by its practical and material characteristics, which are of an intrinsic kind. This intrinsic quality is inhibited in physical palpability; the material propensities of a certain object – weight, shape, density, viscosity, colour, transparency, flexibility, boiling point etc. Take boiled rice for instance: it is sticky, soft, small, grainy, and light, it contains fibre etc.[199] However, the use value of an object only becomes manifested, realised, through actual use; the act of consuming the rice, and not through an exchange involving the rice. Based on its material propensities, rice can have several alternative uses, with nutrition being just one of them. It can for instance also be used as a means of counting, or a place to hide something in between.

In contrast, exchange value is viewed as a quantitative aspect of value, one not necessarily connected to an object's material characteristics. The exchange value of something can be considered the basis for the establishment of its price. Hence, the exchange value of something is usually understood as what it can be traded for. Marx (ibid.) sees the exchange value of a commodity mainly as a function of how much labour it has taken to produce it; the more labour, the higher exchange value the commodity[200] carries. When Marx saw value as coming from human labour, Georg Simmel (1978 [1907]) saw it as something that is established in the exchange, as a function of human desire. For Simmel, exchange value was decided by how much someone was willing to give up for something. Adding money as a token of value, Simmel's definition (ibid.) is not too far from how price can be defined: the amount of money expected, required, or given in payment for something.

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[198] My understanding of the concept of money is based on the definition from Walter Neale's "Monies in Societies" (1976:2.) Where our modern money fills several different functions, from means of payment, medium of exchange, standard and store of value, standard of deferred payment and a unit of account. Today, almost everything we use in everyday life can be bought or sold using money and because of money filling so many functions, it is called general-purpose money, or even better, multiple-purpose money as there are limits to what can be bought with our modern money as well. As with the concept of value, money should be thought about in terms of its functions, purposes and consequences within a particular system (Ibid:4). It has a multitude of functions and should thus be interpreted more closely in context.

[199] We must keep in mind that when one considers how something can satisfy a human need or want down to these characteristics, we are talking about use value in relation to feeding human beings, not intrinsic value (Graeber 2001).

[200] In the purest sense, a commodity is something that is produced to be exchanged for something else, and which also satisfies a human need or want on some level. (Marx 1990 [1867]).

According to Marx (1990:Ch 1 [1867]), price is the monetary expression of a commodity's exchange value. It is a tool for measurement, standardisation and ranking. With the help of a common token of value, like multiple-purpose money, prices make it possible to exchange a commodity in return of a specific amount of money. Thus, price differs from exchange value, as the former is what kind of *commodities* something could be exchanged for in a direct trade. For instance, the exchange value of 15 kilos of smoked salmon loins could be 60 kilos of potatoes or 10 kilos of cloudberries. The different exchange rates per kilo for these different kinds of foodstuffs indicate that they have different values: they are ranked. By the use of monetary prices, one can indicate how much more one commodity is valued than the other (Graeber 2001:15). The potential use value of the loins is different. It would for instance be as human food, animal food, bait for foxhunting or as a gift to a relative or friend. If you had a huge stack of loins, you could hide behind it, or they could even be used to construct a message, e.g. using the loins to construct numbers or letters on the ground to call for help or to make an arrow. Different kinds of food also have varying levels of nutritional value. They contain different levels of energy, proteins or other important nutrients, reminding us of the range of intrinsic qualities matter inhibits. This illustrates the difference between something's intrinsic-value, use value, exchange value and the price as a standard scale of measurement and ranking.

Value, Price and Power - The Influence of Prices

As previously mentioned, upon investigating the local household practices one quickly discovers how influential the concept of price is. Supermarket chains all over the country have set the agenda for the last 20 years or so, creating a strong discourse where food is seen as something that should indeed be cheap. The chains have focused on offering food at low-prices, a strategy partially made possible by stocking a narrow range of goods and imported food from more low-cost markets, supplied by the development of cheap in-house branded products. Subsequently, the consumers have been well drilled over the years to focus on price, at the expense of other aspects like quality, origin, nutritional value, longevity etc.

Firstly, food is often valued by its price in comparison with other goods and services. Price is used as a metric of value, but prices can also indicate how different kinds of food are valued between themselves, ranked. Jon's story about wasteful practices involving rice and pasta exemplifies this. When price is used as a measurement tool, this implies ranking, a hierarchy (Graeber 2001:75). Waste of these foodstuffs was

not seen as very problematic due to its low price. Other foodstuffs higher up in the hierarchy are treated differently, perceived to hold a higher potential value. I experienced this kind of ranking with meat, and also internally within the category of meat-products.

Gradually, the focus has been shifted away from the potential use value of food towards exchange value and price, and the price has become a strong indicator of the perceived value of food. This change of focus is also illustrated by the household's main preference for choosing between the supermarkets that were all situated within a short distance from their domicile: low prices, even if e.g. the quality of fruit and vegetables, superior bread or a better range of goods overall, were explicitly expressed as being superior at alternative supermarkets. The focus on price also resonates with the core motivation for wasting less; saving money. The economic motivation dominates over other concerns, be they e.g. environmental, moral, or the traditionally cultural ones.

Currently, food is primarily, but not exclusively, a commodity engulfed by an economic rational logic. It is available in abundance, due to easy access and low prices, with a modern consumer experiencing little or no contact with the cycle of food-production, often lacking knowledge of the origin of food. It could be argued that the fundamental good of food is now being taken for granted by many of the households. With a comfortable economic situation and a steady, secure access to food, even students and welfare dependent households had little to no motivations to take steps to reduce their food waste.

Abstractions, Prices and Commodities

Two different kinds of commodities that are to be exchanged for each other on the open market are typically compared through the use of a third term, their universal equivalent. Multiple-purpose money often functions as this equivalent. Marx (1990 [1867]) finds that this third concept of standard measurement, money, contributes to an abstraction from the potential use value of commodities:

> *"Exchange value must always be distinguished from use value, because "the exchange relation of commodities is characterized precisely by its abstraction from their use values" (Ibid:127)."*

In this context, the concepts of money and price play crucial roles contributing to the abstraction from use value. Through the empirical examples we experienced how cheaper food like rice or pasta is treated as less valuable. It is measured and ranked not

by its potential use value as food, like its nutritional content, how filling it is, its taste or other possible practical uses, nor by its social status, but by a more abstract entity said to represent its complex array of potential value - the price.

This process of commodification (Marx 1867 [1990]) separates what originally was together and creates an increased distance – contributing to an abstraction that can lead to an alienated existence. The commodification of food brought by the industrialised food production and market infrastructures, along with the dominance of the monetary economy is a powerful combination. This infrastructure provides a steady supply of food, but also harbours an increased distance and alienation from the origin of food and its fundamental use value to humans.

Nevertheless, as in many Western European countries, locally it is not the same person that produces the food, sells, or consumes it. I find that the increased distance between producer and consumer leads to an alienation not just from the classical workers perspective of Marx (1988 [1932]), but also from the perspective we are investigating, the consumers. Anders might see the whole picture, but his perspective is not so common anymore. Not only are the geographical distances increasing when new, foreign and unknown vegetables and fruits become available locally all year round, but there is also an increased mental distance compared to the familiar foodstuffs which are sold when in season. Many aspects of the commodity on offer are often unbeknownst to the local consumer, be it the origin of the commodity, or the energy, labour, knowledge and skill needed to produce it, how to store it, what it tastes like or how it should be prepared. In marketing, the history and origin of foodstuffs is used in an attempt to mediate this distance and the lack of relation between the consumer and the mass-produced, industrialised commodities and those who made them. It has become increasingly common stating its specific origin, be it farms, regions or countries, focussing on the artisanship, the hand-made or handpicked. Food is presented with a history of origin; a history and a story of the social relations are created to mediate the gap due to the increased distance and alienation.

From Grains to Money - A Movement towards the Abstract

The historical development of the link between food and money as a currency is both relevant and interesting. It provides thematic context for discussions around the value of money, food and alienation provided by the process of commodification and the scales of the supplying infrastructure. The historical lines illustrate an increasing level of

abstraction and distance between what is seen as valuable to humans and what is used as tokens of value; money. It is likely that this development has materialised due to practical and material needs of a common currency. Nevertheless, what was chosen as such tokens at the eve of the development of currencies can shed some light on what we still find fundamentally valuable.

Backtracking slightly, the different value dimensions of Marx (1990 [1867]), from the intrinsic, to use and exchange, become somewhat intertwined and dynamic in practice. The dimensions remain present, even if fluid. Such is also the case with food. If you have an orange, its material propensities are present (colour, shape, weight, nutritional content, as is its use value as human food, a throwing weapon, a means to count or trade with if you have many etc.) along with its social dimensions, also contextually dependent. The economic aspect of the value of oranges is also present, linked to its availability and the expected supply, demand and thus prices in a market context. Although, we must also keep in mind the material dynamics as entropy pushes the orange towards non-edibility and uniformity.

An interesting angle towards currency is related to the use value of objects, one where edible food was used as a currency, as money. In ancient times, money was sometimes a direct representation and measurement of a quantity food, just as grains of wheat were used to measure distance. For instance, the word shekel, the currency of Israel, is of Sumerian origin. The oldest coin-currency known is a Sumerian bronze coin from before 3000 BC. This coin was called a “Shekel”, which is derived from “She”, which means wheat and “Kel” a measurement similar to a bushel. The coin symbolised the value of one bushel of wheat (Lietar 1997). Fittingly, the coin had a representation of a sheaf of wheat on one side, and the Goddess of fertility, Ishtar, on the other. This linked money both to the material, intrinsic side of food, and the potential use value of food through its life giving aspect as nutrition, and to a sacred, religious dimension.

Historically, other foodstuffs have also been used as currencies: coco beans, bricks of tea, bricks of salt etc.[201] Edible foods have previously filled some of the functions of today’s modern, monetary currency. In Norway, several narratives mention how dried fish, like dried cod or dried pike, has been used in local village stores as multiple-purpose money, aided by its longevity due to its material propensities like a low fat-content. Other kinds of food used in this manner were eggs. In ancient Greek

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[201] See e.g. Jack Weatherford (1997): *The History of Money*. New York, N.Y.:Three Rivers Press, or J. D. Fage, Richard Gray, Roland Anthony Oliver (Eds.) (1975:543): *The Cambridge History of Africa, Volume.* Cambridge:Cambridge University Press

cities along the Black Sea, small dolphins made out of bronze were also used as money[202]. Some contemporary currencies also have food depicted on them. Fish has been quite common on Norwegian currencies, as it has been fundamental to the livelihood in Norway. However, kings and queens still vastly outnumber fish. Sometimes the link between food and tokens of value even appears in a roundabout way: the sweets I bought the other day in a local shop were imitations of coins: 50 Eurocents, 1 Euro and 2 Euro. I would not trust them as means of payment, but I did find them edible.

In the context of an expected overpopulation of the Earth, there are alternative political groups discussing if food could again become the valuable which currencies are weighted against in the future. Currently, such ideas are also put into practice in small local communities, conscious of the negative environmental effects of the global food markets. They trade homegrown food for other kinds of food or services locally: my fish for your eggs and some of his potatoes. Small contemporary groups create their own local currencies, only being valid, valuable and exchangeable within their limited local communities.[203] Food is perhaps the oldest currency on the planet, and contemporary levels of abstraction have somehow contributed to masking its central, potential use value as human nutrition. The local contemporary focus is often rather on ulterior or social uses, or on its exchange value and price.

In the early developments of currencies, some of the common objects used as money represent two important aspects of what is valuable to humans: from the basic human material and physical needs, represented by grain and other kinds of food as money, to the social, relational values, represented through gold, silver, beads and other eye-catching valuables of limited supply. When edible, food as a necessity for human life holds undisputed potential value, whereas the more eye-catching tokens of value like gold coins or beads could carry social, political and religious value when displayed and made visible socially (Graeber 2001:92). Such social tokens of value induce certain ways to act in relation to each other, they serve to rank and represent power. Food can also inhibit both these categories. As mentioned previously with the different dimensions of Marx' value concepts (Marx 1990 [1867]), social and material elements are combined, e.g. through redistribution or sharing of food, establishing and reaffirming social relations and hierarchies (E.g. Mauss 19995 [1924], Weiner 1976,

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[202] https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/u/0/asset-viewer/bronze-dolphin-money/qwHYBPo-hDJDsQ [Accessed: 27. 11. 2015.]
[203] See e.g. http://bristolpound.org/what Accessed: 6. January 2016.

1992). Evidently, food and other commodities of consumption are still commonly used as tools for social stratification locally.

In the short historical backdrop presented above, the powerful and highly convertible multiple-purpose money (Neale 1976) of today appears quite abstract, some of it not metallic or even palpable as paper money, existing only as bits visible on a computer screen. This journey from the bushel of wheat, the shekel, to the beads or pieces of gold, onwards to today's visualisations of numbers on a computer screen or mobile-phones certainly has clear traits of a journey from the concrete and material towards the abstract, symbolic representations of this concrete physical matter. The historical link between the fundamentally valuable food to humans, and the currency as a token of value has been, if not disrupted, certainly obfuscated in comparison. This development is also an example of a general movement in Western Culture, from real economics[204] towards a gradually stronger emphasis on a financial one.

The emphasis on exchange value and its symbolic representation, the price, is stronger. In addition to the documented household price-focus, another example illustrating this locally is how farmers, fishermen and hunters are renting out their land or associated rights to fish and hunt for cash in hand directly. They opt for the monetary means directly, instead of growing, fishing and hunting themselves, and then selling their surplus. They don't invest their own time and labour to produce and sell their products. The development in what is chosen as tokens of value or currency, from seeds for food to digital numbers is metaphorical for a movement from a basis in real, subsistence economy towards abstractions and increasing influence of a monetary and financial one. In ancient Sumeria, food decided the value of the currency, whereas now in Tromsø, prices predominantly decide the perceived value of food, valuations manifested through everyday practices.

Interestingly, in this context of increased abstraction and a dominant virtualisation of economic activity (Carrier & Miller 1998, Eds.), the value of food can also be analysed as more dominated by more abstract valuations (e.g. price) and evaluation (e.g. expiry dates) and secondary forms of use today. We also see a similar development in terms of money, described in the movement from food being used as a currency towards virtual money. The potential use value of food as nutrition has slid

[204] Real economics refers to the part of the economy that is concerned with actually producing goods and services, as opposed to the part of the economy that is concerned with buying and selling on the financial markets (Longman Business Dictionary 2016).

into the background in a resource situation dominated by excess, one where consumption is also an important socially expressive tool.

The Respect for Money

Ingrid and Fredrik, who are in their 60's, plan much of their food provisioning to save money, but not because they need to. They will for instance buy large quantities of food when it is on offer at the local supermarket. This often coincides with when the food is in season locally. Ingrid told me that they bought ten kilos of carrots when they were on offer, and also that they bought 32 kilos of coffee later when that was on special offer. "It is the fourth time we buy like that. With many people [coming by the house], there is lots of coffee drinking. But we still have some of it left", she says. Ingrid also buys cabbage when in season to make larger batches of sauerkraut. Cabbage is then very cheap compared to other times of year, even if cabbage is very cheap regardless. This practice is a seasonal habit.

Ingrid and Fredrik seem to have established their routines of food management years ago, and their approach is grounded in an ideal of treating food with respect - as a valuable resource in itself. This approach is brought along from their upbringing and is still reflected in their current practices, which are austere and well planned. This is maintained even though all kinds of food from all over the world is conveniently available at the local supermarket only a few minutes' walk away, and at a fraction of the prices during their youth. Their economic situation is comfortable, and would easily allow them to abandon their established food management routines of planning, organising and economising. These ideals of respect for food and money, materialised through their daily practices, still appear to be the most meaningful for them, so spending time on food management is prioritised. Their values thus appear deeply rooted through their past practices and habits, even if they are now reflected in a new mirror, a surrounding context of contemporary abundance. It is likely that their habits are, if not of a wholly un-reflected disposition, to an extent embodied and internalized in their habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). The main motive for their practices appears to be making the most out of their money, grounded in a culture of modesty and austerity. Ingrid told me that she felt the younger generations don't know the value of money. She illustrated her point with a story:

> *"I remember when I worked in the store [at the local shopkeeper in her village]. We were very diligent in our treatment of money. Because it was paper money,*

five Crowns and ten Crowns and all that. When you put the money in the register, into the money drawer. The head should always be upwards. And don't turn the money. All the bills should lay the same direction. Like the wife of the shopkeeper used to say: "One thing you should keep in mind – money doesn't come for free. We have to work for it, and they have to be treated with respect." I have to say, even today, I have to put the money the right way in my wallet. If you have 1 000 Crowns, and you get a few hundred back, the money lies there all mixed up when you get them back. Before I leave the register, I have to put the money properly into my wallet, the correct way. I am sure this has irritated many in the line behind me. That one sticks…I have taught my children that too…money has to be treated with respect…you don't get money for free, you have to work for them…but it is also like that with leftover food. My brother is home here. He always eats the leftovers. That works out fine."

Treating money with respect goes hand-in-hand with treating food with respect, as Ingrid continues her story about the respect for money with the treatment of leftovers. She certainly appears to have learnt the value of money the hard way. She told me about an upbringing in relative poverty, where she learnt the importance of treating food and money carefully and respectfully. With Norwegian society moving fast towards becoming cashless, replaced by abstractions, of the virtual, Ingrid's respectful practice might soon be outdated. Ingrid finds the younger generations more wasteful:

Ingrid: "You can see them [young people] in the stores today, what are we going to have for dinner today? I don't know, they say…Ha! Imagine that they don't know!!! They have food in the freezer, go to the supermarket, stand there, looking around. What are we having for dinner?!"[With much animation, then shakes her head]

Fredrik: They just buy fresh, fresh food, meat, fish and the like.

Ingrid: It is terrible. It is a tragedy! And it is really poor economy."

For her, the value of money and the value of food are closely connected, and both are still seen as precious resources, surrounded by a morality where it is wrong to waste them, even if they are not scarce currently. One should make the most of both resources, as they are seen as very valuable regardless of the increased standard of living, the current availability and access to cheap food, and other large-scale changes having taken place in Norwegian society after World War 2. The overall societal values, and with that the valuation of food, has undergone changes in this period, but their

approach to food and its potential value as nutrition remains. This resonates well with the practices of Erika and Roger.

Before we continue by looking into how Erika and Roger value and treat food, here is a short and relevant digression on the value of food and how it is framed within a larger system of value (Graeber 2001:223). When I grew up in the 1970's in Norway, we would be confronted with a familiar saying if we wasted food or didn't want to finish the food we had on our plate. We were told "to think of the children in Africa", referring to the widespread hunger and famine in many African countries that we experienced through the television screen with regularity. We were reminded of a moral obligation to not waste food, and that we should be grateful for the food we had. One time I was casually discussing food waste in families with small children with a friend of mine. He is in his 40's and has three small children. He told me that he used a different approach than referring to starving African children. Rather than remind them of the moral and social obligation, he would tell his children to finish their milk and orange juice by saying, "remember that this costs money!" This is just an isolated, utilitarian statement, but I still find it remarkable how differently the message is conveyed, sending a message which values that count (Godbout & Caillé 1998:41) through socialisation. Still the point remains, that wasting food is wrong, be it on moral, ethical or economic grounds.

Like Ingrid and Fredrik, Erika and Roger also have deep-rooted practices where food is treated with care and respect. While they do not refer to their upbringing on local, combined farms as one in poverty, they have kept much of the austere food management practices they experienced growing up. Their practices and statements show that food holds a potential value in itself, more akin to a use value that is not dependent on its exchange value or price (Marx 1990 [1867]). They are not solely focused on saving money when they shop, even if they consider bargains and buy food close to the expiry date on special offer. They freeze this food for later use when they get home. They also make efforts to buy foodstuffs they regularly use by the bulk when it is in season, often directly from the producer through personal networks. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 9, Erika and Roger also have a habit of buying some of the milk with the shorter expiry-dates if there are different options available at the supermarket. Her explanation was that otherwise the milk might end up being wasted in the supermarket. I find that this illustrates a perspective where food is seen to hold value per definition, through its potential use value as life-dependent human nutrition.

The practices of both these older households are not excessive in any way, even if they now have the economic freedom to be less meticulous in their food management. Both look to get good value for their money when they shop. They are

economising and constantly planning their resource management properly, most likely because their valuations of food are deep-rooted and their routines now firmly established. Their valuation is manifested through their practices, as even through their standard of living has increased and the household's access to food has become less cumbersome, they still prioritise spending time and effort on food management.

Food does not appear to be taken for granted, and their practices imply someone who is not removed from the larger food cycle and nature. They remain in touch with the use value of food as the source of human sustenance and life. For these household members, the steps of the food cycle, the origin of food and the consequences of wastefulness do not appear to be completely separated. The steps remain more connected, as does the link from the material and intrinsic propensities, the use value of foodstuffs, via exchange value and to its abstraction, the purchasing price.

When the theoretical concepts of value are split up in different categories of value like in the Marxian model discussed (Marx 1990 [1867]), or as I did previously in a schematic manner of emic categorisations, we should keep in mind that this perspective appears quite static. On the ground however, these different dimensions of value, from intrinsic, use- and exchange value, are indeed quite intertwined. They can have blurred and overlapping boundaries. The process of the establishment of value of Graeber (2001) and how acts appear as meaningful to humans is a product of an imagined past *and* an imagined future Sutton (2004:376) points out. Valuations of foodstuffs are defined by previous experiences. For instance by growing up in times characterised by less abundance, by the social relations the food has been obtained through or the status ascribed to the food in question. Additionally, the valuation of food is influenced by its potential usage as human nutrition in the future, its desirability as a sensory treat, or the estimates of future supply. There is a potential value in having a stock of food for the future, as the forager and hoarder, man or animal, is likely to have experienced this in the past. Moreover, for these two older households there seems to be no contradiction between an upbringing where food was quite scarce and practices very austere, to using the price of food, as a supposed indicator of its value, as a tool. Using this economic metric, an abstraction, as a practical tool does not necessarily entail a devaluation of how valuable food is perceived culturally.

Recalling Bloch & Parry's words on money (1989:19), it is the system of value these prices as metrics are placed within, what they actually are thought to be a measure of that tells us what people value and find meaningful. It is the existing world-view that gives rise to a particular way of representing money, and food, as what is

deemed valuable is dependent on a larger system of values (Graeber 2001:223). These older households treat all food as valuable, cheap or not. Both money and food holds undisputed value for them. It used to be scarce, and they still treat it this way even if they don't have to due to a healthy household economy and close to a constant availability. They still choose to spend time on food management, focussing on the amount of food, the number of mouths it can feed and the number of meals it provides. Both young and old are looking for value for money and good deals. They use price as a metric for this, as a tool, but the underlying values the metric is connected to, what it actually measures, are different.

Large-scale societal changes carrying forward a widespread utilitarian economic rationality, with a strong focus on price, does not alone decide whether the approach to food management is wasteful or not. The cultural, historical, moral dimension of resource management still plays a major part in the establishment of the potential value of food. While price is a thoroughly important tool in establishing valuations on an emic level, other dimensions are also central in establishing the valuation of food. These dimensions can be social or historical, as in gifts received being treated with more care, material, through freshness and perceived sensory satisfaction, or linked to the labour put into its preparation.

For these households, prices are a useful tool, and using it as a metric of value does not entail a devaluation of food with subsequent wasteful practices. Money and a focus on prices themselves don't automatically entail immoral, selfish or wasteful behaviour. Both money and food are here still closely to practices of modesty and austerity. The concept of thrift (E.g. Strasser 1999, Miller 1998) is also relevant here, where making the most out of what you got was an important and necessary skill in the local households. In this context, bargain hunting and buying cheap food, like Erika and Roger do, can be seen as expressions of a thrift-culture. It could be to make the most of the little money one had, and could also be seen as an expression of love and care towards household members and others in the vein of Miller (1998)

Generations and Changes in Food Management

The culture of modesty and austerity reflected in both of the older couple's practices are likely to be amplified by ideals of Protestantism (e.g. Weber 2002 [1905]), Laestadianism and other religious communities influential in the region. These ideals resonated well within the harsh natural surroundings and general poverty of the region. Nowadays however, these values of modesty and austerity are not so present in

younger households, as for instance seen in Georg's wastefulness of good coffee, fruit or homemade bread, Ellen and Ivar's preferences for variation and freshness in vegetables, or the low priority given to controlling their inventory of food shown by both Kaisa and Tor or Jorunn and Kjell. Much of the food management practices in the younger households are excessive, emphasising individual pleasure and choice. Food management has low priority.

Georg and Josefine, Ellen and Ivar or Tor and Kaisa grew up in more prosperous times. In these households, I observed how food was not encapsulated by a similar morality judging by their priorities and practices. They have enjoyed a higher standard of living, having experienced a seemingly endless availability of food since they established their own households. For them, low price tends to equal low perceived value. Their view on the value of food is influenced by cultural ideals that dominate today; emphasising food as a means for individual pleasure and enjoyment, displays of competence and as a source of healthy living. There are of course exceptions amongst the younger generations. Anders is one of them.

Anders rarely buys fish in the stores. He catches both sea and freshwater fish himself. He has his own boat that he uses for fishing. He also hunts and eats seal. He buys a lot of his food from straight from the producer or farmer. He buys lambs-meat at the local slaughterhouse at his home-place. He also gets elk-meat from Northern Troms. Reindeer-meat he buys straight from the Saami herders in Kautokeino in Finnmark, or in Olderfjord, closer to Tromsø if they are slaughtering there. Anders explains:

> *"Sometimes we buy whole carcasses, and then split it. We usually buy together. A whole lamb, then we split it in two. When we have bought that we have food for a long time. I have a small freezer, so I have everything at my parents place in Northern Troms. And when I am home there in the weekends, I bring some with me."*

Anders tries to eat what nature provides in the Arctic, fruit and berries and the like. He lists up all kinds of local food he eats: fish, meat and fowl, seal, blueberries, lingonberries, cloudberries and potatoes. He prefers a perspective where one should live in harmony and symbiosis with the natural surroundings quite explicitly:

> *"I think that we should eat what we find around us in nature, here where we live. We don't need to go around buying all kinds of nutritional supplements and that stuff."*

When quizzed further about how this holistic approach to food came about, and the knowledge that goes with it, Anders reckons it comes from taking part in the whole cycle. He participated in raising and feeding animals, slaughtering, butchering and cooking the food. He has learnt from previous generations, throughout the whole process, selecting which reindeer to slaughter, then cooking and eating the soup made from the meat of the same animal later the same day.

> *"Well, I can see the whole picture. It comes from nature, and is going back there. It is a bit like that…but it has probably a lot to do with what is expected. How one is brought up with food and that…"*

Paying heed to the traditional practices learnt from his relatives, they are part of his imagined totality, making up what he sees as valuable (Graeber 2013). Anders' perspective on food management is still connected to the larger food cycle, and does thus not appear to be alienated as a consumer[205]. His approach differs from markedly from Georg and Josefine's. Importantly, the amount of spare-time for Georg and Josefine is quite restricted due to having two small children. Rather than being purely a question of morality, waste for them is also a consequence of economical and practical decisions. Their practices indicate that they can afford to be wasteful. They do not prioritise spending time and effort on food management.

Overall, even if the members of the younger households were raised by their parents, and sometimes also grandparents, and taught their values, they have grown up in a different environment. They currently experience a standard of living on a wholly different level. In addition, with the accelerated growth of an industrialised food sector, an ever-increasing range of commodities is available to pamper to every individual desire and fancy around the clock. Freshness and expected taste and sensations are emphasised, and it is also an important metric for the valuation of food. Georg shows this when fruit and homemade bread with an expected sub-optimal taste is quickly tossed away and replaced with fresher alternatives regularly. Ingrid and Fredrik did also throw away fish, but this was not down to sub-optimal freshness, but due it tasting bad. Their thresholds for disposing food are much higher in comparison.

Considering the increased standard of living, coupled with a growing infrastructure of the food-market and a more limited involvement in the larger part of the food cycle, it should come as no surprise that the resource management practices in the households have been significantly altered. Not having experienced a different

[205] We will return to discuss this argument thoroughly in the next chapter.

resource situation, having become accustomed to the large-scale availability of industrially produced commodities at all times, the younger households practice less planning and bulk and seasonal provisioning. This framework can act as a fundament for a transient and short-term perspective. Such a perspective would be less rooted and connected to the natural seasons and the sources of food and food production, in comparison to the older households with a different background. Georg's established habits of frequent shopping in smaller amounts and the subsequent frequent and unnecessary disposal of food are manifestations of such a short-term perspective. Similarly, regular and cyclical clear-outs of packed fridges and freezers also contribute to a perspective on food characterised by transience, disposability and excess. These habits are common in many of the households. These practices are examples of how food is increasingly treated as more transient, as disposable. Such hand-to-mouth practices are made possible by these infrastructural changes and the subsequent low prices and around the clock, close-by availability, and are a driving force behind high waste levels.

The practices related to value and money are culturally variable, and clearly dependent on what happens in the intersection of the economic aspect of the daily household practices and other important institutions in the specific cultures. The larger societal context, the larger system of value surrounding, and mainly defining, the metrics for the valuation of food (Graeber 2001:223), have changed. And with it, so have the household practices. As regular nutrition becomes so much cheaper relatively, compared both to other goods and to the prices in previous times, the way food is valued has changed. In most of the younger households, the tendency reflected in practice was how food now often fills the role as a mean to reach other ends. The younger households seem to focus less on the potential use value of the food itself as fundamental and necessary nutrition. The connection between the daily practices and the actual use value is more obfuscated within contemporary contexts of excess. There are also habitual aspects of the food management practices and decisions in both generations, some of a more frugal nature, others more wasteful.

The younger households growing up in different times with a different standard of living are more disconnected from the food cycle. Their emphasis on the abstract representation, on price, as an indicator of value, is perhaps closer to the intention behind the creation of markets, separated from the social obligations of a gift-economy. Prices are a useful tool in the commodity market, freeing the commodity from the past, and thus also the purchaser from its bonds, as the traces of previous labour and production are ever more distant, are attempted erased. In addition to the high levels of food waste in the contemporary times of excess, we have previously seen how a low

price on certain foodstuffs like rice and pasta are interpreted as synonymous with this food holding low value, lowering the threshold of its disposability. The potential use value of food, be it materially, socially or both, has thus been allowed to slide into the background. It has become detached from its monetary price which can then increasingly acts as a dominant indicator of value.

Macro-Developments in Northern Norway fostering an Economic Focus

This movement towards a logic centred on economic values and exchange, influenced by the commodity markets, has taken place in interplay with other macro-changes in society: increased income levels, standard of living and availability of cheap food, centralisation of the population, labour specialisation, new globalised market structures, and importantly, a development of a culture valuating individual pleasure and enjoyment at the expense of the moralities of modesty and austerity of yesteryears. While food undoubtedly have also been a social differentiator in previous times, the role of food is increasingly often a mean to reach other ends rather than solely as nutrition, be it to obtain a fit, good looking body, as a source for gourmet sensations or to display competence and status socially.

I see this as signs of devaluation of the potential use value of food as human nutrition, or certainly a re-valuation of food where secondary dimensions of its use value become emphasized and cherished. I find that this devaluation is a key-factor that leads to wasteful food management practices in the households. The meaning and value food holds in the households have changed with the changes in larger system of values - the macro-factors or larger canvas that defines what is perceived as meaningful and valuable. However, regardless of their own excessive and wasteful practices, none of the households studied rejected the ideal that wasting food was wrong, both on moral and economical grounds.

The claim of a dominant influence of an economic logic can at first glance appear slightly ironic with the decrease in relative prices and the increased access to food. However, price is nevertheless a prominent metric and thus influential in the perceptions of value. As argued in the chapters discussing household practices in relation to the steps in food cycle, we should keep in mind that the influence of the concept of price varies dependent on which part of the food cycle our analysis is centred on. Different dimensions of the valuations of food, be them social, material, or economical will alternate gradually between the forefront and the background

dependent on the stage of the household food management cycle. The economic dimension is for instance especially strong during the provisioning phase, whereas the social dimension and the sensory and material is more in the foreground during the actual meal when the food is consumed.

From the Material to the Monetary

Some social theorists argue that in specialised and modern societies like Norway, there are traces of an increased abstraction. This can for instance materialise itself in how traces of origin and the labour invested in objects are disappearing through the process of commodification (See e.g. Sennett 2009). The traces of creation, of production, of human involvement in the previous steps of the cycle, are close to being erased. Consequently, with the increased mental, physical and even social and cultural distances from the creative, productive processes and knowledge we can argue that an increasingly alienated state becomes present amongst consumers in a similar sense to Marx' workers (Marx (1988 [1932]). A related perspective in analysing this development on a larger scale is to argue that a disembeddedness has taken place, where an economic logic has come to dominate many aspects of human life at the expense of other social concerns (Polanyi 2001 [1944], Block 2003).

An increased focus on the exchange value of something, on the monetary price as one of its representations to define value, can be one such abstraction (Maurer 2006). Therefore, when reducing the different intrinsic qualities of specific objects such as food into a common metric for measurement and standardisation like price, this implies an abstraction. How this manifests itself through practices can be illustrative of the power of price as a measurement of value. In a society with a stable supply of desired goods and services present, the position of multiple-purpose money can certainly be a powerful one. If you have money, it can be converted into almost anything the heart desires. However, Maurer (2006) also argues that the money of today cannot fully represent the material, and one of his main points is that it is actually this abstraction and distance from materiality that enables modern multiple-purpose money work so well as a tool or medium of exchange.

A strong focus on price exists amongst many households, and in the Norwegian food-market in general. It is powerful and wields much influence over the practices of food management, and thus these practices are manifestations of the value people place on foodstuffs (Graeber 2001, 2013). Price appears to have affirmed its power as

indicator of value, and the perception of the value of food is close to the equivalent of its current exchange value on the market in a contemporary monetary economy. Such an emphasis also follows Marx' (1990 [1867]) predictions that the focus of value will gradually shift towards exchange value in a capitalist economy. Through the varying food management practices in the households such a focus is illustrated, exposing a hierarchy where food is often valued according to its purchasing price. This takes place even if the social relations they are obtained through, the expected sensory pleasure or previously invested labour remain influential factors as well. We have seen examples of how rice and pasta are ascribed a low value. Contrary, we have experienced how food like certain meats or the gourmet coffee of Georg are ascribed a higher potential value and thus treated differently. A hierarchy based on price influences how people conceptualise and subsequently act when it comes to food.

Lifting the glance from the hierarchy of different foodstuffs and the chosen acts that manifest these valuations, we can also read the value placed on food management in general compared to other household activities. What household's chose to spend their time on, what they prioritise, can be seen as a mirror of their values, it reflects its relative importance (Marx (1990 [1867]), although habitual aspects must remain in consideration. Following this perspective, I argue that a devaluation, or certainly a re-valuation, of food has taken place. This is primarily due to low prices and easier access, but also interconnected with influential changes in cultural dimensions. One consequence and indicator is how food management is sliding down the list of prioritized activities. Food management is not seen as an activity that is meaningful and valuable enough to be prioritised as in previous times. The surrounding societal values have changed, and how food is valued has changed with it.

When the influence of price and how consumers use it in their measurements of value is in linked to the power of the market-structures in a larger context, it illustrates how the many modern households of today are primarily consumers, increasingly dependent on the established market infrastructures of food production and distribution. The increased focus on price, an abstract representation, conceals this dependency. In a society with highly specialised labour, the household's focus has shifted towards the provisioning and consumption phases, and as a consequence, these consumers are increasingly removed from the origin and production of food, and thus alienated (Marx 1988 [1932]) from large parts of the food cycle. The low priority given to food management and the high waste-levels indicate a devaluation of food; the fundamental source to sustain human life and its potential use value as such. Regardless of this devaluation due to the increased abstractions and state of consumer alienation,

food is a necessity for life and will because of this characteristic hold a certain potential use value regardless of the price put on it, provided it is still edible and fit for consumption.

Prices might be a dominant metric of value in certain phases of the food cycle, but this illustrates the limitations of a purely economic perspective on value, just as the cultural back draft of the past showed how the value of meat was not purely defined by its price but also by a historical cultural status. In addition, the history and the social relations foodstuff is obtained through can strongly influence how it is valued and subsequently treated. The social and the material dimensions of value remain factors in this equation, making up the imagined totality (Graeber 2013) forming the basis of prioritised actions and hence, valuations. Here the potential social status of food, in similar veins to scarce adornments like wampum shells and gold (Graeber 2001), must be considered. If and how such an aspect of social status relates to the other value dimensions of food, like its exchange value and price, within the larger interpretive societal context also remains important to understand local practices. This relates to hierarchies of value and how they interrelate.

Value in a Larger Context of Values

When discussing the local practices of using prices to determine value, the work of Bill Maurer (2006) is useful. Maurer argues that money is an abstraction of value. This will obviously have to include the concept of prices. He finds that the introduction of multiple-purpose money entails a move from substance to signs - to representations of value. This is reminiscent of the move from intrinsic value, via use value to exchange value and price (Marx 1990 [1867]).

Economic perspectives are indeed important when it comes to the valuation of food and strongly influence household practices on the ground, down to deciding what to throw away or not and when. The price focus is often present, not only in terms of how different foodstuffs are ranked, but the focus also emerges when the economic benefit or loss for the individual household is considered in decision-making in food management. Clearly, it is not surprising that households use prices to estimate the value of different foodstuffs and choose their alternative actions accordingly. The pricing system is indeed a tool created for the very purpose to rank and to act as a token of something's value. When the prices of food, a good carrying such a fundamental use value being a necessity for human survival, becomes very low compared to other

valuables of a less fundamental kind, I argue that this illustrates a state of human alienation, a detachment.

I suggest that the emphasis on the purchasing price of food as a measurement of value, a trait that developed simultaneously to these large-scale societal changes and the connected re-valuation at the expense of the potential use value of food, can be analysed and understood further by applying the concepts of disembeddedness (Polanyi 2001 [1944]) and alienation (Marx 1988 [1832]). Polanyi's concept is relevant when discussing states of alienation and the obfuscation of the connection between the use value of food and its price, as his point about disembeddedness implies something's removal from its original context. This concept has some similarities to Marx' concept of alienation (Marx 1988 [1832]). Although Marx (ibid.) lists at least four different types of alienation, the main idea here hinges on separating things that were originally together. The social role of food, the collective glue, has decreased with the increased dominance of the impersonal exchange. The alienation inherent in such separations fuels wasteful practices in today's times of excess and convenience, with excessive practices relating to food management inhibiting antisocial characteristics on several levels.

In this study of waste, there is an overriding emphasis on a holistic and cyclic view on resource management, in the attempt to unravel related local practices and valuations. Hence, I have drawn up a socio-economic backdrop to argue how multiple processes have contributed to the development of wasteful practices in the households, viewing it as a state of alienation on a consumer level. Some of these key-processes range from the centralisation of the population, the specialisation of the workforce, industrial food production, commodification of food, an increasing emphasis on exchange value as a measurement of value, to the rise of a consumer-driven economy and the development of a global food market.

The households I followed have become increasingly alienated from the larger cycle of food production and reproduction (Marx 1988 [1932]), and their wastefulness concerning food is an indication of this. This alienated state also contributes to a sense of independence that clouds the fact that the parts of the food cycle are indeed still connected, as are the people contributing to and depending on it. The cycle only appears separated, as the gaps filled by infrastructure, geographical distances and levels of scale, predominantly the cause and effects of the consumption in the contemporary households now resides elsewhere, be it as the sources and origins of food, or discarded matter which was "out of place" (Douglas 1966). The history and sociality of food mediate this detachment and alienation, as people are more reluctant to waste

vegetables home-grown, animals hunted and shot, berries picked, fish caught, or even animals you have seen being slaughtered. On the contrary, the geographical and mental distance to several of the phases in the food cycle appears to ease, if not completely remove, certain moral aspects related to its consequences; like excess and waste.

Regardless of where one stands in the traditional substantivist versus formalist debate in economic anthropology, or how utopian one sees a substantivist perspective, one where all aspects of human life in a contemporary western society are connected, I argue that this separation of aspects that were originally closer together fuels wasteful household behaviour. This distance between production and consumption of food for instance, is a contributing factor to high waste-levels, due to both the geographical and the mental distance and the loss of knowledge and skill this creates. This distance between household practices and the origins of food, its natural growth, production and producers, but also the waste management process, alters the valuations of food. The changed household practices, be it high food-waste levels, a focus on gourmet sensations and displays of competence through cooking from scratch or other practices and preferences, are indicative of large-scale changes having taken place in the larger system of values locally – what is perceived as meaningful in society.

I have established that local households have a strong focus on prices as an indicator of value. In addition, they routinely practice excessive provisioning while still wasting up to a third of their food needlessly. Some are not even changing their wasteful practices much when becoming conscious about this wastefulness. These aspects of local householding can at first glance appear disconnected and split from each other, as acts of a contradictory nature. Applying the embeddedness concept (Polanyi 2001 [1944]), one could argue that much of the contemporary household economy and the food management practices have become increasingly disembedded from other aspects of local culture. But I don't find the local economic activity to be disembedded, removed from its previous context, or to be considered as a separate field of value with its own rules and aims (Graeber 2013), out of touch with the non-economic aspects of society, be they political, social or moral. What I experienced in the field was indicative of economic perspectives deeply embedded into several of the other aspects of human activity towards a state of domination. The value of food is predominately established by economic parameters and food management practices are predominantly guided by economic principles and ideals of valuation. The current wastefulness can at first glance appear contrary to economic rational ideals, but these practices underline the domination of intermediary market actors. The affordable food

and the continuous access to it cater to current excessive practices amongst consumers, maintaining the profitability of producers and suppliers.

Examining the developments of what is considered as meaningful food practices in a more temporal and dynamic perspective, from one generation to the next, the cultural and moral dimensions of modesty and austerity rather appear to be on the verge of being fully replaced. Currently these exist mostly in discourse amongst the younger households. With an abundance of cheap food available, the focus appears to have shifted towards individual indulgence, enjoyment, desire and excessive provisioning and consumption. Hence, the primary value of food, and the meaning attached to it in this contemporary context of abundance, is one where food exists as a means to reach these ends, rather than as a fundamental necessity for human survival.

Summary

After World War 2, accelerated changes on several levels in Norwegian society have brought changes in household practices of resource and food management. With new values gaining influence, the relationship between food and value has also changed. Hence, age has materialised itself as a key factor influencing how people think and act when managing their food and how much they waste. Illustrated by the different approaches in generations of households, valuations of food previously was placed firmly within a surrounding morality of respect, modesty and austerity has been increasingly in motion for the last decades. Several macro-factors have contributed to the development, exemplified by factors like: increased centralisation of the population, changed labour-structures, increased large-scale industrialised food production, highly developed market-structures providing convenient access to cheap food, increased household income and new technologies and competence, and as a consequence, less involvement in large parts of the food-cycle and higher waste levels.

From the vantage point of everyday valuations of foodstuffs in the households, manifested through their practices and priorities (Graeber 2001, 2013), I have argued that there have been gradual changes in the valuation of food between generations, much due to these large-scale changes in society. In particular, I point to a movement from acknowledging the use value of food as nutrition towards the dominance of the monetary abstraction of value as constitutive of food practices and priorities - the price. In addition to price being a dominant metric of value, the motivations for reducing waste are almost exclusively economic ones limited to their individual household.

Older households also use price as a tool for the valuation of food, but have more careful, planned and less wasteful food management practices. This illustrates a different valuation of food, also shown though their more careful handling of money. However, as exemplified by the approaches of the older households, what is deemed valuable is dependent on a larger system of value (Graeber 2001, 2013). The values of society in the whole define what money and prices come to represent. A focus on prices per definition does not entail immoral, selfish or wasteful behaviour (Bloch & Parry 1989:19). Regardless of these developments and the power of the economic discourse, we must keep in mind how alternative socially grounded dimensions of value also remain influential, not least experienced though the practices related to gifts of food[206].

With these large-scale societal changes, and subsequently shifting cultural ideals, the valuation of food is been engulfed in an economic logic with a strong emphasis on exchange value and price as the yardstick of its value. However, the moral aspects of food-related practices are deeply connected to its potential use value as nutrition, as a necessary source to sustain life, even if today offered predominantly via the process of commodification (Marx (1990 [1867]). The subsequent alienation of the households ushered on by the above-mentioned changes on a macro-level, the moral aspects of the consequences of their wasteful practices become detached from the consumers' own experiences. The moral considerations often become a purely theoretical exercise. Wasting food needlessly remains morally wrong locally, but predominantly only in discourse, as excessive, wasteful practices are repeatedly carried out. Rather than focussing on the potential use value of food as a source of human life, food has increasingly become a means to other ends. In the wake of the societal changes on a larger scale, a higher standard of living and convenience, a taken for granted-ness has festered, devaluing what indeed is fundamental for human survival, contributing to high levels of food waste

Household food consumption practices remain connected to flows of production, distribution, consumption and waste on a larger scale. No matter how autonomous individual households might appear due to the services of contemporary market structures, they are highly dependent on them, and through this infrastructure – on other people. The sense of freedom is of a devious kind, as power mainly resides elsewhere, with the intermediaries controlling the market-structures. I have also argued that an economic logic and mind-set is deeply embedded into many aspects of

[206] The practices and valuations of gifts of food will be analyzed in Chapter 13.

contemporary social life, guiding everyday practices. In the next chapter, we will further explore how market-structures have developed locally in the last decades and how this has influenced the food management in different generations.

Chapter 12 The Split – Alienated Households

Introduction

The household-members offer many examples of food provisioning, past and present. These range from fish being gifted by kin or though other close relations, to being a customer at the local shopkeeper on the countryside, at the neighbourhood corner shop, and finally, at the large supermarkets or malls in the city. We are exposed to several different contexts where food changes hands. Such empirical material offers a broad historical palette to understand the multitude of factors that guide local practices around food today, including the inclinations to waste it needlessly. I argue that the relation the food has been acquired through influences how food is valued, and is thus also influential in setting the threshold for when it is thrown away; of how the valuations of food are manifested through everyday practices in the households.

I will present narratives about different manners of food provisioning and its influence on relations. Observed through this lens, I aim to demonstrate how daily food management in Tromsø is connected to large-scale societal changes in Northern Norway. One consequence of changes in these macro factors, be they an increased standard of living, new technologies, industrialised food production, easier access to cheap food, urbanisation, the growth of a globalised food market or a changed labour structure, is that these typical Tromsø households are now only involved in fraction of the food cycle. I argue that the increased, but by no means recent, distance between the origin and production of food and the context of consumption leave household members in an alienated state. Not in the traditional Marxian sense as producers (Marx 1988 [1932]), but they are detached and alienated as consumers; a state that I argue lowers their threshold for the disposal of food.

The increased distance forms the basis of current alienated state of the consumer in general. This can be traced back in time to the creation and growing influence of the commodity market, the split between person and thing, between producer and consumer. Gradually, the developments in the above mentioned macro-factors fuelled an enormous scaling-up of the levels of production, distribution and consumption, in terms of both numbers and distances. This development fundamentally alters the social relations and obligations of those involved in these exchanges of household food provisioning. Their shared values and valuations, and hence also the

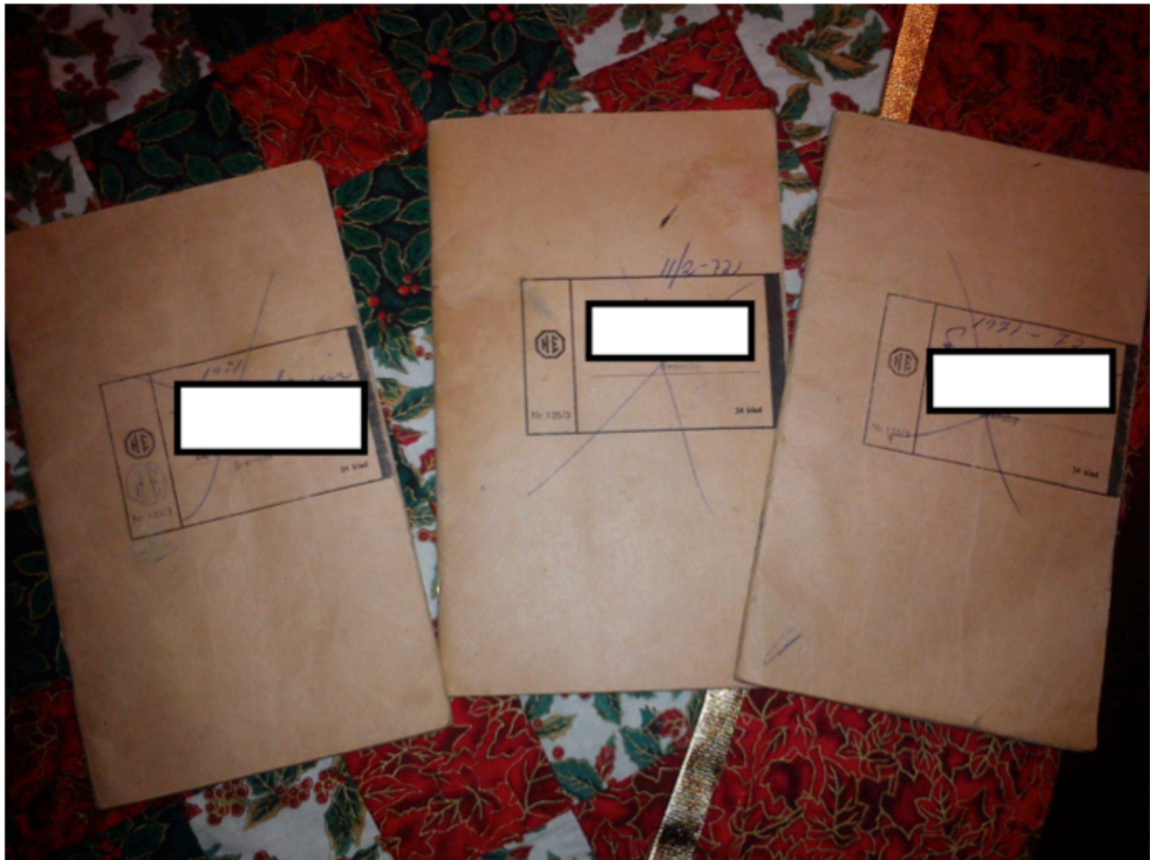
valuation of food, manifested through local practices. The following narratives and subsequent analysis describes such a development.

The Shopkeeper in Lyngen

During both interviews and informal chats in their living room, Ingrid (female, 61) and her husband Fredrik (male, 63) told me several stories about the local shopkeeper in the small village where Ingrid grew up in Northern Troms. She also worked in this shop in her youth. It was the only one in this small village, which certainly influenced the relationship between customer and client in several ways. This relationship manifested itself through acts that Ingrid saw as illustrations of a high degree of mutual respect, dependency and trust, in addition to a different perspective towards time, debt and credit. Before we go on, it is important to note that her story could contain a certain nostalgia and a romantic view of the past and the relations concerning the shopkeeper and his customers. When narrated in the context of the contemporary critical discourse around food management this could be more pronounced. Regardless, the historical narratives reflect important experiences that Ingrid and Fredrik still carry today, and she makes use of these experiences to illustrate changes regarding food acquisition throughout her life.

In the early 1970's customers had the possibility of obtaining credit in this store. They came and picked up the goods they wanted,[207] and afterwards, the goods and prices were marked down in a notebook belonging to that specific household. Ingrid showed me three of these books after telling me this story.

[207] Unfortunately, I am not aware whether or not there was self-service in this shop at the time.



(Three of the books from 1971-72 belonging to their household, and one content page, with date, quantity and various goods and foodstuff on the left, with prices on the right. The cabbage, carrots, swede, spices, sausages, margarine, coffee, lard, sauce for dessert, an Air mail shipment, Vaseline etc.)

The payment for the goods was settled with a varying degree of regularity, depending on the economic situation in the individual households and the amount owed. Their economic situation usually depended on the seasons of the year. The relation between the local and regular customers and shopkeeper was not purely impersonal and transactional. It was not one where the customer and the shopkeeper were almost unknown to each other. It appeared to be a more complex relation, one where the border between the personal and the professional was contextually dependent, and at times blurred.

The perspective of time was different, as the duration of the relation between shopkeeper and customer was both closer and more long-term. The shopkeeper would have such a close relation to many households that he had intimate knowledge of their economic situation and what resources the household actually needed, or not. Based on this, he would sometimes suggest replacements that were cheaper, or even say that they did not need some of the commodities at that time when someone came to shop.

According to Ingrid, he was highly respected in the local community. Over time, the customer and shopkeeper built a bond of loyalty and trust, exemplified through both the flexibility in the credit on one side, and the acceptance of the shopkeeper's advice on what they needed or not in their own household on the other. I was told how the shopkeeper showed concern for his customers through his practices. They were not perceived just customers, nor was he just a shopkeeper. They were human beings. We need to keep in mind that he was indeed still also a merchant, dependent on profit for his own household's sustenance, while the household members were also dependent on maintaining a good relationship with him.

After closing time, the shopkeeper would occasionally give people large bags with old bread to feed their farm animals with. Much of it was still edible for humans too, according to Fredrik. At today's supermarkets, a quite common argument against giving away food that has gone off in this manner is that it ruins profits. Their typical reasoning is that these customers might have bought food from the supermarket instead. Such thinking represents a more short-term perspective, compared to the shopkeeper's more long-term engagement with his local customers. However, this was the only shop in the small village, so the shopkeeper and his clients mutually depended upon each other for goods they did not produce or could obtain through personal networks. There was a kind of balance of power in this relation. As the only shopkeeper there, he could well exercise his power through his prices, range and supply, but he also had to treat his local customers well. They were almost exclusively his only ones, as this village was not situated along a well-frequented route.

From the Corner-Shop to the Supermarket

The households I followed acquired the bulk of their food from one of the many local supermarkets. This is a quite different situation compared to the store in the village 40 years ago. In Tromsø there are many supermarkets to choose from and many potential customers to attract. In the village the customer and the shopkeeper depended upon each other. Another story I was told sheds further light on the relation between shopkeeper and customer.

Georg (42, male) told me about the development in provisioning from the typical street corner-shops to the neighbourhood supermarkets in his childhood. Close to the house where he grew up in Tromsdalen, there was a corner-shop run by their neighbour. They knew him personally through being neighbours over the years, and

their family did most of their food-shopping there. Later a supermarket got established a couple of hundred meters further away, more centrally situated in the larger neighbourhood. The new supermarket offered cheaper food and a much wider range of goods. Georg's parents then struggled. They were caught in a pinch, pressurized by different expectations due to inhibiting multiple roles. They were neighbours, customers and also parents running a household. They found it hard to shop at the new supermarket due to the close and friendly relation to their neighbour. However, they ended up shopping mostly at the new supermarket in the end anyway. The local corner-shop soon struggled due to the loss of customers. Compared to the shopkeeper in the village, the customers in Tromsdalen had several alternatives. One way to interpret this dilemma could be to see shopping at the supermarket as a breach of loyalty towards their neighbour and local shopkeeper, a betrayal of their established bond, akin to an obligation almost. The mixture of a commercial and personal relation complicated matters. Judging by Georg's description of the situation, the personal bonds between customer and shopkeeper appears to be a key reason behind this moral struggle. In the end, the strongest bond of loyalty that Georg's father and mother have to maintain is the one to their own family, providing for them the best way possible.

Weaker Social Obligations

The flow of food between close relatives and friends from the countryside to the city, the narratives about the village storekeeper, the neighbourhood corner-shop and today's customers at the supermarket are all exchanges that involve different levels of social considerations. This development also represents a gradual movement towards the more impersonal, commercial transactions in a purer sense, supported by large-scale infrastructures.

Georg's story about the corner-shop shows how considerations due to the personal relation with the neighbour are reflected in his parents struggle; how their relation complicates their decisions when the new supermarket arrives. Even if we are not talking about a gift-economy in this regard, social and moral aspects connected to the objects still remain in what is labelled as a large-scale, liberal market-economy. The relationship during provisioning was not just limited to a brief transactional encounter at the cash register, but they also met in other contexts, perhaps daily. The relation is not restricted a specific role, but more based on a perspective of a whole person. This is similar to the village shopkeeper and his customers whom he also treated as more of an extended family. This illustrates how the attempts to separate the market and the gift-

economy could not fully rinse the personal and moral aspects away from the market exchanges (Graeber 2001, Mauss (1995 [1924]). The actual transaction cannot be fully isolated from the larger context and the people involved in it. In this case, the split between person and thing rather appears as an ideologically founded construction. Georg's story indicates that the elements from the gift-economy and its moral and social obligations are indeed still valid to some extent. This also points at Mauss' argument (ibid.) that the gift-economy formed the basis of other economic adaptations, like the market-economy. And much like the flow of food from the countryside to the city remains present, social and cultural elements between the involved parties remain to some degree in these market exchanges, albeit more marginally. Today, such cultural and social dimensions are often illustrated by draping commodities in personalised stories of origin and authenticity. This represents an attempt to mediate the distance form the social and natural elements brought by commodification and differences in scale between producer and consumer.

On the other hand, Georg's parents had a choice, assuming the prices in the local corner-shop were still fairly manageable after the arrival of the new supermarket. Still, they ended up shopping at the new supermarket. The dilemma exposed in Georg's story shows how difficult it can be to split the personal and social aspects from so called pure economic transactions, at least when humans are involved on both sides[208]. This is something the relationship between the village shopkeeper and his customers also illustrated. These economic transactions are not truly disembedded or separated from other aspects of society (Polanyi 2001 [1944])[209]. When shopping in a regular supermarket, the transaction is covered in a veil. It appears as a pure commercial transaction is taking place, perhaps like the Greeks and Romans proposed (Mauss 1995 [1924], Graeber 2001); a transaction closer to the intended separation between person and thing, without the social or moral interference like in the other mentioned cases. Even if the personal aspect of the exchange is not completely removed, we could argue that the relationship between the customer and the merchant has increasingly become one of secondary sociality (Godbout & Caillé 1998). This is illustrated by the move from the shopkeeper in the village, via the neighbourhood corner-shop towards the local supermarket and contemporary malls. These concepts of primary and secondary

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[208] The modern age of robotics and automatization might change this, and now one can shop at the supermarket without the direct interaction with another human being, using self-service scanners and payment terminals, monitored by CCTV. You will however meet other shoppers there and the products will be the result of human activity in interaction with other humans, animals, fish, plants and growths, with nature.

[209] We will return to discuss this concept more in depth.

sociality (ibid.) are useful in explaining differences in the relations between the mercantile and the more personal acquisitions. The gift-exchange is first of all a social system based on personal, unique relationships; those within the family, with friends, neighbours etc. where person-to-person relations are forged. These relations exemplify a primary sociality, unique and intrinsically linked to the actual persons involved. The market and the state actors represent a secondary sociality, one that relies on status and defined roles, mostly institutionally and formalised. Here the people filling the roles are interchangeable, e.g. the supermarket manager or the civil servant.

It is important to recognize that no society can function on the basis of relations of secondary sociality alone, which would entail that all social relations become means to other ends (ibid.11). In times of crisis, when institutions falter, mutual aid and gifts ensures survival. The presence of acts of gifting still remains in modernity, even within the top echelons of the state as top-ranking officials ritually exchange gifts during state visits. In market-exchanges, gifts or bonuses and discounts are also offered by sellers to establish and strengthen relations, to ensure further exchange and a bond of loyalty between buyer and seller. All the households studied can fulfil their needs for food at the local supermarkets, but local gifts of food still circulate, as their complex and essential social function remains.

Today, the same Spar supermarket that brought Georg's father new, cheap goods and a dilemma in terms of loyalty is still the local shop for people in this Tromsdalen neighbourhood. Nowadays customers are mobile and loyalty seems hard to come by. Price, and secondly the quality of certain product categories like fruit and vegetables and bread were mentioned as key-factors when deciding where to shop. Although, the mantra often repeated in marketing research about location is also confirmed as important though observations. Locals I talked to would express how they evaluated reasons for and against shopping at the slightly more expensive local Spar supermarket, instead of driving to Prix or Rema 1000 a bit further away where they consider the goods to be slightly cheaper. Food-prices are indeed quite low, as the percentage of the average household income spent on food today has gradually decreased the last few decades.[210] Still even, as discussed, the price discourse is very dominant. This is not just the case amongst customers, but also between the supermarkets which focus on attracting customers by offering the lowest prices on commonly consumed foodstuffs. Some households mention the importance of

[210] According to Norwegian National Statistics, this share fell from above 40% to 11.8 % of average household income in the period 1958 to 2008: http://www.ssb.no/emner/05/02/forbruk/ Accessed: 11.01.2016

supporting your local supermarket or shop, as otherwise it might disappear in the long run. However, when the decision where to do the weekly shopping is made, such reasoning does not appear to carry significant weight compared to price-based arguments. The local supermarkets are valuable when you need to refill on necessities, or have forgotten to buy something. For some of the households, this is their primary function.

The relation to the Spar supermarket in the neighbourhood or the staff working there does not appear to contain the level of primary sociality (Godbout & Caillé 1998) that would invoke dilemmas regarding loyalty.[211] As a result of the wide range of choices in supermarkets and a dominant price discourse in the food-market, many customers shop around for the best offer at the current time. Supermarkets try to counter this to keep current customers and to attract new ones in different manners, by special offers, loyalty cards, pay for two get three etc. These volume or loyalty incentives now typically focus on the economic aspect of loyalty rather than the social one. The focus is on saving money, tapping into what appears to be the main motivational factors for the customer.[212] Formalised and legally binding loyalty arrangements such as cards also highlight the contrasting relationships of the customer now and then. The story of the corner-shop in Tromsdalen shows how loyalty to neighbours made Georg's parents feel bad about shopping elsewhere. This serves to illustrate how a social aspect muddied the waters and made the exchange multi-faceted due to the personal relations. In the village there were no real alternative stores where you could buy food, even if various forms of personal, informal provisioning was common. In Tromsdalen and in the city of Tromsø today, the customer has a multitude of alternatives.

A more complex and long-term relation is also exemplified in the story about the shopkeeper in the village. He would help households during times of hardship by offering them cheaper alternatives, or marking out things he didn't think the household needed at the time, lowering his own short-term profit in doing so. The relation between the involved parties was formal in its essence, but also had clear moral and social dimensions. The relation is viewed in a longer temporal perspective, perhaps due to a combination of an instrumental bond of mutual dependence and one of a more primordial kind established by interaction over time. The current relation typical between customer and the supermarket employee is quite different. The level of involvement is lower and the expectations from the relation differ, and its duration is

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[211] Currently there is high level of competition for market shares in the food market in Tromsø. There are enough supermarkets to cover the demands of a population at least twice of its current size.
[212] Whether loyalty is a good description for such formal agreements can be debated.

typically more short-term and fluid. There are few or no expectations of reciprocity or reoccurrence past the transaction that takes place there and then. The loyalty programs that aim towards creating and strengthening such bonds illustrate this. Such a perspective seems borne out of circumstances where the current infrastructure provides several alternative sources of foodstuffs available locally. The relation between seller and buyer is also one of secondary sociality (Godbout & Caillé 1998). The employees are interchangeable and transient.

Between the village shopkeeper and his customers, the relation was more long-term and complex. One could say the relation is imbued with a mutual sociality, not dissimilar to the obligations following a gift exchange, even if in this case money is involved. In contrast, the relation between the customer and the local supermarket has a more professional, transactional and short-term character and formalised context. Customer-rights are maintained though laws and regulations, as the goods changes hands without the moral, social obligations between giver and recipient in a gift exchange. The transaction that takes place in the supermarket is also based on the obligatory, on the duty (Mauss 1995:144 [1924]) to balance accounts. However, the same level or kind of sociality is not present as in the previous transactional contexts mentioned above.

The stories about societal change shaping the transactional contexts, from the shopkeeper in the village to the city supermarket sphere illustrate a growth in market dominance. The relations of food provisioning have gradually become more formal, short-term and dominated by secondary sociality. The mercantile sphere offers the possibility to withdraw from a social bond, and a spiral of generosity (Godbout & Caillé 1998) present in gifting does not exist. The levels of hierarchy and degrees of sharing in the community change with the development and increasing influence of these market-structures. The developments results in less sharing and a higher degree of hierarchy and structural dependency, as households become more atomistic, individualised economic and social units. The emergence, growth and dominance of mercantile structures transform previous social ties into relationships between strangers. This development is alienating, dividing and creates distance moving towards relations primarily characterised by a secondary sociality (Godbout & Caillé 1998.).

The Creation of the Commercial Market

Based on his studies of gift exchange in archaic societies, Marcel Mauss (1995 [1924]) argues that the gift-economy formed the basis for the development of the market-economy and that many of the same principles are overlapping and present in both modes of exchange. Going back in time, according to Mauss (ibid:154), the Greeks and Romans found that the traditional gift-economy wasn't compatible with their wish for the development of market, trade and production. A reason for this was that the gift-economy was heavily laden with personal, moral and social considerations. Personal law and real law, person and thing, were deeply connected, as tools maintaining social obligations and relations. This changed when the commercial trade was split from the social exchange of gifts (ibid: 144), the legal contract from the moral, social obligation so to speak. This was an attempt to separate person and thing. After the introduction of this separation, human beings should not be sold or bought. Goods and services bought on the market should not become infused with personal aspects of the seller, certainly not in the manner of creating obligations similar to in a gift-exchange. The original intent was to remove moral considerations from the material objects involved in commercial trade. Personal and social considerations were not thought to be compatible with the further development of production, market and trade. The two worlds were split for the fear they might mutually corrupt each other (Godbout & Caillé 1998:162).[213]

This transition towards the dominance of formal markets starts with the establishment of the merchant as an intermediary between producer and consumer (Godbout & Caillé 1998). This intermediary was created to handle the uncertainties – the fear of surplus and of scarcity. However, this was also making the relation between producer and consumer more distant, impersonal. The market was created with the intention of providing a neutral no-man's land, an attempt to depersonalise the exchange, promoting trade, growth and profit. The role of the intermediary, the merchant, is a key component in the creation of the market, as is the reversal of the relation between maker and user (ibid: 152). Previously, goods circulated in the context of individual relationships, governed by social norms. With the establishment of the market, the relation between maker and user was reversed:

[213] Market exchange also exists in fairly simple societies, combined with other modes of exchange. What has become characteristic today is market dominance.

> *"The day when a cobbler, instead of making a pair of shoes someone had ordered, made a hundred pairs and then concentrated on "creating" the demand was the day surplus was invented."(ibid.153)*.

The maker made things in advance, instead of the user contacting him, demanding it made when he wanted it made. With this reversal, production and supply came first in the supply-demand chain. This inversion also strengthens the aspect of desire, the wants over the needs.

The manner the concept consumption is often used today does not necessarily relate to the actual act of consumption, but to the act of provisioning. This is perhaps one reason for the prevalent confusion experienced in the households, as they speak of provisioning as an act of consumption. However, consumption does not take place until the actual act of consuming something. That is when the potential use value of something is realised; for instance when the food is eaten and digested. Waste of a surplus is a component highlighting this significant difference. The definition of usefulness has been consigned to the merchant, in a powerful mediating position. Production then becomes a goal in itself, not a means to provide something of need, something useful. Consequently, in addition to the gradually scaling-up of production and infrastructure, only one step of the cycle of resource management is in focus and emphasised - not the nature-oriented and social one per se, wherefrom and how economic activity extracts resources, human and non-human, but the mercantile outcome of the exchange - the profit. Additional indicators of the power situated in the discourse of the market are exemplified by how household members value food according to its purchasing price and how the provisioning phase is strongly emphasised.

The food the households in Tromsø regularly buy at local supermarkets is not infused with the same level of relational history, of sociality, as food obtained through more personal exchanges. This makes this food easier to throw away. Large-scale, industrially produced food from the supermarkets cannot be said to inhibit or represent the same relations of kinship, nor the local cultural and historical traditions as the fish from the countryside, received as gifts through such relations. The goods from the supermarket are commodities (Marx 1990 [1867]) in a purer sense. They are produced by people anonymous to you, on a large scale with the aim of sale on the market, and are thus of a more short-term, detached and transient character. These goods are not in touch with the larger relational and collective cultural continuity, spreading out in both

space and time, wider than the current household itself, exemplified by gifts (Godbout & Caillé1998: 218-219).

The Abstraction and Commodification of Food

In the purest sense, a commodity is something produced with the aim of being exchanged for something else, and which satisfies a human need or want on some level (Marx 1990 [1867]). Satisfying one's own needs by one's own labour also creates something of use value, but not similar to producing a commodity since the item is not produced with the intention of providing use value for others through an exchange. Both goods and services can be commodities, like candy bars and dental care, but not all goods or services are commodities, like berries you picked in the woods or babysitting for your friend. There are contemporary tendencies where an increasing number of objects and acts are labelled with a price and attempted converted into a monetary value. For instance, what a clean lake is worth compared to a contaminated one, or what is the price of a pretty view from a hilltop and other aspects of nature.

According to Marx (ibid), commodities have four central attributes: 1) value, determined by the quantity of human labour invested in making it, 2) use value, 3) exchange value and 4) price. With the growth and dominance of commercial trade and markets, the borders between these attributes have become increasingly blurred. Consider for instance how food is valued and treated on the basis of its price, not its potential use value(s). Marx here points out that a commodity appears to hold a natural value because it embodies the labour that has produced it and can satisfy human and non-human needs. This value then appears to rest within the commodity itself, similar to a material characteristic like its shape, size or weight etc. The labour that produced it then appears distant. Also, as previously discussed, it is not until the actual act of consuming the food, or using it for other purposes, takes place that the potential value of a commodity is materialised (Graeber 2001). Even if an object holds a potentiality, a capacity, the value of an object or a commodity is not solely inherent in the object itself. Its value is created and manifested through acts. In the case of food, for instance when searched for, gathered, produced, distributed prepared and finally, consumed. The use value of a jacket is not realised and manifested until used, for instance when worn to provide warmth, shielding you from the elements, used as a flag representing your tribe, to be waved as a signal for help, as a bandage suppressing a bleeding wound, used in a ritual to symbolise power and hierarchy etc. In the case of food, its use value is typically both realised and manifested when it is eaten and then transformed, rendering well-

being, satisfaction, energy, quelling hunger, or if one overate, giving feelings of discomfort, or even nausea. Additionally, the value of food can be manifested socially when gifted, re-distributed, or even destroyed in public ritual displays of wealth and power.

The idea behind introducing the concept of the commodity here (Marx (1990 [1867]) is to discuss if and how the commodity status of food influence household food management practices and waste levels, not least since the bulk of the food supplies in the Tromsø households are commodities. I argue that, in addition to previously explored variables like access of food, increased standard of living, household priorities and available time amongst other factors, the commodity status of food is another aspect that influences the perceived value of food, and hence the daily household practices involving it. The commodity status of food is deeply connected to an increase in levels of scale, a development intertwined with a whole host of societal developments. In the next chapter the detachment these developments entail will become clearer as we examine the practices involving gifts of food obtained through close social relations in comparison to formal market purchases of commodities more in detail.

These commodities are the offspring of a wide network of preparation, cultivation, harvesting, production, refining, distribution and trade on a local, regional and national scale, and for the last decades, an ever increasingly of a worldwide one. The household-members are often not familiar with the originating context of the food they buy at the supermarket. They are detached from the larger cycle of their food's production, and also the cultural and social totalities surrounding it. The household members relate mostly to a small part of the food cycle. The parts of the cycle prior to spotting the food on supermarket shelf, and what happens after they place their residue in the waste bin, remain distant to them.[214] Thus as mainly consumers, they are detached both from the productive phase and from the management of the waste from their household. Here I see the industrialized, large-scale production of commodities of food and related market infrastructures as key components behind the increased distances between contemporary producers and households as consumers of food. Not being involved in or close to the production or harvesting of the food they depend on render them in a state of alienation, parallel to the classically alienated workers (Marx 1988 [1932]). The food they consume is of a remote and distant origin both as a mental category and in a physical, geographical sense. The scaling-up and the industrial- and

[214] This is exemplified numerous times in the chapters on household practices throughout the food cycle: Chapter 8 "The Food Management Process – Practices and Analysis" and Chapters 9 & 10 on Disposal Practices.

market-infrastructures contribute to this alienation as the commodities are serialised and attempts are made to render them impersonal, removing traces of other people's involvement.

There is still complexity and difference amongst current practices of provisioning. Compare the common provisioning of supermarket foodstuffs containing fish to buying fish at the local fishmonger, or even at the town square in Tromsø. The fishmonger typically has first-hand knowledge. He can tell you the approximate time and place where the different kinds of fish he has on sale were caught and by which boat. Refined foodstuffs found in supermarkets are also made into anonymous commodities from the same raw materials, but these are mostly industrialised, serialised and standardised on a large-scale, removed from its context of origin and production.

More recently though, the food industry have increasingly labelled products with origin, as a means to provide control for food safety reasons, but also to promote exclusivity, authenticity and quality. As a response to increased distance and alienation, companies producing food create and share the history of their products and their origin, presenting claims of authenticity with the aim to mitigate the alienation brought by the split between producer and consumer. We also experience this through an increase in opportunities to shop directly from producers or at farmers markets, underlining the relational aspects to mediate the gap. Our bodily relation and dependence to food and drinks could also amplify this need to mediate and reconnect, as the origin seems particularly common when it comes to food and drink. This can be a sign of developments having gone too far in the direction of the impersonal and detached, and that counter-forces are at work, mobilising, akin to the concept of double-movement (Polanyi 2001 [1944]): the rubber band between the economic and social considerations where the social, relational aspects will attempt to correct the market forces if they become too dominant.

Marx argues (1988 [1932]) that in commercial relations the previous transactions are erased from memory. This can create a veil between the producer and the consumer – an increased distance. I argue that this contributes to alienation on a consumer level. And on a smaller, more local scale, even the introjections of commercial principles into dealings with friends, neighbours, colleagues etc., who you previously for instance just exchanged food and favours with, made it possible for to treat them more distant (Graeber 2006:77). Still, the relation could be more complex and multifaceted, as when the neighbour and friend was running the corner-shop, as Georg narrated. His father

was caught in a pinch, pressurized by the expectations of different, hybrid roles; friend, neighbour, customer and father in a household, a family.

As exemplified in the introductory narratives, a closer relation to a seller and or a more expansive involvement in the larger food cycle enhances the social and moral dimension, a factor that influences everyday practices and waste levels. Georg illustrates this explicitly. Interestingly, amongst all their other wasteful practices, when I asked him to highlight a moment when he felt really wasteful, he picked an occasion where he was indeed involved in the larger food cycle. The occasion was when he bought ecological lambs meat straight from the farm of a friend. He cut, packed and froze it himself. The previous labour was either experienced personally or highly visible to him. The memory and history of how this meat came to be was very much present in Georg's mind. In this case, he wasn't removed from the larger food cycle, compared to the clear majority of the rest of their household food provisioning. He was deeply involved, and that made the wastefulness more palpable and conscientious for him. On this rather unique occasion, he was not a detached and alienated consumer who would waste food unnecessarily without much critical reflection. He remembered, and related differently to his surroundings. This illustrates the importance of both the social, relational aspect in the exchange through an involvement in the larger food cycle. It represents a counterpoint to the state of alienation as a consumer and the habitual wasteful practices in his household.

Increased Distances and the Concept of Alienation

From the moral and economic vantage point of Mauss, we end up with the individual contracts of the market (Mauss 1995:90 [1924]). As shown in the analysis of the relationship between food, money and value in the previous chapter, the movement towards a focus on price as the dominant yardstick of something's value is made possible by large-scale market and industrial establishments.[215] The creation and developments of the market is a fundamental condition behind the concept of individual property and exchange, as well as a central driver behind different states of alienation (Marx 1988 [1932]).

First of all, Marx found the division of labour in modern society paradoxical. While actually creating a common dependency on each other to survive throughout

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[215] See Chapter 11: The Relationship between Food, Money, Value and Waste.

society through specialisation, it does so by confining everyone to such limited interests and perspectives that no one was able to perceive this common interest (Graeber 2001:65), this collective endeavour. Graeber finds the split of production, exchange and consumption to be problematic as it is central to alienation and dominance. He argues that a more holistic focus is called for to understand how value is constituted and develops. In our case of food management, a link that could illustrate the common interest is the obvious dependency between the people in the cities and the countryside's of the world, roughly speaking, areas with mainly food consumers and those with food producers as well. However, currently this is such a veiled, long-distance relationship, that it is a reason of alienation and exploitation globally. However, as we will explore in the following chapter, acts of gifting between relatives remain as a constant. They act as a beacon that helps us escape this Marxian gloom, as we unveil these ever-present and life-dependent cords that tie people together. These acts of gifting are exceptions that enable us to remain conscious of the dominant market discourse, a key force behind the current alienated state (Graeber ibid: 227).

The Marxian concept of alienation (Marx 1988 [1932], Seeman 1959, Ollman 1971) describes aspects of a state where people have become foreign to their own life and the world they live in. Marx (ibid.) insisted that human labour, skill and action creates culture and history, not the other way around, highlighting its influence on Graeber's perspectives of value as created in action. Inspired by Aristotle's praxis and production, Marx argued that the genuinely human relation occurred when humans produced something together by changing the material world. The product was an expression of one's own essence, and an objectification of human powers, but not in an alienated sense. The alienation occurs when the workers sell their labour for wages and produce commodities for the market, losing control of their own lives and the destiny of what they made.

Marx maps out four types of alienation that he argues takes place in a modern capitalist society (Marx 1988 [1932]). Here the worker becomes an instrument rather than an independent person. The alienated worker loses control of his own life and destiny and some of his social relations are reduced, drifting towards the impersonal. 1) The worker is alienated from the product of his own labour, as the product is only a means to satisfy needs external to the work. For Marx, work should be about creative self-expression. 2) The worker is also alienated from his own labour. His labour is reduced to the exchange value of wages, so he is estranged from determining the product, its purpose or application. 3) The worker is alienated from fellow human beings as differentiated wage-labour brings competition between workers. 4) The worker is

alienated from their own species being – what it is to be human. This is because the key component of being human – to exert creative social labour, is owned by others. In short, alienation has elements of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement (Seeman 1959).

Examining the relationships between people and objects, Mauss arrives to quite similar analytical conclusions in The Gift (1995 [1924]), if albeit in a more general sense compared to the Marxian concept of alienation. Mauss' understanding of the concept is rooted in legal history where property was alienated if its rights belonged to one owner and not the other (Graeber 2001:162-163), if it was personal. This makes sense when we consider that the elementary and ideal social contract for Mauss was a communistic relationship, one of *total prestation*. This was an open-ended relationship where goods flowed without considerations of balances and accounts, as the parties were concerned about maintaining the life of each other. In this sense, alienation can thus take place whenever an exchange takes place, and not just in a capitalist economy, as things are continuously moving around, obtaining new meanings, becoming detached. According to Mauss' post World-War 1 perspectives influenced by communism and Marxism, legal institutions like private property and individual ownership become contributors to detachment and alienation in society as they lead to difference, dominance and hierarchy. A society where some have and some have not. Above, we saw Marx' arguments that property relations is what is behind the alienation, as the fruits of labour escapes the worker since the capitalist owns the means of production, pocketing the surplus value. Mauss (1995 [1924]) also focuses on property rights. Nevertheless, work can be very meaningful even if you don't own the means of production, e.g. working as an aid worker, baker or farmhand, in a company owned and run by someone else, or even voluntary work. Rather, the aspect of meaningfulness can be related to questions of scale, e.g. when your labour is part of large networks and circuits you do no longer perceive or comprehend, rendering detachment, similar to local household members in their acts of wasteful food management.

Criticisms of this perspective on alienation are often rooted in the renowned substantivist-formalist division in Economic Anthropology. Formalists would dismiss the arguments from substantivists about ruptures in modern society contributing to alienation as romantic notions of the past, utopian in societies of a larger scale. But regardless of how utopian one sees a substantivist perspective on the modern societies of today, one where all aspects of human life are truly connected, the increased distances between social aspects that were originally closer together lead to a partial consciousness (Graeber 2001:60). Understanding the consequences of ones actions

becomes increasingly difficult the more complex the intermediary infrastructures and relations become in urban, large-scale societies in comparison to the life on the many local self-subsistence farms of yesteryears like Ingrid and other elderly informants recount.

The Alienated Consumer

In the beginning of the chapter, I presented contextually important narratives describing changes in relations between the local inhabitants of the village and their shopkeeper. Relations changed from being complex, multi-faceted and social, increasingly towards a purely commercial kind in the current supermarkets. This development resonates with large-scale changes in Norwegian society. On the whole, the significantly increased standard of living local households have experienced, but also the growing impersonality in retail trade which affected peoples experience with objects (Carrier 1994:104). During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, one could argue that alienation emerged on several fronts. It was not only the labourers during the production phase whom were alienated in the traditional Marxian sense (Marx 1988 [1932]), but also the consumers, and perhaps it also applies to people operating in between. Increasing scales and distances make those involved in the steps the food cycle lose sight of the whole picture, their own contributions and the other people involved. In accordance with our narratives, Narotzky (2012:90) points out how people were increasingly separated from the personal, trust-relationship that existed between customer and shopkeeper. Here we could add, simply between colleagues and neighbours, even friends and relatives, whom with necessities of life were often shared, gifted and exchanged. The social relations food is obtained through are drifting towards the impersonal, towards relations of secondary sociality (Godbout & Caillé 1998) where the people filling the roles are interchangeable.

The households I studied only relate to a minor part of the full earth-to-earth food cycle. They engage with the food they consume only from the supermarket shelves to their own waste-bin. This distance and detachment from the rest of the food cycle, both previous and subsequent steps, contributes to wasteful food practices. Georg's narrative about his most wasteful moment, when he threw away the ecological lambs' meat he had put so much effort into acquiring and preparing, and Jorunn's regret about wasting her mother's home-made jam are centred on the point that they themselves or someone close to them were involved in a larger part of this cycle. There is a genuine connection, a relation strengthening the memory. And contrary to other examples of

wastefulness, like Georg's weekly routine of replacing edible fruit, the bi-annual deep-freezer clear-outs or the overfilled fridges, involvement in larger parts of the food cycle made the threshold to dispose of this food higher, their regret more pronounced.

Many from the generation of the older informants moved from the farms of parents and grandparents into the city of Tromsø, where wage-labour was the dominant way to provide for yourself and your family. Generally speaking, the drops of sweat from such labour do not fall as close to the family domicile, the nearby fields or one's own fishing boat anymore. However artificial it appears, the distinction between workplace and home, between production and the domestic consumption spheres, this separation is a central factor behind alienation, enabling the dominance of intermediary market actors.

In previous chapters we went through the household's actions related to the steps of the food cycle. We dealt with food- and waste-practices also uncovering several other indicators of local household members being increasingly alienated in their roles as consumers in the contemporary, specialized society. Some of these were: households being decreasingly involved in producing or harvesting their own food, a loss of previous knowledge and skills about resource management, a decrease in buying in bulk or buying slaughter straight from the farms, less seasonal variation in terms of food as seasons basically are rendered invisible by the availability of basically all kinds of food from across the globe at all times, and high waste-levels per se. Today, one can even buy readily ripened avocadoes and mangoes, avoiding the wait for them to ripen in our own kitchen. The temporal focus is short-term, and what is desired is available instantly. I argue that these increased distances to the seasons of nature, to the sources of food, the production of it and the changes in knowledge are all factors indicating and contributing to a changed conceptualization and valuation of food, and subsequently, different food management practices.

In the households, food is treated chiefly as a commodity, and to a lesser extent as something that has lived, grown and been harvested or killed before arriving in the supermarket shelves. I interpret the consequences of this distance as having clear dimensions of alienation (Marx 1988 [1932]) and detachment from the origin of food and its larger cycle from a consumer point of view. As the supply of food is not in question or under threat currently in contemporary Norway, food is increasingly also assigned ulterior motives. It is seen as a tool to obtain not just the necessity of being nourished, but rather to obtain e.g. a healthy, fit body, social status and positioning, superior taste and gourmet experiences, to display competence or combinations of

these or other motives. Ellen and Ivar enjoy having choices so they stock their fridge full with a variety of vegetables. Georg and Josefine always want to have fresh fruit available in the bowls on the kitchen table, while regularly throwing much of it away. The latter practice could even be partially motivated by aesthetics. The fruit looks pretty as well, while also representing a social ideal of healthy living, simultaneously being a health conscious practice *if* the fruit is eaten instead of less healthy food.

The loss of knowledge related to preparation, conservation and storage of food also contribute to this increased detachment. Ingrid pointed out that in some local Tromsø supermarkets they now keep picture books in the fruit- and vegetable section to provide knowledge about the new and exotic fruits for sale. Most locals are not familiar with these products, so there is a need for knowledge about their origin, nutritional value, taste and possible uses. This piqued Ingrid's curiosity, as she enjoys buying an unknown fruit once in a while, just for fun. But even if the distances from the origin and production of food are on the whole larger for consumers today, food has been arriving from countries and fields far away for quite some time. From the 18th century and up until the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Pomor-trade was a prominent feature in Northern Norway (See Niemi 1992 ed.). Russian traders from the area around the White Sea sailed to Norway to trade, and this took place in the coastal areas of Northern Norway as far south as Bodø. They brought goods such as flour (rye) that was traded mainly for fish, but also for reindeer hides.

The local household members are dependent on the food supplied through the market infrastructures, on commodities. Their own creative actions are not the ones producing this food. Thus, they are removed from the origin of the food and from interactions with nature, estranged from the originating source of what maintains their own sustenance and lives. Due to the continuous availability of all kinds of seasonal food and vegetables all year around in local supermarkets, the local consumers are also increasingly removed from the seasons of the year. The need for a picture book in the fruit- and vegetable-section, explaining name, origin and usage of foodstuffs from all over the world also illustrates this development. Direct sensory knowledge is also weakened as the majority of the household members admit to being unable to decide edibility of food using their own senses. Rather they place their trust in the symbolic abstractions of the expiry dates printed on the packaging, using or disposing of their food solely on that basis.

In addition to the examples of the older households seldom buying carcasses after moving into the city, buying less in bulk and how seasonal variations are less visible

in their household consumption, Timothy Jones[216] exemplifies a similar detachment well with a comparative narrative from Arizona in the U.S. He recounts a time when he is in the garden together with his daughter's boyfriend. This boy could not recognize green beans when he saw the pod on the plant, nor when in a pod taken off the plant. He only recognized the beans when Jones cut off the edges of the pod and then cut it in half, making it almost identical to how it looks when in the tin cans one can buy in most supermarkets. He recognized the commodity, but the origin was alien to him, as he was unfamiliar with the larger part of the food cycle, detached, ignorant.

Commodities, Abstractions, Wastefulness

The food available for contemporary Norwegian households consists primarily of foodstuff produced with the aim of being exchanged, of commodities. The terms of production and commodity become problematic with livestock. How can their body parts, their tissue, be defined as products; like something that is produced, unlike parts of a living species that has been born, bred, lived and grown? Livestock like cattle, sheep and goats and parts of them are typically seen as commodities, meat as something that has been produced. Conceptually, perhaps even morally, how living tissue is seen as something that has been produced is a debateable conceptualization, regardless of ones position on carnivores.[217] Who is the producer of beef? The parents of the ox, who mated? Or even the grandparents? The cow that raised the ox? The calf become ox himself, who ate the hay? The farmer who led the oxen into the field and looked after them? The slaughterer who killed the ox? The butcher who cut the meat? The industrial facility where the meat was processed? All of them? And to what degree? Compare the leg of an ox to a frozen package of ready-made lasagne containing the same kind of beef amongst other ingredients. The content is similar, but the package containing the processed food is serialised and has little resemblance to its origin. The meat has been processed and used as an ingredient in a dish, and then packaged. Looking at a mass-produced box of lasagne, it is the result of a longer process, and there is conceptual and physical distance between this product and the originating context of the meat, regardless of how many oxen are printed on the packaging, and the detailed history to

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[216] Timothy Jones at The ABC Science Show – What a waste! http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/scienceshow/what-a-waste/3433276 [Accessed: 1.08.2012]

[217] I am indebted to the South-African writer J.M. Coetzee for this perspective from an interview in Norwegian weekly newspaper Morgenbladet: http://morgenbladet.no/boker/2013/spor_dyrene_det_gjelder [Accessed: 10. 11. 2015].

add authenticity and declare its origin. These commodities are modifications, but as a result of that very process, abstractions. There is a leap from the leg to the rectangular, serialised cardboard package with an image of the classic Italian pasta-dish on it, framed by graphic design in green, white and red. This is as far as I can go down this line based on my data, but it is interesting to consider if, and if this being the case, how this gap influences the thresholds of waste.

During an interview Anders, a conversational topic relevant to this context surfaced. Anders was admittedly struggling to understand the wastefulness he experienced around him. He offered a retrospective glance in his attempt to grasp these wasteful practices:

> *Anders: "People earlier…they had to think and treat the food properly, so that it would not get ruined. People now, if something gets ruined you can just go and buy something new. It is like it isn't their fault that the food has been ruined, even if it is they who have ruined it.*
>
> *Ant: What do you mean, not their fault?*
>
> *Anders: They think in a manner like…if there is food scattered all around them, they also know that they can just go and buy some more. Strictly speaking, they don't have to take care of it.*
>
> *Ant: Is it the store's fault then or, the food itself which is to be blamed for the lack of longevity of the food then or?*
>
> *Anders: It is the peoples own fault…that they don't use the food. I think so…it doesn't matter much…they just go and buy some new food."*

One aspect which Anders points to is related to the argument about changed macro-factors that create a different context of household food management - an increased access to cheap food and an increased standard of living for the individual. In addition, consider the increased distances and the removal the traces of labour and living species on the finished commodities. I argue that both this abundance and the increased physical and mental distance to the larger food cycle play a part in a re-valuation, and perhaps a growing devaluation of food, with regards to its use value. The potential use value of food as a fundamental source for human life has been pushed into the background. Due to the continuous wastefulness experienced in the immediate surroundings, a view on food as something that is always affordable, easily accessible and thus also more disposable is allowed to fester.

This development has been made possible by before mentioned large-scale changes in society, as various processes of specialisation and the scaling-up of infrastructure and production have taken place. Positively, a vast increase in standard of living has taken place. Today all the households I followed could afford to waste significant amounts of food. This development in scale also leads to food becoming more abstract to the consumer through the process of commodification and household practices taking place farther away from the whole cycle of food management. The more industrialised and processed the food is, the more it is serialised, the more distance between producer and consumer, with a loss of knowledge, the more alienated (Marx 1988 [1932]) the practices in the households appear. Also, within the same infrastructures and contexts for distribution and sale of food, a multitude of other commodities are available for the consumers to buy. The necessities are easily drowned out by unnecessary desirables in contemporary hypermarkets.

The increased access to food and the marked improvement of the standard of living are central, but the infrastructure that helped provide this carries several alienating mechanisms. For instance, the increased scales, division of labour and wage-labour markets, the split into the creative and domestic spheres, into production and consumption. Consequentially, the perspective on life and one's actions and *their* consequences easily becomes partial and fragmentary. These fragmentary perspectives are also projected onto food and food management, and its potential use value as human nutrition and the consequences of one's wasteful actions become distant. The limited perspective of resource management contributes to contemporary food waste levels in Northern Norway. Ellen questioning if it is even wrong to waste vegetables if they are short-travelled, or Jon throwing away rice or pasta as it is either just cheap food, or one's individual property to waste if one so pleases, or Svein's wish for the return of a kitchen-grinder to remove waste are but a few examples of such fragmentary perspectives. These illustrate the split from the larger food cycle in a local everyday context.

At the other end of the resource-cycles, another alienated experience occurs, as redistributory or waste-management practices beyond the waste-bins in the households are outsourced, organised by the local municipality. Their waste is managed by others, out of sight. Local household members are not fully experiencing or managing the consequences of their own wastefulness and consumption. They are typically involved in the food cycle from provisioning to disposal, but removed from both previous and subsequent steps. On a larger scale, many western countries now pay to export their waste to other countries. This development is very much a consequence of the scale of

contemporary industrial mass-production and mass-consumption, and subsequently a growing waste-management and recycling industry. We previously heard Anders' story about his grandparents not being allowed to redistribute their leftovers and waste into nearby surroundings for the foxes, seagulls and other wildlife after they moved to a more densely populated area. Yet another part of the resource cycle becomes removed from the context where the commodities are consumed and those who consume them. In sum, several different phases of the food cycle; its production, refining, packaging, distribution, consumption and waste-management are geographically spread out, even further than just between Tromsø and the local countryside; it is spread out between countries, even continents.

Considering Western Europe in a global perspective, the production of consumer goods has been gradually decentralised in the last decades, mainly to low-cost countries in Eastern Europe and the Far East. What happens on a larger, global scale, with low-cost countries dominating the production of goods, and also to an extent food, is interesting. These countries have access to cheaper labour, and usually also closeness to the natural resources needed. The knowledge and labour enabling production and repairs is present in many of the low-cost countries. However, these workers can also often be defined as alienated (Marx 1988 [1932]), in the sense that they cannot afford to buy the products they produce with their own labour. The products are shipped away by the thousands to far away countries experiencing a higher standard of living. Norway and other Western-European countries are increasingly dependent on these countries' labour, knowledge and production of food and other goods to support their current lifestyles.

Like the alienation concept, the concept of "disembeddedness" is also a relevant tool (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). Generally speaking, most of the food-consumption in the households in Tromsø takes place outside of, and with little or no relation to, the originating context of the food. Consumers are mostly unaware of the knowledge and skill connected to its production: what its habitat is, where it grows, how to nurture it, what the plant actually looks like, when it is in season, how long it takes to ripen, how it is harvested and refined, who is involved etc. With the regular supermarket provisioning the local households mostly practice, I experienced how the connection between the origin of the food and the commodities household members pick up in the supermarkets, becomes vague and indistinct for many of them. Both a geographical distance and a lower awareness of the originating context and subsequent processes commonly exist. The food that household-members routinely buy and consume is made for the market, industrialised, serialised commodities, products of a process mostly

unknown and alienable to them. But regardless of how economically independent the households appear, their economy and resource management practices are neither disembedded, nor independent. They are deeply embedded in an economic market infrastructure and logic (ibid.), and also on the acts of people within these infrastructures. Marx (1988 [1932]) found it highly ironic that as individuals became increasingly dependent on other people and their actions, this also entailed that they were increasingly unable to perceive and acknowledge these bonds due to specialisation and the scaling up industrial production and the alienation it brought.

Local practices are multi-layered and dynamic. We will later hear how serialised, industrial commodities, like pork-chops bought on sale at the local supermarket, are also accepted as a personal gift. Such commodities can also carry a degree of sociality as long as the context is right, and can become part of acts that make up a flow of generosity. The social relation between giver and recipient all but decides if and when a commodity or money is an acceptable gift, illustrating a degree of overlap and mutual influence between the monetary spheres and other aspects of human lives.

Individual and Collective Perspectives on Household Waste

My empirical material demonstrates multiple perspectives on contemporary food waste levels. Most of the households have an individual perspective on household resource management, on economy, on provisioning, their consumption and waste levels. Bluntly, when it comes to waste, they do not see past their own waste bin. Others have a more holistic and large-scale perspective. Those in the former category are able to see their own consumption and waste practices as part of a collective and more holistic phenomenon. They see themselves as part of something bigger and to imagine the size of their accumulated household waste over time. These households express concerns about how much waste is accumulated on a larger scale by a group of households. This group was in a minority.

Through the formal interviews, I asked specifically about how the households related to expiry dates when they were shopping food. In this context, one interesting practice stood out. When shopping, selecting goods from the back of the stack, usually the foodstuffs with the longest possible longevity, was expressed as the norm by all but a couple of the households in this study. This norm though, refers to the occasions when they actually check the expiry dates before putting a product in their trolley or basket, and the occasions when there are indeed different alternatives to choose from with different dates. On many occasions when I went on shopping runs with the household, I

observed that this wasn't really the case, as they as a rule would pick products without checking the expiry dates at all. However, when the dates were checked, a conscious decision was made and the foodstuff with the one farthest into the future was chosen. This appears to be in accordance with a shared impression that the fresher the food is, the better it is in taste. Although, as several of the households also expressed, they are aware of some exceptions when it comes to certain kinds of meat, cheese etc.

Jorunn tells me in the main interview conducted at their home that she too picks the food with the longest expiry date. She says it is because it gives them the largest possible margin for using the food, but that it is also motivated by the expectations of better taste when the food is fresher. Nina, along with Erika, was the only one who expressed a different view. She would also consider choosing some foodstuffs closer to the expiry day if she plans to use it quickly, as "otherwise it will be thrown away", whereas her boyfriend Kåre would chose differently on the grounds of the food then being "freshest".

Again, the consciousness around amount of food waste generated does not extend past the individual household level. As the household is the basic economic entity, there was not much reflection around the amount of food waste generated on an aggregated level across households on larger scales, nor much consideration is given towards food wasted earlier in the food cycle, before it enters their household. Perspectives on waste that go beyond the limits of their household, which Erika and Nina express and say they act upon, are exceptions which make others raise their eyebrows in surprise when I told them about such practices.

I also Interviewed Erika and Roger in their home a couple of times, and one time I discussed how they did their shopping. One thing that piqued my interest straight off was when Erika told me that they wouldn't necessarily pick the packages of milk with the longest expiry date in the supermarket, which was the norm in all the other households. Erika said they would rather pick one litre of those, and one that expired earlier if that were the options. This was preferred because they knew they were going to use it by tomorrow anyway. Erika said it was because otherwise it would be thrown away and wasted. Not by them at home obviously, but at the supermarket. One plausible way of analysing this would be to see it as indicative of them seeing themselves as part of something bigger than their own individual household, and carrying a more collective oriented perspective on waste and how it is aggregated. In the case of buying milk in this manner, this practice and perspective connects their individual practices with a concern that expands past the borders of their household.

This is in the veins of Bloch & Parry's (1989) arguments on the relation and balance between household and larger cultural groups and concerns. Based on other observations of food management practices in their household, I found that this perspective resonates with how they treat and value food as a resource. For Erika and Roger, food appears to hold an inherent value (Marx 1990 [1867]), a potential use value that is not dependent on its exchange value or price – food as the necessity for human sustenance and survival. We will return to this particular case in the concluding chapter.

Georg and Josefine are pretty much at the opposite scale when it comes to wastefulness. In their household, other concerns take priority. Spending time on other activities than food management and planning is more meaningful to them, just like enjoying good quality food is. Here the value of food is primarily defined by how food can be a means to other ends, rather than having a value in itself. To them it appears more meaningful and valuable to save time by just spending more money and wasting a larger part of their food. And also to enjoy good fresh food and ingredients of high quality, rather than being concerned about meticulous planning and management to keeping waste levels low. Alas, there seems to be no clear dissonance between the values they cherish the most, and the practices they find most meaningful and valuable. However, in a more holistic perspective, their focus on enjoying life, saving time and not prioritizing food management, represents a lifestyle that is increasingly deemed as unsustainable over time. So, hinging on ones acceptance of a paradigm of sustainability and environmental concern, one also ideologically based and politically situated as contemporary large-scale resource management being at odds with it, individual household practices should ideally be subordinated to the reproduction of the larger scale social order (Bloch & Parry 1989:25-26). This can for instance be interpreted as how consumption levels on earth must be sustainable in the long run.

Excessive and wasteful practices can also be ideologically framed as measures to meet larger-scale collective concerns, e.g. under an umbrella of a consumer driven economy and an increase in global trade, technology and standard of living, bringing increased welfare and development to poorer countries. Nevertheless, Bloch & Parry (1989) argue that such a path represents a more short-term, limited perspective dominated by economic ideals, clearly in conflict with environmental collective contemporary concerns, potentially damaging to the long-term reproduction of humanity. They argue (ibid. 29) that we should be weary of how such situated ideals, like further economic progress, prosperity and technological advancement, are elaborated into the legitimacy of long-term reproduction and the future of humanity. This line of thought carry some similarities to Graeber (2013) pointing out how

intravalues, like e.g. to be effective, to produce effectively, are somehow posing as *metavalues* of society, driven by more specific and politically situated ideals.

Individual Ownership

In local, everyday food management practices the focus often becomes utilitarian and micro-oriented. The ownership of food is mainly individual, or at least limited to the individual households per definition. I also often experienced how the meaning and value attached to food and other commodities in contemporary everyday situations was related to personal projects. The interplay between the individual household and the surrounding environment was not so much in focus. In terms of the origin of the food, cultural and social traditions, the effects of waste and excess, the larger discourses of solidarity or morality are in the background. Today the focus rests on what food can do for the individual there and then, also socially, but the vantage point is the individual, or the individual household. Basic human needs are regularly covered with little effort, so the autonomy, self-realisation and expression of the individual human being have taken centre-stage. Food is often not considered to be valuable inherently, but its value rather decided by its function to contribute as a mean to other ends. Food is often assigned an ulterior motive, and how different kinds of food can contribute in the different life-projects of the individual becomes the focus. However, food holds a potential value as a necessary and fundamental good - the source of all human life.

Making no claims of this being a novel or local phenomenon, food consumption is an important arena for the expression of identity in contemporary Norway. Here motivations can for instance range from a hedonist focus on pleasure and desire, to displays of competence or expressions of a political and environmentally conscious lifestyle.[218] Such projects can take many shapes and forms: to obtain better health, a more nutritious diet, lower weight, more energy, a medium for interesting and exotic gastronomic tastes and enjoyment, as a social marker of lifestyle or class and recognition, or as a channel to communicate political preferences like environmental concern through short travelled or fair trade-branded food, or animal welfare or patriotism etc. For instance, Jon did not serve his two young boys sausages. He rather served fish, and balsamico rather than ketchup. Now they love balsamico and fish, not caring for sausages, usually very popular with young children. Over time, they are

[218] For discussions on modern consumer culture, see for instance Jean Baudrillard – The Consumer Society (1998 [1970]), Jonathan Friedman – Consumption and Identity (1994) or Daniel Miller – Theory of Shopping (1998).

brought up to like certain kinds of food, food with social as well as nutritional qualities attached to them, exhibiting the combined social status and physical, sensory experience food brings.

Individual ownership and perspectives on households as free and independent entities can be alienating as they impinge on social relations. Such perspectives veils the actual dependency on other people's actions, knowledge and skills and the lack of control one exerts over one's own life. These atomistic perspectives also contribute to increased alienation on a household level. With this increased distance and sense of alienation, the objects and commodities are suspect to worship, to fetishism, at the expense of the actions, thoughts, knowledge and intentions it took by people to create these. Local consumers then become immersed in lifestyles characterised by spirals and competitions of status where excessive or wasteful consumption is a key component. Here, food is also used to satisfy needs that do not include the actual physical consumption of it.

Also, redistribution of unwanted food from the households is not common, and individual autonomy and ownership is a highly valued social and cultural ideal. As seen with motivations for lower waste levels being grounded in saving money for one's own household, there is a dominant economical and individualistic discourse surrounding householding. The established sentiment is that one has the right to decide the fate of one's own food, as exemplified by a statement from Jonas (25, male). "Bloody hell! It is my pasta!" he uttered when confronted by a friend raising a moral finger as Jonas was shuffling the leftovers from a meal into the waste bin. This not only illustrates a micro-oriented focus on the individual household and a short-term perspective, but also how the material and nutritional aspects, both its intrinsic value and its use value is gradually slipping into the background, as the cheap pasta is quickly shuffled into the bin. Excesses of food are available, and the individual ownership means the destiny of the food here is supposedly only the personal concern of Jonas, as his reaction above shows.

A consequence of this development is that Western-European consumers can become alienated, but in an inverted manner compared to the traditional Marxian sense (ibid.). Currently, many Western countries are not self-sustained, but in fact dependent on the food production of other countries for the continued survival of their population. The production of significant shares of the life-essential food-supply, and many other kinds of consumer goods, whether we are talking about it on a local level in Tromsø and its immediate surroundings or Norway in the world, can be interpreted as distant from everyday aspects of local households. The production and the producers mostly reside

elsewhere, in a globally populated, large-scale network which is decoupled, similar to the consequences of the current excessive consumption and wastage. The creation of markets splits the acts of production and consumption, but it has also contributed to splitting people and households from each other. The people involved in the different stages that make up the process of food production and management, act separately from each other, alienated from the larger whole, but contribute to this holistic flow together. A state of alienation can reign, as the rupture between producer and consumer is wide (Godbout & Caillé 1998).

Contrary to this veiled collective dependency, a market and exchange-oriented mind-set with ideals grounded in a utilitarian, economic rationalist discourse and individualism appears to be deeply embedded in several aspects of the daily lives of the contemporary Tromsø households. We learned how their valuations were often made with a basis in prices, and the cost or gain of the isolated individual household is the primary concern. The power of the economic discourse remains deeply embedded in and manifested throughout a range of everyday practices[219].

Another dimension of dependency is connected to the state and market-actors. The local households also act as an instrument of profit (Marx 1988 [1932]), for these entities. This is for instance maintained through taxation, or through special offers or advertising promoting and encouraging excessive consumption. This is manifested through the overstocked deep-freezers needing bi-annual clear outs to make room for new purchases, or by how public officials and politicians urging their inhabitants to keep up the consumption levels to ensure economic growth nationally. Most local households today depend on both state and market-actors to provide the resources needed and ensuring their quality and safety.

Consider our context of food in a Marxian perspective. Here providing food either through growing, hunting, fishing or in refining or producing it from materials through action is when and where value is created. Graeber further discusses this perspective critically (2001:38) drawing upon Strathern (1988), as such a Marxian theory of value entails a specific culturally situated perspective; that an individual should be in charge of one's own creative powers and its output. This also relates to how Jonas views the pasta just mentioned as his, as he has bought it. Hence, he is free to decide its fate accordingly, questioning the moral finger his friend raised.

[219] This is discussed in Chapter 11.

It is not universal that a person has a certain right to whatever they produce or to define its importance or value (Strathern 1988). This is a cultural trait deeply entrenched in Western thinking, based on a perspective where a society is made out of individuals who are perceived as autonomous, independent entities. And in capitalism, it is also a fallacy, as what is produced by the workers labour does not go to them in its entirety. The surplus goes to the owners of the enterprise. We should keep in mind the comparative perspectives of Strathern (ibid.) based on her studies from Melanesia. The right to what one has produced; the right to individual property and to define its value is a cultural construct. Strathern (ibid.) sees a person as the sum of multiple parts, what we are perceived to be by all others, in all contexts, as we are multiple persons and not a uniform entity. She presents the concept of the *dividual* person, directing attention to how Melanesian personhood is objectified in artefacts. What comes to the fore and becomes visible for the people observing a person in different contexts is thus what is meaningful and holds value, be it a person's generosity, position in the family or skill as a boat-builder. Here value exists in the eyes of others, recognised socially. As people are brought into being through social relations, this means that past social relationships are also a factor defining value. The history of an object, heirloom or not, is a defining component of its value, e.g. the social relation it has been obtained through, as exemplified through gifts of food in the local households entailing differential practices.

The Freedom provided by the Market

Illustrated in the introductory narratives about the "three-shops" is change, an increasing split that allows for the growing dominance of the market, of its actors, infrastructure and modes of thought. The relationships between the people involved become increasingly depersonalised – a "no man's land" is staked out, a place with no personal ties (Godbout & Caillé 1998:152), apart from individual ownership we can add. Although degrees exist, as we will encounter in the next chapter, the result of this movement appears to be a polarisation of redistributory relationships. One is communistic, informal and personal, like the local flow of gifts of food between friends and relatives, and the other formal, mercantile and exchange-oriented, like the routine supermarket provisioning. Through this movement towards a more anonymous commercial market, the attempted subject-object divide is reinforced.

This split also fuels perspectives that economic activities as separate from other social acts; that they are disembedded (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). Such a distinction is just another social construct. When splitting the production of commodities and the

production of people, underlying them entirety different logics, a distance that contributes to alienating people is created. The control households have over life-dependent resources was then weakened. This alienating split that Marx also describes (Marx 1988 [1932]), a split of person and thing (Mauss 1995 [1924]), is a social construct, just like the completely autonomous individual and the completely selfless gift are. These are concepts founded on particular world-views. This split can only take place in the shape of an abstraction; a social construction like a purely commercial exchange. This construction attempts to isolate exchanges, of e.g. food, creating a vacuum in time and space through its efforts to remove the personal aspects of its past origin and creation - the people involved in this process, as well as food's creative material potentialities in creating humans physically and socially. Mauss (1995 [1924]) argues that such attempts to strip commercial transactions of the personal obligations cannot succeed completely. One reason could be that the shaping of social persons takes place through a primary sociality. Not through a singular economic sphere, but though relations more fundamental than the market or the state – through social bonds where generous acts are not counted or necessarily balanced. So before a human being is understood in terms of any economic, administrative, political functions they fulfil, they must be understood as social persons (Godbout & Caillé 1998:10), through the bonds they create and maintain. The local flow of gifts between relatives and friends maintain such bonds, bonds manifested through their more careful management of these resources.

The freedom of the market exchange gives the possibility of exit through balance by minimizing the importance of such bonds, or abandoning the bond itself (ibid: 191). This development also gave rise to another social construction, the concept of the modern individual, an individual apparently free of ties, but not free to stop producing as a permanent surplus is necessary (ibid.). This split and the focus on perpetual growth are all steps towards individualisation and a negation of the gift (ibid. 160-161), of social obligations. This allows for individuals to develop seemingly unhindered by each other. But still, social relations remain present within the market. The market, filling a key-role in this rupture between producer and user, is also dominated by social relations, but of a different kind, namely those of secondary sociality, relations that are interchangeable (Godbout & Caillé 1998).

The nature of these relations is instrumental in maintaining distance and is a force behind states of alienation, an abstraction which veils and attempts to erase social relations and moral obligations. This rupture and state of alienation lowers the thresholds of disposal and waste in the households. In principle, the commodity is

without a history, without traces of labour, of people, faceless. Nevertheless, due to the potential use value of foodstuff as life-dependent nutrition for humans, a dependency on others remain, with autonomy being a misconception. This dependency is again unveiled through the local gift exchanges between city and countryside dwellers.

A fragmentation of previous social relations and communities into individual entities in a mental, economic and social manner, with the increased distances it harbours, increases the challenge of conceiving how the individual person and the larger collective still intersect and merge in any society. The individual continues to live and work for friends and family, inhabiting a society, community and social network which represent a mix of altruism and egoism (Godbout & Caillé 1998:9). As increasingly difficult it might be to perceive the connections to many others, the idea of the completely autonomous individual is a fallacy, as proven by the helpless new-born, the care-needing elder or the city-dweller incapable of providing food without the help of others, however distant. Children are reared, elders helped and food shared and re-distributed. Berries are picked and cod fished for the old grandmother, while bread is baked and gifted to the visiting son of Erika and Roger, yet without an own family.

The commodity and the rules of their exchange are human cultural creations, just like the concept of the market and the rules that govern it are presented as natural, as an invisible hand. The compulsion to deny the existence of a gift without return, and rather enter into utilitarian territory, talking about balanced reciprocity, exploitation and egoism by interpreting acts of generosity as utilitarian, is indeed also an ideologically encapsulated or politically motivated endeavour. Gifts are then attempted reduced to objects in a market exchange, to commodities, entailing a full separation of person and object (Godbout & Caillé 1998:2). We cannot separate objects from the people who transact them and the social relationship in which they are transacted, just as we cannot separate the relationship from the people who are in it, the objects they transact, and the ways they transact them (Carrier 1994:133).

For instance, consider pork bought at the local supermarket. Here we must keep in mind that the pig is pro-created, raised, fed, slaughtered and then made into serialised commodities of pork-chops, bacon, sausages and ham, after a series of transformations of nature. The commodities are both created by humans and non-humans, but their past is hidden from us, as we do not partake in the process of its creation. It happens far away, and the matter is serialised and de-personalised by others with the assistance of intent, labour, technology and knowledge. A commodity is moulded into anonymity, as the imprint of the humans and non-humans involved in

producing it is typically attempted erased from the object itself. It is prepared for the market – an object without social obligations sticking to it. The object of economic activity has shifted from creating and maintaining human life towards growth and profit, with human life becoming secondary; a means to other ends (Hart, Laville & Cattani 2010). Marx (1990 [1867]) argued that in capitalism, a state of commodity fetishism encourages us to imagine that human activity is about material production, and not about the creation and sustenance of people and relations between them. What are actually relations between people masquerade as relations between things (Hornberg in Graeber 2011a: 505-506). The alienated state of our contemporary households due to their current split from the larger food cycle, and the people that it consists of, is in line with this argument.

The increasing influence of markets represents a movement towards a state where exchange to gain replaces the exchange to cover the needs of households. Aristotle (1981) referred to the former as amoral. The transition towards market commercialisation and dominance with price as a yardstick of value can also be indicative of what Graeber (2013) describes as the naturalisation of an *intravalue*. This naturalisation can for instance be establishing a market to better provide resources, where it is reshaped by political acts and rather ends up being perceived as a *metavalue*, e.g. market growth as a goal of human endeavour on the whole. According to Marx, the production of wealth was not seen as an end in itself amongst the ancient Greeks, Romans and pretty much every other non-capitalist society (Graeber 2006:70). Rather it was seen as a subordinate act in a larger process aimed at the creation of people. And Marx (1867 [1990]) already suggested that the production of objects was simultaneously the production of social relations, hence also of people. Following this perspective, objects should not be seen as the goal, as wealth has no meaning except as a medium and tool for the growth and self-realisation of human beings. Rather, one should see the process of food management in the households as part of the larger process of producing people, interwoven in a socio-material manner. The next step to creating people is to create something lasting, an extension of oneself. This can for instance be manifested through reproduction of both oneself and of social and cultural traits, typically through raising a family. As a consequence of such a situated perspective, food management practices leading to excessive waste can be interpreted as anti-social behaviour on several levels. We will return to this argument in the concluding part of the thesis.

The Failure of Market Dominance?

Georg's story about the neighbour's corner-shop illustrates how an exchange of commodities can also help create and reaffirm a relation between the involved parties. It also shows that degrees of obligations can also be a component within formal market exchanges. The objects are not completely separated from the people who exchange them (Mauss 1995:31 [1924]); the communion and alliance they establish is well-nigh indissoluble, even if an alienating rupture is made possible by the creation of the market and the state (Godbout & Caillé 1998). Mauss goes on to explain how he finds the subject-object divide impossible, as: "that coming and going of things and souls are all intermingled with one another" and further claims that "…the gift cannot be a true object, that would mean removing all traces of people involved with it." (Mauss 1995:48 [1924]). This is one possible reason behind his claims that that the logic of the marketplace has failed to dominate western society (Graeber 2001:162).

However, the formal exchanges when commodities change hands are still somewhat different. This relation is more distant, abstract and alienable, one of secondary sociality (Godbout & Caillé 1998). The supermarket clerk and manager are replaceable, in a large system of division of labour, of production and distribution, unlike the function of Ingrid's village storekeeper or a relative. Also, the commodity is perceived as private property, property that one can apparently treat as one pleases as long as one has paid its price; its anonymous, impersonal marker (Carrier 1994:128). But as we should know by now through studying wasteful practices concerning food, this is not necessarily the case as moral, cultural considerations are still present. The contexts of production, distribution and consumption still remain, socially, economically, environmentally and morally. We must also consider foods' material potentiality as human nutrition, just as well as large-scale social and moral contextual factors like global environmental consequences or famine.

The complete separation between person and object, postulated as the idea behind the creation of the market (Mauss 1995:144 [1924]), does still not seen attainable, as personal considerations of previous history and future obligations still attach themselves to both the object and the parties involved. As Georg's father experienced through his wider social relation with the owner of the neighbourhood corner-shop, these continued acts of commodity exchanges also helped create a bond, a sense of obligation between them, alienable objects exchanged or not. Over time a relation was formed through their contact both as neighbours and as customer and merchant through numerous, reoccurring commodity purchases. An expectation to shop

at his neighbour's shop was created through these patterns of action. The relation was too close to only be of a professional character (Sahlins 1972), it was not one solely based on secondary sociality (Godbout & Caillé 1998), but more complex. Acts of gifting creates social bonds, obligations, but commodity exchanges can also create them, as the exchange doesn't take place in an isolated context neither in time nor space.

The increased scale of industrial food production is indeed a challenge. Its abstract and large-scale character and infrastructural intermediaries makes it difficult for people living mainly in small-scale relationships to connect and relate to the conditions under which the food is being produced. We are dealing with a clash of scales (Eriksen 2016), or a scalar gap. Through practices of exchange, this gap can be bridged at a later stage, as a social meaning and value can still be impregnated into a serialised commodity, like the pork-chops. In context the commodity is presented as a gift, an object with a relational history, manifesting a close, small-scale relationship between the people who exchange it. The centralisation and specialisation of labour and the scaling-up of resource flows are some of the macro-components here that underline the loss of control and the fragmentation of the existences of individual household members. They promote ideals of independence and individual ownership, while simultaneously enabling wide-reaching bonds of dependency and trade to grow stronger. Even though we don't see or know them, there are people on the other end, feeding us. The split cannot be complete.

As the acts of gifting berries, fish and meats between the households in Tromsø and beyond will show in the next chapter, gifts and commodities are not mutually exclusive categories. Gift giving is widely present also in societies dominated by market-exchanges and vice versa; the difference is quantitative rather than qualitative (Carrier 1994:132). Gift-exchanges can indeed also contain elements of alienation, as in losing degrees of one's individual autonomy due to obligations created. Just as much, gift-exchanges can be acts of individualism and dominance, e.g. as expressions of power. Similarly, as shown above, many commodity transactions can be tined by mutual obligation (ibid.).

Acts of generosity or of gifting carry also important social significance in modern western countries, like in my own field-site, Tromsø. Altruistic practices, exemplified through flows of gifts, still exist as cultural continuities alongside the frequent provisioning practices through formalised market exchanges. At times, they also become intertwined, as these categories are not binary. The consumer food-market might be driven by different principles than those of the gift, but still along the very

same E-8 motorway both gifts and commodities flow regularly into Tromsø, in coexistence with each other. In Tromsø, fish, meat, potatoes, berries etc. can still be obtained both though informal and formal relations. The narratives illustrate how several parallel manners of food provisioning take place simultaneously, receiving deeply personal gifts or how provisioning gradually becomes more formal and impersonal. Major changes in household food provisioning have taken place during the last 50 years, but common cultural continuities laden with social relations remain.

Through studying practices of gifting, we gain insights into the commercial principles and market institutions that now dominate in the local society, as these generous practices remind us of the ever-present alternative of sharing, of acts of generosity. Through applying the concept of gifts, diversity in economic transactions is revealed. Even in our modern capitalist society our lives are not always as individualistic, autonomous and market dominated as often portrayed (Graeber 2014:66-67). Perhaps this particular social construction of the autonomous individual has become naturalised, similarly to how Christianity augmented a dichotomy between the selfless and the selfish. Acts of sharing serves both involved parties, surely preferable to serving only one of the involved. Could this duality present in an act of gifting, of selfishness and selflessness, another factor behind failed dominance of the logic of the market in Western Society (Graeber 2001:162)? A factor that exists in addition to the inalienable, lasting relations of primary sociality that cannot be interchanged with or reduced to a sole exchange are the relations of *total prestation* (Graeber 2001:159, 217-218). These still appear impenetrable to the domination of an economic rationalist ideal.

In the following chapter we will see alternative practices of gifting that keep the households together are present as a counter-force, in a dynamic similar to the double-movement (Polanyi 2001 [1944]), between the principles of a liberal market and of social concerns. We are reminded that the separation into domestic and market spheres, into that of subjects and of objects, are social constructs and not absolutes. My aim is not to compare the different ways of food provisioning per se, or to argue that a linear development has taken place, but to shed light on some cultural traits and changing relations and infrastructures that influence these different practices of food management. As shown previously in this chapter, the social relations between the involved parties in the provisioning phase influence the practices of household food management. Thus, these relations are important social and cultural discourses to understand why households waste food needlessly.

Summary

In this chapter the main aim was to illustrate key traits connected to recent developments in household food provisioning, the surrounding infrastructures and the relations between the actors involved. The narratives presented provide important historical context for understanding current food management practices and priorities.

I have discussed contemporary practices of food provisioning in the light of this development and illustrated that the complexity of social relations between the people involved in the main food provisioning contexts have changed in the last decades. On that basis, I have argued that many of the contemporary households are separated from a significant part of the food cycle, towards a state similar to Marx' term describing industrial workers; alienation. While presenting the complexity of local practices on the ground, I also argue that both the increased distance from large parts of the food cycle and the decreasing levels of sociality related to the most frequent food provisioning contexts are influential factors behind such an alienation. Notwithstanding, the increased standard of living, more widespread market infrastructures and changed priorities in terms of how household members spend their time that has been experienced during this period are all interconnected factors, linked to the argument about an increased distance.

A key development that contributes to this alienation and distance is the growing influence of global, large-scale industrial and market infrastructures. I have investigated how the split between person and thing, between producer and consumer, brought along by the increased scale of these infrastructures, along with several positive aspects, entails a removal of social aspects from the exchange. This split, and these market infrastructures contribute towards enabling individual, impersonal exchanges without social considerations and obligations. Here I argue that both the decreased level of sociality in the mainstay of local exchanges and the increased distances between the origin and production of food and the consumer influences household food-waste levels in a negative manner. The alienated state of consumers fuels food waste levels.

However, in the midst of the alienated consumers and increased distances brought along by the large-scale macro-changes and the dominance of formal market exchanges, a mirror image exists. This image; these acts, enable a critical perspective towards the dominant paradigm. These are the acts of gifting, still remaining socially and culturally pivotal. These fundamental human social practices, a resisting counter-force, are keeping the seemingly autonomous islands of individual households together. Gifting as practices can both illuminate and inspire us to reconnect what has been split.

They remind us of both communality and nature in the context of managing our resources, offering hope of decreasing food waste and of sustainability. This is the topic of the next chapter.

"Geigi giedas ii goassige noga. –
A giving hand never gets empty."
Sami Saying

Chapter 13 Waste, Value and Values – The Memory of the Gift and Social Relations

> *"My father stopped by with some fish…"*
> *---*
> *"I do nothing like that (picking berries). My parents do it. Then we get some from them every year, one or two (jars). We get homemade jam. Cloudberries, lingonberries." Jon (42, male)*

Introduction

Previously, we followed the food cycle throughout, identified and discussed key factors driving waste levels. We witnessed how the food management practices in the households were influenced by an almost unlimited access to food and low prices, shaping time management and priorities. I also argued that an increased distance from the larger food cycle has led to a state of alienation on a consumer level.

Through generational differences that stood out in empirically, I then backtracked slightly to historicise in the last chapter where I discussed a bundle of changes on a macro-level in Northern Norwegian society, and with accelerating pace after World War II. These changes have contributed to an increased standard of living, centralization, increased market and food-producing infrastructures and more, but also a split between people, institutions, social activities and the like. This larger context is important to explain the changed adaptations and gaps in local generational practices. It improves our understanding of how these macro-factors came to drive the wastefulness I experienced locally. The level of access to food, the low prices and prioritized time in households, both contribute to, and are, to an extent, products of the processes behind the increased distances from the food cycle, the differences in scale and the alienation that I argue household members express through their practices.

This chapter brings together the arguments drawn up in the previous two chapters; the value-based approach analysing food practices as manifestations of their value and the overreaching contextual and historical developments framing and re-shaping the shared societal values, and in consequence, the valuations of food over

time. I described an historical development towards the dominance of the market and an economically centred logic reflected in the local household practices. Now I will present ethnography on acts of gifting. This will illustrate different valuations and practices, and how these influence the thresholds of disposal of food locally and thus the levels of food waste in local households.

I present countering practices pertaining to food management and waste generation. They concern acts of gifting in close social relations; the value placed on gifting and gifts of food, against a backdrop of values that these acts represent and sustain. To understand waste, we must understand value (Thompson 1979). These acts of gifting and redistribution are important as they remind us of the alternatives to dominant, naturalised practices and perspectives. The food received through these relations is valued higher; a value manifested through more precious management practices.

We will see how this empirical material gives us an important, contrasting cue. It clarifies my analysis of some of the drivers behind current wastefulness in the households. Perhaps it also shows a possible path towards reducing waste levels, as these acts illustrate a possible, tangible alternative to individualism, alienation and the dominant, imagined household autonomy. These social acts connect and reconnect people. In a sense, the acts of gifting are what keeps people together; the unselfish, generous acts; a flow of generosity that is manifesting and reminding the household members that they are part of a larger collective. Society is memory, we could state with nods to Emile Durkheim (1971[1912]). We should however not lose sight of the sack of potatoes from the introduction, as gifts from outside the household can cause instability and also drive waste levels.

Fish for My Family and Friends

A steady flow of local food regularly arrives into Tromsø. It flows from people living in the surrounding countryside areas to their relatives and close friends living in the city. This flow manifests itself socially in multiple ways, and I will discuss it in the light of other exchanges involving food. These practices illustrate a local complexity, as informal exchanges of gifts are still ever-present in a household resource situation dominated by a dependency on formal, large-scale market-structures.

Countryside dwellers from neighbouring areas of Tromsø often bring gifts of food when visiting relatives or close friends in the city. Such visits took place regularly in

many of the households I followed. The visits typically occurred once or twice a month, mostly on weekends. The gifts would generally consist of local natural resources that had been caught or harvested personally, often in areas nearby their countryside homes. Dependent on the season of the year, these gifts consisted of fish or refined fish-products, potatoes, berries or jam, or occasionally different kinds of meat like reindeer or elk, sometimes seal-meat or ptarmigans.

It is common that parents and grandparents gift food in this manner to their children or grandchildren, or between siblings. Gifts also flow the other way around when elderly or sick are not able to harvest these riches themselves. These gifts can both consist of food bought at the local supermarkets or food they have made, caught or grown. The young son, who lives alone, would now and again get a loaf of homemade bread from his mother when leaving after a family dinner on a Sunday. Visiting children could also be given food that has been bought but not consumed, either down to it not being liked by someone in the parental household, or that they have so much that some of it might go off. The sack of potatoes mentioned in the introduction, given to Tor and Kaisa by his mother is another example. Feelings of love and care for others can thus be reaffirmed through such gifts (Miller 1998), and establish and maintain social bonds (Malinowksi 1922, Mauss 1995 [1924]).

Already more than 25 years ago, Marianne Lien (1989) argued that there had been a decrease of the redistribution of fresh fish in the small town of Båtsfjord, Finnmark[220]. She found that the distribution had been increasingly formalized and taken over by commercial interests, becoming part of a monetary exchange. She claimed this led to an atomization of the households as units, and that it altered local social relations (Ibid: 220). With the increased availability of fish through the supermarkets and stores, the households are not so dependent on personal relations to obtain fish and other foodstuffs harvested locally. Lien (ibid.) says the mutual dependency that these exchanges of food reaffirmed were on the brink of disappearing at the time, and that friendship relations were no longer a guarantee of access to fresh fish, a key resource locally in many ways. She argues that the dominance of the monetary economy in the local distribution of fish has weakened social relations in the local community, even if the local fishermen still had enough fresh fish for gifting and personal consumption.

Now, almost thirty years later in Tromsø, the gifting of fresh fish between relatives and friends still takes place at regular intervals. The fish is typically flowing

[220] A neighbouring county to Troms.

from people who are to some extent involved in fishing either privately or professionally, and into the city households who are not. These gifts of fish still play a role in maintaining social relations, even to a degree on the occasions where monetary means are involved, or if the households are not entirely dependent on these relations to obtain fresh fish. Today there are several ways to provide fresh fish through formal commercial channels, but very often fish is still provided through an informal economy, where relatives, friends or colleagues are connected.

Redistributing the Catch

Most locals who fish are not professional anglers, but usually they catch enough fish for both their own household and close relatives and friends. The catch naturally varies. Often when a certain kind of fish is in season, they catch more fish than they need themselves. This surplus is often distributed generously through kin- and social networks, usually without money changing hands. During a conversation with Professor Ottar Brox, an invaluable resource on Northern Norwegian culture and author on many books from the region, I was told that this was a traditional practice. This was a traditional practice on the small combined farms in the area, a practice certainly not likely to be exclusive to this part of Norway either. One would fish for one's own family, but redistribute the surplus to relatives and neighbours. Morally and culturally, the neighbour would be obligated to reciprocate and redistribute his future surplus catch (Mauss 1995 [1924], Sahlins 1972). Occasionally, some of the catch is sold to other more distant friends, neighbours or colleagues for a bit of added income. The more distant relations between the parties mean that payment is expected.

The scale of the catch also has other consequences than the wider distribution between households. With a big catch comes the need for sufficient technological infrastructure to manage the fish. In this case, freezers of adequate size to handle 20, 30 or 40 kilos of fish in addition to what is already in store. The informal deliveries of fish to the city households do not occur very often, or at regular intervals. Doubtless, these local, hobby anglers also waste fish needlessly. It is reasonable to believe that quite wasteful practices also occurred a few generations ago, considering the lack of today's refining and storage technology, even if traditional methods of drying and salting were prevalent. The locals also picked blueberries, lingonberries and cloudberries regularly. Picking berries during summer and autumn appeared to be mostly a female domain, but certainly not exclusively so. Jam was then made, and a jar or two was often redistributed to members of the extended family, or close friends.

Households and Cultural Continuities

Kåre (40, male) still obtains fish straight from his relatives when he visits them. He claims to never have bought fish in a regular store or supermarket in his life. Household members obtaining fish straight from the source would sometimes emphasise how they are able to taste the difference between this fish and that from the supermarkets. Some, like Kåre, state that they do not buy refined products containing fish. He would claims that his knowledge of the quality of fish was high and thus he would not enjoy eating fish inferior in quality compared to their standard. In any case, the bulk of the fish on sale in the supermarkets, in the shape of refined products or not, originates from the same waters as the fish they get through their personal relations. Local anglers supply the raw materials of which some are still frozen and refined at local facilities in Northern Norway, even if much of it is sent to Asia for filleting nowadays.

In many of these cases, the distance between the households consuming the fish and the angler who catches it in its habitat is short. There are no intermediaries. The close relation between these households and the origin of the resource, here represented by the angler and his or her relation to the surroundings waters and rivers where he/she harvests the fish, contributes to maintaining knowledge about the kind of fish, the quality and purity of it and the originating waters. Here the consequence is not a state of alienation (Marx (1988 [1932]) and distance on a consumer level, one where the household members are removed from the larger parts of the food cycle and the origin of the food. Techniques of how to provide, process, preserve and prepare fresh fish are handed down from generation to generation. This knowledge is often picked up by spending time together with grandparents or parents, in situations when these foodstuffs are caught, refined, stored and prepared in different local manners. It is part of the Northern Norwegian heritage, illustrated for instance by stories of grandparental know-how in judging freshness and good storage methods picked up by Anders and Georg. The continuity in such adaptations and practices of provisioning are pivotal in maintaining the human understanding and attachment to local natural surroundings, past, present and future. These acts maintain and manifest the underlying values of the local society, keeping the individual household practices connected to the larger socio-natural surroundings.

This lasting flow of fish, berries, meat etc. is embedded in the culture and history of Northern Norway. A combination of fishing and small-scale farming and husbandry was the dominant way of life for centuries here (See e.g. Paine 1957 & 1965, Rudie

1980, Brox 1972 [1966]), in addition to reindeer herding amongst the Sami. Households were based on a subsistence economy, with a widespread austere and modest approach to food and resource management. The approach was down to the harsh natural surroundings and poverty. It also resonated well with ideals in Protestantism and stricter religious communities influential in the region, like Laestadianism, Pentecostalism and Methodism. These austere practices were probably not chiefly a result of a general lack of resources, as the sea was usually brimming with different kinds of fish. However, uncertainty played a role due to the seasonal variation of resource availability in these harsh natural conditions.

These acts of redistributing local natural resources maintain cultural traditions and knowledge on a larger scale. They represent a different way of life, while still only a generation or two away for most of the households I followed. This previous way of life is not so far by gone that it is alien to them. The foodstuff brought along from the countryside is typically not caught or grown exclusively by the use of traditional methods, equipment or technology, even if some of the knowledge related to geography and seasonal patterns remain. These Tromsø-households are not practicing this way of life themselves, but this flow also ensures certain elements of knowledge and skill related to such harvesting, hunting or fishing is to some extent maintained. For instance, where and when game, berries or fish can be found or are in season. This kind of knowledge and skill is usually handed down through the generations, be them fishing skills, good spots or the best cloudberry fields in the area, quite often the subject of secrecy, sometimes even deceit (Olsen & Thuen, 2013).

These individual acts of redistribution, that in sum make up this flow of food, create and maintain social relations. These are acts that create a society, what is between people, making it into an arena for the realisation of shared values (Graeber 2013). The gifting practice also anchors people and these acts in both past tradition and history and the future, sustaining life and knowledge. I view these practices as related to a subsistence household economy of the past. Food harvested and redistributed in these manners preserve kinship relations by representing the roots and the origin of the family in the local context. Through this flow, an affinity to a larger cultural and social collective is also reaffirmed, both to the family, fjords, fields and rivers in the local geographical area and to the heritage of Northern Norway as a region. These gifts and exchanges of food play a part in the reproduction of social and cultural ideals in Northern Norway, ideals and practices that outlast the lifespan of the individual. These gifts of self-gathered and harvested food between relatives represent ecological, cultural and economical adaptations to the local environment going back centuries. Gifts

of berries, fish and game, harvested in traditional ways, are still part of the local or regional, cultural heritage - a narrative of self-subsistence shared by many and still practiced by some. I view these gifts are manifestations of knowledge, skills and a way of life that stretches out through time, outlasting individuals, simultaneously manifesting current social relations, transgressing individuals and confirming connections to a larger collective. But as indicated by Olsen & Thuen (2013), there are also elements of secrecy and competition involved, illustrating the boundaries of solidarity and sharing. This could even extent to brothers quarrelling over fishing spots, still arguing about wrong-doings fifty years back in time.

I must note that the historical narratives of past adaptations and ways of life offered to me might be oversimplifications and stereotypes, but acting as self-representations of past cultural ideals they still hold some significance. The narratives can represent an ideal that people today have of the traditional way of life in Northern Norway, as a negation and a contrast to the contemporary. Their view of the past is a mirror image of their critique of the present.

The Concept of the Gift

These local practices of redistribution resonate with the classic anthropological topic of exchange. I will explore a variety of aspects related to this flow of food from the countryside to the city households in Tromsø, seen through a Maussian and Marxian lens. Before continuing further into analysis, a short introduction of the concepts of the gift and exchange is necessary.

In the classic "The Gift – The Form and Reason of Exchange in Archaic Societies" Marcel Mauss (1995 [1924]) argues for treating gifts as total social phenomena. He argues that a gift can contain many aspects, some simultaneously. Aspects of gifts can for instance be social, personal, economic, political, kinship-oriented, religious, mythical and practical. The gift constitutes total social phenomena because what is exchanged is not just goods, but also acts of politeness, companionship, rituals, women, children, dances, festivals etc. (ibid: 15). Mauss looks at practices involving gifts, examining all institutions and relations that are somehow linked to these, to explain the broad cultural framework surrounding the gift exchange. At first glance, gift exchanges can often appear to be voluntary, but there are strict cultural rules involved, e.g. related to the concept of duty. The three main duties outlined in gift theory are: the duty to give, to receive and to reciprocate (See e.g. Sahlins 1972, 1976 and Weiner 1976, 1992).

These duties are regulated in a dialectic relation with the social relations of those involved. Sahlins (1972, 1976) developed concepts to show that the more gifts circulate in close relations, the less rigorous the balance between the gift and reciprocity is. The closeness of the relation also influences the timeframe of the reciprocity, or if such is expected at all. The levels of trust in the relation, the social distance between the involved parties, and the temporality, place and perceived value of what is exchanged are all relevant factors in analysing these acts (Sahlins 1972). So in essence, the gifted object is primarily a medium, an embodiment of a system of interpersonal social relations (Godbout & Caillé 1998:12). This entails that while you cannot ignore what is exchanged, e.g. food can be converted to nutrition, gifting a knife to someone means you want them harm in Sami culture etc., it is the nature of the relationship that defines the gift (and the acts of gifting), and should be focal point of its analysis (ibid: 24).

More recently, the MAUSS group - Mouvement Anti Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales[221], have reinvigorated Mauss' works, pointing out its analytical richness. They also underline its previously under-communicated political potential. Their definition of a gift is: "to transfer something without any immediate return, or guarantee that there will ever be one" (Graeber 2001:225). Mauss has been criticised for overstating the obligation to reciprocate, with basis in social pressure. Graeber (2001, 2014) claims that many critics might have misunderstood Mauss here. He finds that critics are guilty of seeing society through their own glasses of economic rationality, as anthropologists studied gift exchanges in societies where the economic life was based on very different principles than a dominant economic rationality mind-set. Such projections are even harder to avoid as a native, conducting research on resource management within a society dominated by such ideals. However, by highlighting the social and ethical aspects of gifts, it is possible to challenge the market rhetoric and exchange theories that hold a strong position in social sciences (See Weiner 1976, Osteen (2002).

Town and Country - Social, Cultural and Geographical Ties

Some further context on the local flow of gifts of food is useful. Many of the city households have kinship links to small farms in the surrounding areas like e.g. Arnøya,

[221] The MAUSS group - Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales, is a French intellectual movement founded by Alain Caillé. It publishes the monthly journal Revue de MAUSS and is interdisciplinary and critical towards economic rationalism. It draws inspiration from the work of Marcel Mauss and looks to further develop some of his ideas. http://www.revuedumauss.com/ Accessed: 10. August 2015.

Lyngen, Malangen or Nordreisa. Nowadays, many of these farms are not in use except as cottages or summerhouses, but some still have relatives who either work on these farms or just live there. The household members living in the city will often have relatives who are still directly involved in food production or harvesting; most commonly, fishing. Traditionally in Northern Norway, fishing was often combined with small-scale farming and small-scale animal husbandry (See e.g. Rudie 1980, Brox 1972 [1966]). These local practices, where foodstuffs flow between relatives and friends, are also a local expression of a connection often forgotten or hidden during the current practices of food provisioning - the dependency of city areas on the rural areas, a dependency on other people's actions, whether close or afar. Food is generally grown, caught, raised or harvested in the countryside's of the world, not in the cities. The urban areas are dependent on the rural ones for their supply of food. There is very little food production in Tromsø today, and only a small amount of refining[222].

Historically, the farmers and fishermen of the region would come to the small towns, selling their produce in the market squares and harbours. In most Norwegian cities, this was a common practice. It decreased at the end of the 20th century and almost disappeared. It did not completely vanish, as the town-square markets are still taking place today on a small scale in Tromsø. Such markets have actually become increasingly popular. Local farmers, fishermen, reindeer herders and others come into the city on Saturdays, selling their latest local produce, refined or not; vegetables and berries, fish, shrimps, jam, honey, etc. Ready-made meals are also on sale, for instance a variety of Asian dishes. Not all on offer is edible, as arts and crafts like jewellery, souvenirs, sweaters etc. from all over the world, and also reindeer furs and Sami-souvenirs and handcraft are on sale. Just like the flow of food between relatives, these small-scale flows of food to the city square also represent a cultural continuity. These practices confirm ties between the city households and those in the surroundings countryside areas, as well as between the current and the more traditional ways of living, between the people and the natural surroundings.

The flow of food between friends and relatives exists parallel to the local farmers markets at the town-squares and the large-scale flows of foodstuffs of the corporations and companies that supply the local supermarkets and stores. Along the same roads, or by sea or air, leading into Tromsø from local, national as well as global sources, food is transported into the local supermarkets. The flow of gifts, of local, natural resources

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[222] For details about Tromsø's economic activity, see Chapter 3.

contain another level of complexity and infrastructural networks. Balsfjorden, Lakselvbukt and Vannøya are just a few of many places in the surrounding countryside areas, less than an hour away by car that supplies food to city households. The couriers are generous relatives or friends, or locals visiting the town-square to offer their goods.

In the context of food acquisition and management, a growing market infrastructure has made it easier to obtain an increasing range of food more conveniently, closer to both home and workplace, around the clock. This was shown through empirical material in the chapters describing practices of the food cycle, in addition to narratives on this development in chapter 12. The development of new practices of resource acquisition, from subsistence farming and fishing, to today's markets and technological infrastructure enabling supermarket shopping, has influenced social relations and the local culture surrounding food practices. This framework has also altered the perceived value of food due to increased access, and with it, the levels of waste in the households.

Shopping for local food at the Tromsø market square can appear to be an occasional curiosity, mitigating the sentiments of alienation or providing experiences reminiscent of the past for older locals. It is certainly not where the households would go to provide the bulk of their food. However, these local exceptions, like the flow of food just described, gifted or sold, and the local food-markets are important tangible reminders of the origin of food. Reconnecting, everyday meals and habits with nature, these exchanges are also manifestations of the relationship between the involved, between the city and countryside and their current roles when it comes to food production and consumption. They reconnect people and practices of different stages of the food cycle. Regardless of such reminders, many city households today are increasingly detached from the origins of the foodstuffs they acquire at their local supermarkets.

The link between city and countryside, like between user and producer, is not as visible today. Perhaps so, since foodstuffs are chiefly provided through a complex infrastructural web of global industry, logistic pathways and markets, an alienating development as argued in the previous chapter. A truly global food market supplies the supermarkets in Norway today, and distances can appear to have diminished or have become invisible to the consumer. There are so many different kinds of unknown and exotic fruits and vegetables on sale in the local supermarkets that a picture book is present to assist the customers. And even locally accessible food, like trout and lamb is transported from the High Andes or the plains of New Zealand to the local supermarket

in Tromsdalen. The origin of the food available in the supermarkets is not reflected much upon in the daily lives of the household members. This gap filled by market infrastructural development and growth of scale is discussed in the previous chapter. This split masks the dependency of the population in cities like Tromsø on the surrounding areas the food originates from, whether it is Northern Troms, Southern Norway, Ukraine or the highlands of Peru. Nature and the premises of the natural resources, the technological infrastructure and much of the knowledge, tradition and practical skill for acquiring and producing food are located elsewhere - outside of the cities.

The Gift of Food as a Total Social Phenomenon

These gifts of fresh fish for instance, don't really illustrate a mutual dependency in todays Tromsø households. Still, the exchanges are valuable contributions for the involved households in several manners; socially, culturally, economically and materially at least. They are examples of gifts as total social phenomena (Mauss 1995 [1924]). The flow of food is socially important. It establishes, affirms and re-affirms close relations between giver and recipient, but the gifts are also important materially, on the most basic level. Consumption of food is necessary to ensure the reproduction of the household, both on a physical, cultural and social level. The human organism needs food and nutrition to grow and to live. While still edible, fish and other foodstuffs will always carry potential use value (Marx 1990 [1867]) as human nutrition, due to their intrinsic material qualities, necessities for human survival. These gifts consequently also contribute to the on going life of the household members. The gifting of food is thus a value-creating act; the creation of human beings (Graeber 2013), alternative sources notwithstanding. As a consequence, in addition to maintaining life on a day-to-day basis, these acts also contribute to maintaining the social group, the household as a common unit reproducing itself through generations, carrying a dimension that stretches beyond the individual. The flow of gifts ensures the reproduction of something larger; larger than the individual, the household, or even the family; a certain way of life or world-view (Bloch & Parry 1989:24-25).

The socio-material dimension of food as life-dependent nutrition in creating people illustrates the fundamental value of such acts of gifting. Another important aspect of this prevalent flow of food further illustrating its high value is how it creates and affirms both current social relations and simultaneously links to a shared family- and cultural-history. They are social acts on several levels – creating and maintaining

local society. The resources making up these flows are commonly harvested directly from nature by the people in the countryside households, who then redistribute them. These practices both represent and are a consequence of a cultural continuity on several levels. They maintain traditional historical links to practices, skill and knowledge of food provisioning in Northern Norway, and manifest the ties to their local, geographical surroundings, of belonging, sustaining a culture and way of life that was typical only a couple of generation's back.

But the gifts of food don't even have to be caught, harvested or made by hand, nor provided though close relations. Commodities can also carry a more personal meaning, being inalienable (Gregory 1982) when obtained through a close relation. Food purchased in the stores is also acceptable as gifts, building and reaffirming such relations and express emotional ties, in the vein of Miller (1998). This illustrates the emphasis on the act of gifting itself and the relation it affirms, rather than the object medium chosen. We will soon discuss this more closely.

Different Thresholds of Disposal – Valuations through Practice

Through the fieldwork I experienced how the history and sociality of these gifts of food could influence practices in the remaining steps of the food cycle: the planning of a meal, like saving the received food for a special occasion, the meal itself, through more elaborate preparations or who is invited to take part in this meal. It can also have an impact on how well the food is stored and cared for, including any potential leftovers and their threshold of disposability. In cases where the food has been harvested personally or prepared by hand, the food was treated as even more valuable and precious. Such practices were common among the households. The value of this food is thus reflected and manifested through actions (Graeber 2001). If received as a gift, such food is more personal. It represents the social relationship between the involved in a more profound way. As with other kinds of gifts, self-produced, harvested or caught food in general also holds a higher value compared to a gift that has been bought in a store, then handed over. The memory of the person who gifted it remains.

These gift-exchanges have significant personal importance for both giver and recipient. They create and maintain bonds, clearly illustrating how the gift is filled with sociality (Mauss 1995 [1924]). The split between the person and thing is not present in the gift, and the gift is animated with the personality of the giver (Taussig 1980:36-37). A part of the person rubs off and is embedded in the gifted object (Mauss 1995 [1924]). Or

the relation the food is obtained through engulfs it, acting as a protective shield; as if the hand giving it still safeguarding it, as it represents something important, something valuable which extends past the object itself. It has a memory and history that resides in between people – the relational, the social, that ties them together.

The closer or more significant the relation is, the more is at stake, says Lien (1989:71-74), underlining the difference between gifts to those who are close and the more distant acquaintances. The closer the relation, the more pronounced, or rather, complex, the morality and cultural norms encompassing the practices pertaining to such a gift appear to be. In a very close relation, based on primary sociality where the actors are not interchangeable (Godbout & Caillé 1998), there appears to be little risk of severing or damaging the relation by not returning a gift, or by disposing of a gift. With a gift received through more distant relations, a disposal carries a higher social risk. There is more at stake in a close relation, but there is also more leeway since the relation is seen as lasting, sometimes even without end. In a sense, *Gemeinschaft* (Tönnies 1963 [1887]) lives on through these reciprocal relations in the domains of modern mass-society whose imprints are encompassing.[223]

Regardless, wasting food with such moral and social underpinnings is to be avoided as the food can represent the social relation between the involved (Mauss (1995:x [1924]). The importance of the origin of food and who had made it became evident to me several times during a freezer rummage in November at Jorunn and Kjell's flat. The following conversation took place:

Ant: "Did you find anything you wanted to throw away?

Jorunn: Yes, that loaf of white bread. I remember we made it for the 17th of May (Constitution Day).

Ant: This year?

Kjell: No, the one before that. It is a bit stupid really. We had kind of made it ourselves. It is a bit of extra…like that, that jam which said "2009" on. That jam that I had gotten from my mum, that she has made, which I know is very good. Stirred raspberries.

Kjell: We can open it and taste it.

Jorunn: Yes…

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223 Different network types and multiplex versus uniplex relations can also be applied to describe these different relational complexities (See e.g. Bergs 2005).

Ant: It is a bit stupid when you have made it? What do you mean?

Kjell: Hehe! I don't know. It might be a bit more stupid because one has put time and effort into it…"

As we see, the closeness of the relationship between the involved, and the fact that the food was homemade is reflected in the management of this food. These gifts are symbolic representations of the importance of kinship relations and the generosity associated with these. Additionally, the material aspect remains, where it can potentially be converted into nutrition through consumption. The acts of gifting can be seen as value-creating acts, creating human beings, socially and physically (Graeber 2013). The acts of gifting and what is perceived and treated to hold value symbolise shared values, and through everyday acts of value creating the importance of the shared values of this society are manifested. Food worked tirelessly for through hunting for days or obtained as a gift from your mother (or a combination of the two) would carry a higher value, and thus have a higher threshold of being wasted, compared to regular supermarket provisioning which includes an additional intermediary. But the interpretation of value is not just a product of the past. It is also created in the present context, for instance based on how much food one currently has in store. It is also dependent on the future, for instance through the outlook of food availability, the seasons and perceived efforts of obtaining food.

Georg expressed something similar during the main interview held in his downtown office. He told me that a while back, he had bought high-quality ecological lambs-meat, straight from a friend's farm. He wanted the best meat available and spent quite a bit of time investigating where this could be obtained. He then spent considerable time and effort to obtain it, to cut and pack it properly before freezing it. However, he did not check his freezer beforehand, and since it was packed to the rim he had to throw lots of food away to get enough room for the newly acquired meat. But like he so pragmatically put it when narrating the event to me: "*Something is going in, something has to go out"*[224]*.* Additionally, he had also forgotten to mark the meat properly with content and date. When it was time to prepare a special dinner, he had this quality meat in mind. However, he could not remember if the meat was from the autumn of 2009 or 2010. Georg continues, and in a sense post-rationalizes his actions, actions he also morally condemn:

[224] This statement is analysed contextually in the chapters on disposal practices in the food cycle.

"Then I threw it away. That was bad. It was irritating; because I felt it had been a bit too long ago…it wasn't treated as in a slaughtering facility. I had cut and packed it myself. It was probably less hygienic. It had also been in the car for a while…I got unsure about this meat. It is not often that it happens though, but this is perhaps the time this year when I have thought, "God damn, this is a waste!

Ant: What was it that made this special?

Georg: That I had cut and packed it myself, kept all the parts too."

Georg statement very clearly underlines the general argument of alienation (Marx 1988 [1932]) amongst consumers. This lamb's meat carries traces of work and has a social history. This makes it more valuable, and thus it clearly has a higher threshold of being wasted compared to general commodities of food where these traces are less visible.

Locally, I experienced a variety of factors determining the potential value of food, a valuation manifested through the practices of food management. Such factors constituting value were the history of the food, the labour invested, the social relation it was obtained through, the potential use value as nutrition, the economic value in terms of product price, the larger social, cultural and economic context, for instance a period with less money available, and more. Not to mention its desirability, imagined or perceived, through the material and sensory propensities like freshness, delicacy, texture, smell and more. Using gift- and value-theory in analysis of these data, I find that due to the social relation the food is acquired through, the subsequent food management practices differ. Wastefulness is less prevalent with gifts of food compared to more easily obtained generic commodities. Availability, prices and cultural status nevertheless also remaining central factors in such valuations.

This personal, relational dimension heightens the threshold for wasting the food. Household members express that the thresholds for wasting such food are higher and that extra considerations should be taken, and sometimes are. Regrets when wasting food carrying such personal, social and relational dimensions are also more pronounced. A different cultural and social morality surrounds the food that has been handmade or self-harvested, has been laborious to make or gather, or where the link to the person making or gifting it is a close and personal one. We see this from Georg comments when throwing away the lamb's meat that was laborious both to obtain and manage, and how this contrasts his regular practices of wastefulness not appearing so morally entangled. These ideals are also present when food has been received as a gift, or both, as expressed in the case with the homemade jam Jorunn and Kjell had received, even if the

overall resource situation in the households is one of excess. Such an encompassing morality brought along by the social relation makes the threshold for disposal higher. Consequently, the threshold is lower when the food is acquired though less personal relations, as the most common way of household provisioning today; the local supermarkets where the salesperson is interchangeable, and the relation one of secondary sociality, contrary to one of primary sociality (Godbout & Caillè 1998). With an increased standard of living, the priority placed on food management practices and the time invested in it is lower. This is in accordance with changed valuations of food and, as an extension, the values of local society.

By viewing these foodstuffs as total social phenomena in the vein of Mauss (1995 [1924]), we can unfurl how the value they carry is decided and manifested through differing practices. As the aspects of history, sociality, economy, through one's own and others time and effort invested come together, the meaning and value of the different foodstuffs are realized through acts in a socio-material context. This totality of the gift is a prism through which one can view a multitude of factors that are important, meaningful and valuable in a society. In a gift past, present and future considerations are tied together in an imagined, social totality (Graeber 2001).

Jorunn values the relationship with her mother. She appreciates the jam she receives as a gift from her. Her valuation of the jam is reflected in her practices of food management, albeit influenced by the general resource situation. The context is one of excess, which influences how they prioritize spending their time and energy. There is plenty of food available, so the potential use value of the homemade jam as nutrition becomes relatively lower, regardless of the social bond and value it represents through being a gift from her mother. The general excess is reflected in Jorunn's practices, as the jam is forgotten in the freezer, just like the homemade bread they have invested time and labour in making, even if both products are also perceived to provide superior taste. But on the contrary, in the current situation of excess, such valued and relationally charged gifts as the sack of potatoes from the introduction, or gifts of fish, berries and meat can also be waste inducing. They arrive in addition to what is already in the household inventory. However, in general the thresholds for disposal are higher and the management practices concerning these gifts are more careful, as the relational connection is a factor that restrains wastefulness. This past history the gifts of food inhibit, and the social relations they represent, heightens its threshold for disposal. This illustrates that sharing and gifting of food still represents important values of local society. Through these acts of redistribution people and social bonds are created. Sharing is affirmed as an important valuable act, and both the values and valuables, in

this case food, are manifested throughout society (Graeber 2013). The wastefulness of food in general also emphasizes the current dominant values, brought by excess and prosperity, fuelled by factors like industrialisation and mass-production.

Gifts of Food and the Cycle of Life

In the introduction we hear that Tor and Kaisa received a sack of potatoes from Tor's mother. At the same time, they also received a bag containing assorted foodstuffs as gifts from Tor's grandparents. Tor and Kaisa had just become parents for the first time, to a small boy, and had more expenses than usual. We were in the process of going through their second freezer together when Tor told me about these gifts:

> *Tor: "There is no light here…no.*
>
> *Ant: Any difference between this and the other freezer?*
>
> *Kaisa: We use this one less…*
>
> *Tor: Here there is no system. We just throw it where there is space.*
>
> *Kaisa: There were some baked products, and the pork-chops. It is stuff we got from his grandparents.*
>
> *Ant: They bought pork-chops then, and gave them to you?*
>
> *Kaisa: Yes, I don't know why we got them.*
>
> *Tor: Reindeer meat. I think that was in the same delivery. And here we have a box of ice cream.*
>
> *Kaisa: I didn't know that.*
>
> *Tor: Yes, it was for my birthday. Oh, and here is some fish…here is also some fish which we have gotten from my mum and dad, from their cabin [the area where they have a cabin]."*

Tor's grandparents had brought a bag of food for them when they visited. The bag contained a large pack of pork-chops that had been on offer at a local supermarket, some reindeer meat and some bakery products. It is not unusual to help relatives in different manners, both young and old, and gifts in relation to marriage and childbirth, the extension and continuation of kin and life, are common globally, across cultures. The children and grandchildren of the giver of food can to an extent be interpreted as parts or extensions of the giver (Mauss 1995:26 [1924]), parts that will live on when they pass

away and thus represent a larger cycle of reproduction and life. The child can also be interpreted as the ultimate gift (Godbout & Caillé 1998:39), one that transcends the individual, the household and the current generations. Here, a split between object and subject cannot fully take place, as these two important elements are interconnected, the gift from a relative to a child or grandchild, and the gift of a child or grandchild in the larger context of reproduction (Godbout & Caillé (1998:30) of both kin and of humanity (Mauss 2016: Ch. 1 [1925]). The flow of food from countryside and city also transcends the individual households, as it maintains the traditional ways of life and the link to the past and geographical and cultural origin of kin. Through this social act of gifting the importance and value of the creative acts become realized (Graeber 2013:225). In the case of the sack of potatoes, the value was created through acts, the labour of Tor's mother and the gifting. The values of kinship, of community, are manifested through such acts, cumulating in the gifting in the context of the recent family expansion – the new grandchild.

Staying with kinship relations for a moment, it is also common to share fish or berries with older relatives who are not able to get out in their boats to fish or to reach the marshes to pick berries anymore. Such social practices of redistribution have elements of taking care of the extended family, similar to what was the norm on Norwegian farms earlier. Then the elderly continued to live on the farms of relatives. They were taken care of even though they were not able to work and contribute in the previous manner. Such acts can of be interpreted as duty-bound repayment and reciprocity to both parental and grandparental generations who fed and raised them, but this could also be a one-dimensional and limited transactional world-view tainted by economic rationalism and utilitarianism. Rather, I find that such relations and the flows of gifts of food between close relatives appear as being of *total prestation* (Graeber 2001:158-159, 217-218).

Total Prestations

A key point in Mauss' argument is that not all gifts have to be repaid or balanced out. These are acts of gifting between individuals in an open-ended communistic relationship, one of *total prestation* (Graeber ibid.). In these cases there is no need to preserve autonomy or independence amongst the involved parties. The relation is more akin to open-ended sharing between individuals that often accompanies marriages or permanent kinship-based relationships. Sharing of this kind however is not exclusive to

direct downwards or upwards kinship lines. Such gifts are also given to close relatives or friends who live alone, as an act of kindness and care for them.

These gifts of food, rather than having the nature of duty bound exchanges, appear to be closer to *total prestations,* parts of open-ended relations where sharing without the view of a return takes place (Graeber 2001:158-159, 217-218). The do not appear to move towards competitions in generosity, which is a risk (Ibid: 225). These gifts are profoundly different from a balanced exchange, as they cannot be cancelled out by repayment (Graeber 2001:225). Strathern (2012) also points out that gifting does not always entail the obligation of receiving or reciprocating, freeing the gift from the exchange. This indicates that the relation is key, not the object-medium. Consider e.g. the sack of potatoes from the introduction, the local practice of making extra dinner in case someone pops by, fish and berries from close relatives or the cake from the old mother at Christmas soon to be discussed. Rather than exchanges, these acts appear to be examples of sharing that I interpret as similar to *total prestations*, taking place within open-ended relationships that cannot be balanced out. They can be also interpreted as acts of baseline communism[225] (Graeber 2014), of mainly altruistic gifts.

A degree of equivalence and balance might be present even in family relations of gifting, but it is but one factor, and it is not a central one in such relations (Godbout & Caillé 1998:32). Consider again the sack of potatoes, or the berries and fish Jon receives from his parents, or when Erika gifts a loaf of bread to her son when he leaves after visiting for a Sunday dinner at his parents. These acts might still install or maintain a bond or an element of obligation in the recipient, as he or she feels gratitude and empathizes with the act. The act of generosity might also create a sense of wellbeing in the giver as an act of love and care, but that is not the central factor here. What is between these individuals – the invisible bond that these acts create, maintain and manifest – is.

Godbout & Caillé (1998:140-141) underlines how the vertical gift preserves the world of kinship, similar to those interpreted as *total prestations*. While the horizontal gift opens up that of matrimonial or political alliance, transforming the enemies into allies, strangers into friends. Considering the local flow of fish, berries, meat etc. between relatives and friends, I experienced both categories. The before-mentioned sack of potatoes is interesting in addition to the macro-changes and gaps of scale that

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[225] Graeber (2014:68-69) defines baseline communism by listing examples; answering when spoken to, small courtesies like giving a cigarette to a fellow smoker when asked, helping a stranger when in need to find his way. He sees such acts as foundations of human sociability. Apart from with enemies, when the need is great enough or the cost reasonable enough, the principle will be applied.

become apparent, as several of the aspects of the gift mentioned become so explicit. It is a vertical gift from mother to the son's family in the context of birth, which also highlights the temporal element of the maintenance of kinship lines, but also the preservation of local cultural heritage, knowledge, skill and belonging. It is on one level part of a smaller, short-term cycle of household resource sustenance and maintenance of kinship lines, but on a larger cultural scale, it reproduces the collective narratives of the past (Bloch & Parry 1989:24-25).

The Flow of Food – A Reminder that Reconnects

The flow of foodstuffs between relatives and close friends represents an informal, collective cultural continuity. Additionally, industrially produced commodities can be transformed through acts of gifting that manifest a larger collective, the family and close social relations. The relational element in gifts connects elements in the food cycle, split through the modern market and infrastructural developments, whose background and composition are depicted in the last chapter. The current distance and split between spheres of production and consumption and the differences in scale have brought alienating and fetishizing dimensions. These are not as present in relation to gifts, even if contemporary excesses of food can lead to negotiations of the value of gifts of food.

According to Graeber (2001:162), one of Mauss' points was that that the logic of the marketplace has failed to dominate western society. It had not completely become the common sense of modern societies. Mauss wanted to explain why it had failed in this regard, and why the logic of the market was found morally repugnant by so many, particularly the underprivileged. Mauss argued that wage labour was a miserable and impoverished form of contract, as many were unable to follow what they had put their labour into producing and a share in the profit (Mauss 2016:Ch. 4. [1925]). Without deciding on the level of domination of economic rationality and market thinking, the relational, collective and lasting aspects illustrated through the local acts of gifting show a cultural complexity. They show an alternative practice, sustained through time. In the midst of a strong focus on the individual autonomy and self-realisation, often expressed through the consumption of commodities, cultural traditions and social relations remain. These are partially manifested through the acts of gifting food, even if the bulk of food provisioning are industrially mass-produced commodities bought at local supermarkets.

The acts that make up the flow of gifts from the countryside into Tromsø, and simultaneously the acts of gifting of commodities from the supermarkets into the households, are manifestations of the importance placed on of values like generosity, family and belonging. The acts themselves are what manifest these social values. The origin of the food is of importance, but not the sole characteristic in defining the value ascribed to the act. Commodities can also act as vehicles of these values. The acts of gifting represent ties between the individual households and the larger kinship group, and also a lasting relation between the individual household and the larger cultural continuities of local history and traditions of food provisioning and household management. Looking at these gifts as social phenomena, there appears to be no conflict between the some of the short-term and long-term concerns as discussed by Bloch & Parry (1989). The households look after themselves, their subsistence and individual needs, while simultaneously the lasting collective interests they share with larger social groups are maintained. Such a balance between giving and taking that is pivotal (Mauss (2016:Ch. 4 [1925]).

Like for instance Graeber's story from the Inuits[226] (Graeber 2014:75), the local gifts of food remind us that people maintain such networks of sharing and gift giving. These acts remain present in the gaps of the formal systems of market and state, and they can transcend the oft presumed opposition between the individual and the collective, while making individuals a part of a larger, concrete entity (Godbout & Caillé 1998:14). Gaps between production and consumption, between the public and domestic, can be filled by such social practices on different scales. These acts embody the alternative to the market-oriented, individualised dominant discourse and remind us of contrasting values (Graeber 2001:227), akin to the counter-force of the social considerations in Polanyi's double movement (2001 [1944]) pulling in the opposite direction of liberal market forces.

In this modern context dominated by capitalism, the gift creates networks that are sheltered from this pervasive alienation though objects (Godbout & Caillé 1998). It bridges the rupture between producer and consumer through re-connecting the stages of the larger food cycle and by personalising the social relations of exchange. As such, it also re-connects humanity and our actions with both the cosmos (nature – earth) and to the fellow humans and non-humans they depend on, countering this rupture of modernity (ibid.), these alienated states (Marx 1988 [1932]) taking place along the steps

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[226] See later in this chapter.

of the value-chain. These acts of gifting are the exceptions that are enabling us to see the current naturalised practices for what they truly are (Graeber 2001). In the contemporary life in modern Norway, with a standard of living and an access to food that can be expected to remain high and relatively unhindered in years to come, the priority of spending time on food management can also be expected to remain fairly low. Reconnecting current practices with the larger context of the food cycle could be one important factor on the way to reduce waste levels of edible food. It's potential effect is typified by the higher threshold for wasting food obtained through these social relations where the steps in the cycle are closer, more intimate and connected. The local flows of food made up by gifts link individuals to others they depend on, to persons, collectives on different scales, the larger global society and the shared natural surroundings.

The flow of food gifted between relatives and friends is a cultural continuity. It provides reminders of the origin of food, the relationship between city and countryside and the historical and cultural roots and way of life. The acts re-connect the individual households, raising their consciousness in a larger context of social relations and creative actions. The food involved invariably comes straight from the farmer, fisherman, gatherer or hunter themselves, relatives and friends of the households. Receiving gifts of food directly from the source in this manner, several steps in the value-chain of formal market structures are skipped or managed personally. One bypasses the industrial phases of production and refining, the distribution of the wholesaler and supermarket retailer. Such a closer contact with the source unveils what is often hidden and forgotten by many of these consumers during the households typical food provisioning at the local supermarkets; namely the origin of the food, and the creative actions of others who have produced it. Through this flow of gifts, the contact with the natural surroundings and context and traditional ways of life can re-emerge, enabling individuals to step out of their current alienated states (Marx 1988 [1932]). The connections can be reflected upon and re-established through memories of others. Not to mention that it illuminates the reliance on the actions of others, which is generally not in focus.

Selfish Gifts, Selfless Gifts

Ethnography from Melanesia indicates that the intention of giving does not necessarily entail an obligation of receiving or reciprocating, hence liberating the gift from the

concept of exchange (Strathern 2012:406). Godbout & Caillé (1998:19) expands along the same lines of thought:

> *"The drive to give is as important to the understanding of humanity as the desire to receive – that giving, transmitting, reciprocating, and compassion and generosity are as essential as taking, appropriating, keeping, and appetite or egoism."*

If the lure of the gift is at least as powerful as the lure of the profit (ibid.), this brings us further towards Mauss' questioning of the underlying notion of self-interest – that economic assumptions were not adequate to explain common behaviour in our own society (Graeber 2001:155). Building on the thoughts of Mauss, Graeber (2001, 2014) finds that there is no separation between individual and collective interests with reference to the exchange of gifts. Mauss (1995 [1924]) himself is critical towards the idea of self-interest in gifts as to him self-interest is seen as market dependent. Likewise, he also sees the completely selfless gift as utopian. There is no free gift either, as both self-interest and the care for others are always present at the same time, diachronic. For Mauss (ibid.) gifts can thus be selfless and selfish, generous and dominating, and also both at the same time. These aspects are not necessarily in conflict, as humans strive to be both self-reliant to a high degree and also to attach themselves to others (Hart, Laville & Cattani 2010).

As described previously, in Northern Norway redistribution of surplus food is both a common historical, and to some extent, also a contemporary phenomenon, especially when it comes to local resources that the giver has harvested. In previous times, you gave away surplus fish caught to your neighbours, so that when one of them is out fishing on a later occasion, you had security through them reciprocating. This kind of redistribution can also be interpreted as of displays of skill, competence and indeed, power; power to establish and maintain dominance, to create alliances and obligations. In previous times there was less excess and availability of food through market formal infrastructures on the whole, with the exception of times when key-resources were in season. In these times, it is likely that these gifts would carry a substantial value for the household due to their potential to keep people fed and alive. This would also increase the social potency of the gift simultaneously. In times of scarcity and downright hunger, this undisputable potentially high value of a gift of food would also resonate strongly throughout local social networks. The status of such gifts would echo far and for an extended period of time. The gift of fish would be both a substantial mean and a socio-material medium, valuable and meaningful in both a collective and selfish sense, not

either or, in accordance with Mauss' point (1995 [1924]). The redistribution of fish, berries, meat and the like maintains social relations that are to a mutual benefit, expressed thought recurring acts of generosity and gratitude. The recipient also receives valuable nutrition, the giver often get insurance of future returns. A western historical and cultural bias makes us assume that these two, the care for the individual and the collective, should *automatically* be in conflict (Graeber 2001:162, my italics), notwithstanding that they can of course be so.

The juxtaposition of the aspects of the selfish and the selfless is just a social construction, and in the vein of Mauss and Graeber´s thoughts, a perspective fostering a unity of both the self and the relation to others appears central to understanding the human condition. A pure market-oriented approach appears inadequate in explaining human behaviour, whether classified as economic rationalist or not. Rather than the elimination or sacrifice of utility, self-interest and intentionality (Hart, Laville & Cattani 2010), a more fruitful approach is to call for a balance of self-interest and self-sustenance, and the concern for others on both a small and larger scale. Gifts are sometimes dressed in a utilitarian, economic rationalist cloak, presented as an exchange only masked by time (See e.g. Bourdieu 1977). "The gift is shunned and disclaimed by modernity because it is dangerous" (Godbout & Caillé 1998:4). Gifts can be dangerous, partially because such re-distribution highlights clear differences in resource allocations. Hierarchy, exploitation, dependency and dominance are undoubtedly potentially destabilising factors. It is argued that Mauss himself was hesitant and vague in what was actually the key point of "The Gift", to present a scientific and philosophical alternative to utilitarianism (Godbout & Caillé 1998:13, Graeber 2001, 2014). The practices of gifting can actually show how the current naturalised order of the market, and a focus on growth is but a political construct, one legitimising and maintaining current hierarchies and market infrastructures fuelling purchase and thus also waste.

The Social and Political Potency of Gifts

Food is also a particularly potent gift (Mauss 1995:87 [1924]). Food is the source of life that represents fertility and life. It ensures the reproduction of mankind, and in the extension of that also ensures the continuation of cultural and social collectives. These local gifts to children and grandchildren are filled with sociality. These acts confirm the bonds between children, their parents or their grandparents, and can thus also represent reproduction, a continuation of kin – a chain both backwards and forwards in

time. These gifts represent roots of the past and transcend the present bringing promises of a continuation into the future.

However, we need to consider the limited longevity of food and its transient nature[227] as discussed using the concept of entropy in chapter 8. As food gradually moves towards decay, or the fact that it is devoured and consumed, it is reasonable to assume that this has consequences for its lasting power as a gift. After consumption, the gift isn't present as a reminder of the relation between giver and receiver. But based on this empirical material, I find that this perspective is a too materially focussed one that misses an important point. That point is that the gifts potency rests in the actual social processes of giving and receiving, of the shared acts of production, distribution, consumption and the shared memory of these acts. Since food is given and shared with the aim of consumption, which takes place through the mouth, the consumed food becomes a part of the recipient's body. There are risks of illness and even death by eating contaminated food. Eating is thus an intimate and personal shared experience that requires a not insubstantial degree of trust.

This illustrates how the divide between person and thing, between subject and object, is problematic. We should remember Bateson's discussions on where the subject ends and the object begins, especially his example of the blind man with a cane (Bateson 2000 [1972]), questioning where the subject ends and the object begins. This becomes no clearer than when using food as an example, e.g. if food consumed makes you sick while inside your body, going through the process of digestion. It can be argued that food the most intimate gift. Due to this obligatory element of trust, also keeping in mind Mauss' insistence about its specific potency as a gift (1995 [1924]), it is interesting to consider if there is a closer relationship between the people exchanging gifts of food compared to other material objects or services. Nevertheless, food holds a particular potency as a gift, as the source of continuous human life. It is an object that becomes part of the subject; devoured, internalised, shaping the body, and subsequently, what remains get discarded.

It is quite common that the older generations are better off financially in Norway today. They are in a position to step in and help the younger households in different manners. As a juxtaposition of the example where grandparents are gifting food to their grandchildren, Mauss (1995:33 [1924]) describes how sacrifices to ancestors ensure continuity between generations and tie ancestors and the living together. The gift also

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[227] See e.g. Thompson (1979) for conceptualisations on this topic.

evokes memories of others. It bridges time. While making a small contribution to the household economy, the bag of food from the supermarket and the sack of potatoes the parents and grandparents give can also be interpreted as a mean that ties generations together. It can be a way for parental generations to ensure a continuation of themselves beyond their own lifespan, in addition to confirming their current social bonds. In this context, Mauss (ibid: 157-158) refers to Hindi beliefs stating that food that is gifted or given will return to the giver in this and the next life. This ensures a lasting cyclical pattern, which can be broken e.g. by greed or other selfish motives. This perspective has similarities to the flow of generosity and the concept of *hau* amongst the Maori (Godbout & Caillé 1998:130-134).[228]

Another comparative perspective on the aspects of waste worth mentioning relates to the now famous potlatch rituals (See Mauss 1995 [1924], Aldona 1991, Harkin 2001). Consider the exploitative and dominant nature of gift-giving rituals like the potlatch, also drawing parallels to the large-scale contemporary wasteful food practices. Taking place simultaneously, the contemporary wasteful practices are stark contrasts to the local communistic sharing of food on a smaller scale. Both the contemporary excessive and wasteful practices and the rituals of potlatch have clear elements of an antisocial practice. The destruction and waste of food on the scale currently taking place in Western Europe and North America especially underlines this antisocial element considering for instance the poverty, hunger and climate challenges present. The mentioned wasteful acts, past and present, maintain hierarchies and dominance or attempt to display social status. The ability to destroy, in this case even what brings and maintains life, can be the ultimate sign of dominance and power, as portrayed by Shiva in Hinduism. However, waste and destruction does not have to be public displays of power. Wastefulness can happen out of sight too, for the sake of not severing or damaging social relations.

The Cake from the Old Mother

As briefly mentioned, every year Georg (male, 42) and his family receive a cake from his old mother on the days before Christmas. Georg tells me that straight after receiving it, he throws it away. He says: “she has lost her touch a bit with age, and it is full of sugar”. He finds the cake inedible. He states that the main point is to accept it, for her sake, as it

[228] We will return to discuss the concept of *hau* shortly.

is important for her and she always makes a cake for them. He says he doesn't feel bad, because she never knows that they throw it away, and making and giving it means a lot to her. It is a family tradition.

When a gift is sold on or wasted, disappointment or disapproval can be the result, which illustrates that the gift is symbolic representation of a relationship (Godbout & Caillé 1998:14). In this case, throwing away such a gift, something that would be seen as wrong and disrespectful towards the giver according to local custom (Mauss 1995 [1924]), is not problematic for Georg. He considers his reasons for disposal fairly legitimate, as long as it remains unknown to the giver. He says it is an important event for his mother. She expresses her love and care for her family by making this cake (Miller 1998), and Georg wants her to be able to do so in her customary way. Through the acts of planning, making, giving and receiving this gift their family bonds are reaffirmed, even if the cake is not shared and eaten by Georg and his household. With an excess of food available to Georg's household, he is in a position to put personal taste and dietary consideration before the potential use value of the cake as nutrition, after he has fulfilled the social expectations of receiving the gift. Georg does not reject the relationship with the giver by refusing to accept the gift (Carrier 1994:126), and as we are talking about Georg's own mother here, severing the bonds is not a likely outcome at all.

This lasting social relation between mother and son, one of primary sociality (Godbout & Caillé 1998) can also be viewed as one of *total prestation* (Graeber 2001:158-159, 217-218) where the flow is endless, non-calculative and lasting, both ways. The gifting of the cake is a re-occurring and regular ritual gifting which constitutes their family relation. David Graeber (2001) appears reluctant of mentioning structures that precede action, but this exchange also contains an echo of past exchanges, of previous manifestations of the current close social relations, and finally, a promise of future ones (Sutton 2004:367). When the cake is received through this annual ritual, the history and sociality of this cake and the previous ones also become illuminated, along with the image of the mother making the cake, her labour and love and social relations it represents. The gifting of the cake affirms that when it comes to their relation, things are like they have been, as they should be, and that they are likely to continue this way. It bridges time and evokes memories.

The act of gifting this homemade cake from a close relative is also a symbolic representation of the values of society on a larger scale, of the values of sharing and of the bonds of family and kinship (Graeber 2013), as well as Christmas being an occasion

connected to family. The value of the cake and the values it reflects are constituted through creative acts (Graeber 2001, 2013) - the making, giving and receiving of the cake. As with the sack of potatoes, the value of the intellectual and practical labour of the mother becomes realised through a dialectical relationship with the values of society. This takes place through these social value-creating acts of making, gifting and receiving the cake. Thus, these acts manifest the shared societal values *and* the value of their relation simultaneously. As with the lambs meat Georg bought himself, the traces and memories of labour and the personal relation matters. The sociality and history of both the meat and this cake makes it harder to throw it away compared to regular commodities, from which he is detached and alienated (Marx 1988 [1832]) as a consumer.

People, Objects and the Relational - Memories of Wastefulness

When discussing material representations of social relations or fetishism of produced objects, the view that the material and the social aspects of value are deeply connected emerges. Food and beverages are perhaps the ultimate transgressing objects as they are necessary to create and maintain the life of the subject, and they are also instrumental in shaping the subject, enabling it, energizing it, moulding its physical body.

Let us focus on the object itself for a moment, the abovementioned homemade cake. As it is an object that upon reception knowingly will be disposed of, it can to a degree be interpreted as a fetishised object. This concrete, material object is a manifestation of the social relations between the involved parties – it is a medium, a vehicle, certainly from the perspective of the recipient. In our context of an excessive resource situation, the potential use value of the cake as nutrition drifts into the background. The social importance of the act of giving and receiving is further highlighted through the subsequent act of disposal. The social ritual of gifting and receiving takes centre-stage, manifesting the relation between mother and son. However, their relation is not a distant one. It is not characterised by degrees of alienation, separated by spaces occupied by intermediaries, human of infrastructural. The producer and the consumer are close, not strangers. The mother and son have what can be labelled an inalienable social relation (Gregory 1982). The cake has a history and carries this inherent sociality of the primary kind as this inalienable relation is at the core (Godbout & Caillé 1998:10). The relation is unique, one of primary sociality (ibid.). Georg does not fetishise the cake for its potential use value, but it is likely that he projects the value of the labour of the mother into the object, as the social value it holds

is significant. The acts of gifting and receiving of the cake is an important component in weaving the bond between them.

At the same time, the cake represents their relation materially. It is embedded into this cake, illustrated by Georg disposing it out of his mothers´ sight. As Georg points out, it is important to her, so he puts on this display. He plays the role of the good son, just as she expresses her love through the cake, being a caring, good mother and grandmother. Georg displays empathy, consciously miming the role of the good son. Doing what is now customary and expected. The shared societal value of gifting and sharing are the ideals that guide this ritualistic role-play. In the exchange, the acts of giving and receiving between these two people, I argue that an interchange takes place. It is an interchange between seeing oneself as an acting and present subject, and from the outside, as an object, introspectively. For Georg, there is a dialectic interchange between him consciously being aware that he is miming and playing a role - the ideal of the good son, and the object perspective. In the latter perspective he is considering what he imagines his mother is seeing; how good his mimesis is and what characterises it (Willerslev 2007:191). As a person you need to acknowledge others as subjects, but you cannot completely do so, as to you, they will always be objects as they are not a part of you (ibid.). This acknowledgment of others becomes a missing factor when most of the food cycle is invisible and its participants anonymous to the current household members. The social relations and the empathic element escape the individual, making wastefulness of food more unproblematic.

The history of the previous acts of giving and receiving, the memory of these acts, represents part of the bond and their relation. This both obligates and enables. This memory of previous acts influences future actions and priorities, at least two-fold. This act of gifting each Christmas creates expectations, as it is a component that defines their relation as mother and son, while the memory of the relation, the sociality, influences the management of the gift, in this case, the disposal of it in secrecy. The gift is not just an object, and cannot easily be treated just as one. It is always a story. A personal element is carried with it, and every gift is a gift of the self (Godbout & Caillé 1998:213). So the value of the cake is still significant enough to instil specific courses of action. When the mother is not present, the cake now radiates of her. It is encompassed by her, of their relation, and of previous value-creating acts fulfilled. It becomes a prism of their relation. She is absent, but her actions are projected into this object. Georg has performed his mimesis of the good son, receiving it and being grateful, as usual. Only later he disposes of it, out of her sight. It *has* to be done out of sight. Herein lays the point - person and thing are separate entities, but cannot be split completely. The

history and memory remains. Typically in the households, the relations between person and thing, between producer, food and consumer are much more distant and anonymous, one defined by an alienated state which I have argued to be waste inducing. This is illustrated by how food obtained through relations of primary sociality has a higher threshold for disposal, and also through the wasteful acts that are *remembered* and shared with me. Stories narrated about their most wasteful moments or memories would often the ones involving gifts, or were the individual in question was involved in a larger part of the food cycle. Examples of this are the homemade jam from Jorunn´s mother, Georg´s ecological lambs meat straight from the farm, when he wasted the small cods he had fished himself, or the now famous sack of potatoes. In these cases the memory of the relational aspect or the wider involvement remains, illustrating its importance, while also reminding us of the lower threshold of the anonymous, everyday commodities of food. Another factor to remember in this context is how gifts of food from others can be an instability factor as previously discussed in chapters on the food cycle practices. These gifts provide extra stock, often not familiar, needed or desired in the household, thus often it gets wasted.

Heirloom objects rank at the top as objects that are the most fetishised in small-scale societies, while food is on the other end of the scale. This is not due to its lack of value, but as the labour that has gone into producing it is fairly known in such a society. When someone is offered food it is the social relation rather than the fetishised value that is recognised in this act (Sutton 2004: 375), e.g. the values of sharing, generosity, family and friendship. The case with the cake exemplifies just this, even if it has a history and also represents an act in a sequence of similar acts during a family holiday - Christmas.

The importance of the exchange on a social level rather than the material, object level can also be exemplified though empirical material of Jane Fajans from the Baining of Papua New Guinea (Graeber 2001:69-70). Here families often exchange the same amounts of taro with each other before they prepare their dinner with these. Or when two men meet each other on the road, they will typically offer betel nut to each other. Such exchanges are also seen as socially reproductive, in a similar sense as giving food to children is. The cake from the old mother and the sack of potatoes were both gifts that were not consumed. One was deliberately disposed of, one neglectfully stored and forgotten after receiving it. If we see them in comparative perspective, the exchange of taro for taro can be interpreted as gifts that hold significance on a social and cultural level, rather than on a material one as long as the supply is adequate. The latter is exemplified by the sack of potatoes, and of Georg receiving a cake that he knows he will

dispose of. The social importance of this gift-ritual comes to the fore; as for Georg the object appears almost solely a medium in an act expressing social values. Another empirical factor to consider is the material context. The general situation of excess of food, and thus low priority on spending time on food management, marginalises the potential use value of the sack of potatoes as nutrition, and also the perceived edibility of the cake. If the cake would be perceived as inedible, or the sack of potatoes wasted in times of scarcity is highly questionable.

In this perspective, it is not in the material object (the sack of potatoes, the cake etc.) itself where the actual value resides. The potentialities of value the material carries is realised and manifested through acts (Graeber 2001:69-70); through production, distribution, management, preparation, re-distribution and consumption. Realising the *potential* value residing in the material, like edible food, is only realised through acts. This can for instance take place socially, as a medium through redistribution, and materially when it is then consumed (socially here as well if consumed collectively). Giving away food is one of the most basic ways of maintaining society. In this case, food is simultaneously both the medium and the matter of social creative action.

Token Money Maintaining Social Distance

The following case is interesting as it shows the complexity of local life, how gifting and monetary transactions are not pure systems, but overlapping. As a rule, no money is involved in the local acts of gifting between close relatives and friends, as these relations are of a different nature, a close, lasting one, one of *total prestation* (Graeber 2001:158-159, 217-218). The involvement of money occurs when the relations are more distant, like between co-workers, neighbours or strangers, where no continuous flow of generosity occurs. These relations are not those of *total prestation*, not perceived as permanent or life-long ones, at least not at that moment in time. In the more distant relations, balanced reciprocity is common (Sahlins 1972); locally, a fair return is expected within a certain timeframe. The balance is then settled, re-instated through another exchange, ensuring that no one owes the other party, thus holding a bond over him or her. The social distance, expectations and obligations between the parties then remain the same. Interestingly, I heard how sometimes when e.g. fish was redistributed, a small sum of money can be involved, a sum not even close to the equivalent of the perceived value of the fish.

Roger told me about such an occasion where[229] money was involved in the transaction of fresh fish. He told me that "a symbolical amount" is sometimes involved in these exchanges, e.g. between neighbours or colleagues. This distinguishes these kinds of exchanges, both from those not involving money at all, and from formal transactions between commercial actors, where a fair amount of money or a pre-set amount, a price, is changing hands, settling the balance there and then. In any case, Roger said that the sum involved could also just act as a token, as the sum is clearly lower than the customary approximate value of the fish changing hands. This could be just down to habits according to him: "For the last 15 years I have always given him 200 Crowns when he brings me 15 kilos of fish. It is just the way we do it." Based on his explanation, there is also another subtle act displayed here; one should not appear stingy, but rather generous, even if the amount is lower than the perceived value. Roger said that typically the conversation during the exchange would go something like: "Ah, just take this" giving the money over, while waving it off, under-communicating the transactional monetary element. Whereas the other could then counter with, "Oh, no, you shouldn't. That really isn't necessary."

Ideally, it seems the amount should be handed over in a lackadaisical, non-calculating manner, thus clearly distinguishing this transaction from a formal exchange. However, this appears quite complex, even slightly contradictory. What does it mean? Why is the amount of money an element here? Is this monetary amount of 200 Crowns for something worth perhaps four times more partially a return gift to balance out the exchange somewhat? The money could be a counter-gift, which at the same time maintains the status quo of the social relation between the involved parties. The distance remains, keeping future obligations at bay. Another interpretation would be to see the inclusion of a token sum of money as a tangled-up manner of maintaining both the local, cultural way of the traditional redistribution of fish, the way Northern Norwegian neighbours historically help each other, but at the same time maintaining a certain distance in the social relation between the involved parties. Locally, the role money plays or doesn't play and what amount is involved is dependent on the social relation between the involved. Additionally, there are other factors influencing the decision whether or not to include money in such an informal transaction; for instance the shared history of the involved parties, their wealth, the perceived value of the goods, be it in terms of quantity or quality, its status, the general availability of food, or of the resource in question that could also.

[229] Unfortunately, I am not sure in what context this story was told. It is likely that it was during a discussion after dinner with Erika and Roger where he explained this to me.

Gifts as a material medium can fill multiple social roles, and not just be elements to establish social relations or to maintain or alter existing ones. They can also mark boundaries and confirm thresholds through ritual acts, affirming social differences and roles (Godbout & Caillé 1998). Thus, in some social contexts, gift-giving is mandatory to be able to cross such a threshold, e.g. enter the house of a colleague when you visit for dinner (Graeber 2001:226-227). Following this logic, the mandatory gifting of 200 Crowns, if that is how we chose to interpret it, does not necessarily create a closer social relation, but can be interpreted as an act maintaining the status quo of their relation. This token monetary sum thus serves to maintain distance in the relation and a sense of autonomy for the involved.

Acts of gifting are not necessarily a representation of the human counterweight of modern, capitalistic exchanges (Graeber 2001:226-227) and vice versa. Gifts also act as markers of boundaries, hierarchy and power. In such a sense, acts of gifting can be an intrinsic part of the reproduction of inequality, e.g. through ritual sacrifices to the Gods or gifts to other superiors, or as recipients and dependents of the benevolence of superiors. Culturally, perhaps the injection of a monetary element, here symbolised by money on top into this gift exchange between neighbours and colleagues, makes it possible to treat them as more distant, or to maintain such (Graeber 2006:77). It can define the relation as fairly close, as the amount is not sufficient to balance out any obligations completely, but here I believe that money still acts as a marker of social distance. Sometimes monetary means associated with the formal market can be a better alternative. This depends on the context. We have, for example, no interest in accepting a gift from someone whom we want to keep in distance (Godbout & Caillé 1998:207), but locally people will also accept money as a gift from close relatives.

The addition of money into this informal exchange can also be indicative of its discursive dominance, yet another example of a market-logic penetrating the private sphere. It can indicate an all embracing economic logic, a way of thinking now deeply embedded in other social spheres, using the terminology of (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). Following such an argument, we could say that the monetary has become so deeply embedded in other societal contexts and so dominant nowadays in contemporary Norway that there is now a more pronounced cultural expectation that it should be involved. Even when we talk about these kind of exchanges between colleagues and neighbours. The token amount could then also be interpreted as a manifestation of an increased emphasis on the value to remain an autonomous individual; a social and culturally founded inclination to offer something in return to maintain social distance, freeing oneself from future social bonds. If so, general-purpose money is indeed also a

very useful social tool in this manner. The exchange could also be habitual; it is the way they have always done it, as Roger says. Their relation can have developed over the years, becoming closer due to these exchanges or other involvement.

The inclusion of a monetary element, symbolic or not, raises the question which term is the most accurate to describe what takes place. Is this case to be termed as an act of gifting or a commercial transaction? It appears more like something in betwixt and between, and it might even have started of as a transaction. The inclusion of a token, low, amount of money means that this exchange transcends the imaginary border, or at least enters an un-defined grey-area. It takes place between the sphere of the informal gift-exchange and the current norm for household food provisioning– the dominant, monetary and commercial exchange. The pathway out of what seemingly has the traits of a cultural double-bind is perhaps situated in this role-play; the token amount on top, in addition to the gift, and the under-communication of its importance, claiming the 200 Crowns are not necessary, implicitly and simultaneously over-communicating the closeness of the relation and how money really does not belong.

This also points to our understanding of the concept of a gift as a culturally and historically situated ideal, as touched upon by Caillé (1998) previously. He argues that it was Christianity that rendered us the idea of a truly selfless gift, an impossible and unachievable ideal. How are we then to interpret this transaction? As one where the monetary pries its way into, albeit in a sham or token-like manner? If the sum of money is indeed but a token symbol, it will also it will also follow along with Mauss' argument (1995 [1924]) that a gift will always carry elements of both the selfish and the selfless. The hybrid forms have blossomed (Mauss 2016:Ch. 4 [1925]), and the removal of moral considerations form the exchange is not possible.

This regular act of gifting re-affirms a certain kind of bond though. If not one of obligation, or one as strong as the one between Georg and his mother with regards to the cake for Christmas, perhaps a looser pact, one of a certain expectation of reoccurrence. Compared to the gifting of the cake, this bond appears to be of a more fluid kind, a looser and negotiable one with a way out. The social relation is also of a wholly different making in terms of intimacy, history and longevity. Earlier we read how Georg made a point about the cake being thrown away, similar to his lamb's meat, contrary to his everyday wastefulness with food. The relations that local fish is distributed through appear similar to the one between Georg's father and the local neighbourhood merchant, even if that situation would be interpreted differently today, as the culturally encompassing context deciding the levels of obligation is dynamic.

There are slight expectations dependent on the wider social contexts of the relationship between the involved parties in local fish distribution, but not towards obligation. The characteristics of their relation ensure that they fall between primary and secondary solidarity (Goodbout & Caillé 1998).

The money involved, habitually included from a time when the relation was different or not, still helps maintain a distance in this social relation involving this mainly informal exchange. However, the personal aspect should still be considered present, and to a varying degree intertwined with the monetary. In the loyalty conflict between Georg's father and his neighbour with the corner-shop, we saw how commercial transactions are also entangled in personal considerations, regardless of the intent behind the creation of commercial markets and commodities, attempting to separate person and thing (Mauss 1995:154-155 [1924]).

As discussed, an exchange cannot fully be removed from the context of the involved parties and the history of the object. If so, the exchange would have to include no giver, no receiver and no object that is given:

> *"…if there is to be a gift (a true or pure gift), there would be no subject who gives, no object that is given and no one who receives the gift!" (Caillé, in Hart, Laville & Cattani 2010:181).*

Whether any future obligations are still present or not between the parties in this exchange of fish, indeed remains to be seen, but it would be interesting to investigate further if the involvement of token money, if that is indeed what it is, renders the involved parties with a larger degree of liberty to conduct their future exchanges as they see fit, and what expectations remain. The 200 Crowns could however just be a habituated remnant from the past, when their relation was more distant.

Commodities Transformed

Mass-produced food on offer in the supermarkets is usually standardised, industrially produced, and available in large quantities. When on the shelves, these are certainly not inhibiting the personal touch and history of homemade jam, bread or cakes. This means the mass-produced food has a lower threshold for being wasted. True enough, the ingredients for making such a cake are mostly bought in our households, but through the personal labour to plan and make e.g. the jam, the commodity dimension is pushed into the background and replaced by a personal and social dimension, closely linked to the person who made it. In Mauss' perspective on gifts, person and thing has not been

split. The gift appears to be animated by the personality of the giver (Taussig 1980:36-37). The memory of the donor and the exchange remains as a reflection in the gifted object. This perspective is inspired by and carries similarities to the Maori concept of *hau*, where gifting something is also to give a part of oneself (Mauss 1995:26 [1924]).

Mass-produced commodities are generally not seen to be inhibiting personal or social aspects per se. They are primarily produced industrially by machines, however still operated or surveyed by people on some level. This takes place on a large scale. The products are serialised and made to appear identical through its exterior packaging. Gregory (1982) presents a theory where viewing commodities as alienable objects and the transactions they are a part of are independent from the people involved. He contrasts this to inalienable objects that are of a personal character. Here the transactions are interdependent, creating social bonds and duties. Later, Gregory (1997) points out that the ethnographic classifications he experienced working in Papua New Guinea are ambiguous and quite different from such dichotomic concepts used in analysis. Gregory (1982:43) also states how a gift exchange usually has to be done with inalienable objects, but that these objects are given for nothing, whereas a commodity exchange involving money is a trade between people alien to each other. Viewing gift and commodity exchanges opposed in this manner can be an oversimplification as social contexts strongly define meaning. This is also supported by i.e. Mauss (1995 [1924]), Strathern (1988) and Carrier (1991).[230] It is not so much the object in question which is the most relevant, if it is alienable or inalienable, a commodity or not, but the acts involved and the social relation the exchange takes place within of and manifests. The object acts a material vehicle; a tool to create and maintain social relations that also have potential uses, dependent on the context and its material propensities.

The relationship between the parties in an exchange is reflected onto the object. This influences how it is should be treated, as the object comes to symbolize this relation. It is through the acts of people involving the object that the value of the relation is manifested - the relation is the pivot (Godbout & Caillé 1998). Without the context of gifting, the object does not carry this significance. In a commodity exchange the relation is more alienable, compared to a gift exchange where the involved parties are not interchangeable, e.g. between unique parties like mother and son. Godbout & Caillé (ibid.) defines this difference as relations of secondary sociality versus primary sociality. You will always be the biological son of your mother, but at the supermarket

[230] As an example, Strathern (1988) illustrates this by referring to wedding rings, and discussing whether they are indeed commodities or gifts.

where the commodity exchange takes place, the person at the register, even if that transaction is singular and unique, holds a position within an organisation and can easily be replaced by another person fulfilling the same role (Carrier 1994:127). The stage is then set for a focus on the object-status rather than the involved parties and their acts, paving way for the possible dominance of commodity fetishism (Marx 1990 [1867]). The industrial mass-production of food, and other macro-factors previously discussed, provides easy access to cheaper food, and a lower priority on food management in the households. This simultaneously contributes to a scalar gap (Eriksen 2016), a distance between large-scale production and small-scale consumption which contributes to fetishism and fosters alienation amongst the involved on several levels of the food cycle. This relational dimension points towards a factor that can perhaps help dislodge this seemingly double-bind (Bateson 2000 [1972]) of wasteful household practices and large-scale environmental problems, reconnecting the steps in the food cycle operating on different scalar levels.

I previously mentioned an empirical example where the grandparents of Tor gave them a large packet of pork-chops bought on special offer when visiting. This example gives credence to such a critique, as it shows how an alienable, mass-produced commodity bought in the supermarket can in the next instance become a component in interdependent acts of gifting, affirming close social bonds. Together with the case about token money in the transaction of fish, this case suggests transgressions and dynamism between the categories of non-commodities and commodities, between the intimate and social and the apparently anonymous monetary sphere. But the object cannot be separated from place, person, or the relation and situation it has been obtained through; the history it carries, and from its memory (Caillé, in Hart, Laville & Cattani 2010:181).

Through the act of gifting and receiving the pork-chops, an alienable object is rendered somewhat inalienable, infused with a social dimension. This adds to its value, which is reflected in subsequent practices. A gifted object infused with the social history of previous exchanges this has parallels to the concept of Maori concept of *hau* (Mauss 1995 [1924]) to be discussed in depth shortly. By Gregory's definition (1982), this exchange can also be viewed as inalienable. A commodity has been bought, but is handed over as a gift by the grandparents. It is thus transformed, also into an object expressing and representing care and love (Miller 1998) for the young couple who have just gotten a child and are in a pinch economically. The act of gifting is what creates and reaffirms such a social bond.

Looking closer at the context of the gift of the pork-chops and the rest of the goods that was handed over, as the grandparents gifted them a whole bag of food, there are several interesting aspects. The household also had less income since Kaisa had halved her work-hours to study in the months before giving birth, so there was the dimension of helping them out economically as well. The pork-chops was just one of several foodstuffs that were gifted, but they were the ones still left in their freezer when we went through it together, and this sparked our conversation. In comparison to the homemade cake Georg received from his mother, the cake carries and expresses a higher degree of sociality, and thus, value. This gift still looks just like one out of many packages of pork-chops that can be found in the supermarket. It has not been personalised, either by gift-wrapping or by laborious hands-on preparation. But the fact that it is a standardised commodity does not make it completely unfit for gifting, even if homemade food can be interpreted as inhibiting a larger portion of the relation between giver and receiver, a more significant symbolic representation, a memory of this person and the relation to her. The cake will thus be treated with even more care, but the fact that the pork-chops are a commodity bought on the market, and certainly not gift-wrapped or accompanied by a card, does not make them unacceptable as a gift or unable to be a vehicle representing a social relation.

The processes of commodification associated with mass-production in industrialised, modern societies do not lead to wastefulness per se, as on the whole, the general resource situation constitutes the thresholds of disposal. Those in need would also handle commodities preciously, and waste can be prevalent amongst those lacking the technology to secure the longevity of their food supplies, even if food is generally scarce in their lives. The larger social, natural, economical and technological context defines these thresholds of wastefulness, just as this context and the social relation defines what is acceptable or not as a gift (Godbout & Caillé 1998). It is quite likely that Tor and Kaisa offered a thought to their grandparents when preparing and eating the pork-chops, just as they remembered who had given them when we went to check their freezer together. The physical, material dimension, the potential use value of the food as life-rendering nutrition and its economic contribution to this household are also factors present, just as the social, relational aspects of this act of gifting. In this regard, the commodity status becomes marginal, as gifting of food bought at the supermarket also create and maintain social bonds, carrying the potential of being life-sustaining necessities at the same time, as long as entropy hasn't progressed too far.

Marx (1970 [1859]) argues that previous labour and transactions are erased from the commodity, creating a veil between the producer and the consumer – an increased

distance, rendering alienation. As discussed in the previous chapter, the serialised, impersonal and large-scale industrialised production of commodities offers a wealth of cheap produce for those who can afford it, but can also bring a state of alienation amongst consumers as well as the producer. The memory and the personal element are attempted removed, as the natural origin of the product and the process of production and the people producing the commodities are typically unknown to the consumer. The consumer is estranged from the process through which the food he depends on originates. On the contrary, the gift is marked by the links between giver and recipient through the act of gifting. This makes the gifted object unique, because it is *the* object that was gifted in *that* specific moment (Carrier 1994:126), and with *those* people involved. It is this particular object, and not another, regardless of it being serialised. Whether the object involved is originally a commodity or not is not central. The object is a material medium, a vehicle through which a social relation can be manifested. It symbolises the importance and value of the shared values of generosity, family and sharing. These values are manifested, reaffirmed, socially through this act (Graeber 2013).

In this manner, the packet of pork-chops as a serialised mass-produced commodity, actually stemming from uniqueness, from the tissue from an individual pig, born, bred and slaughtered, is also shown to be unique socially, representing this relationship through the act of giving and receiving at this particular moment in time. However, it is the object itself, and not the efforts that it took by animals and people to create it, which is often worshipped. The value is typically perceived to be residing in the matter itself, in the object, in a perspective of fetishism. But rather, it is through a whole series of acts that the object becomes valuable socially, and also potentially valuable as nutrition, to be manifested finally through the act of consumption. Both human and non-human acts, from pigs to the technology of machines, render this object valuable; the acts of procreating, raising, breeding, caring for and slaughtering the pig, making the pork-chops, packaging and transporting them, procuring them and the acts of gifting them.

Maintaining a view that value is created through acts (Graeber 2001), we can regardless return to Gregory (1982) temporarily and focus on the object itself, and namely its social propensities and potentialities. This commodity represents the relationship between the consumer and the person who produced it or sold it to a lesser degree (Carrier 1994:125), but is still some kind of representation of the relation between giver and receiver. The object is an interdependent item and not interpreted as an anonymous commodity simply due to its origin from the monetary commercial

market[231]. In this case, even the gifting of a fairly generic, serialised commodity like the pork-chops represents something socially, culturally, morally and economically positive. It also represents something long-term, larger than just the bond between giver and receiver. An act of gifting between grandparents and the household of the grandchild and their newborn son also reaffirms a relation of kinship and lineage which is lasting. It is not only connected to the individual persons or households involved.

At the same time, the social and cultural order is reaffirmed and reproduced. The flow of food from the countryside to the city also represents something lasting, a traditional way of life, poignantly and explicitly exemplified by the gifting of the sack of potatoes grown on the family farm. I see the local flow of fish, berries, meat etc. as a cultural continuity as practices that to an extent transcends the momentary and extends through space and time; both the perceived borders of individual households and those of generations. The practices illustrate the collective history and the links to the surrounding natural environment in Troms. They strengthen social bonds between giver and recipient, and also reaffirm ties to the generations of ancestors having lived in the area, on their family's countryside farms, having fished and harvested food in the very same areas. The flow of food represents a larger collective cultural group and their collective narrative of a past way of life that used to be common in Northern Norway.

Additionally, in the context of the recent family expansion, all gifts, both the sack of potatoes and the bag containing commodities from the supermarket, relate to the creating of future generations in these families. The value of this food is manifested by acts of redistribution in context, by these people at the specific time of family expansion. These gifts are vertical gifts of kinship, and thus reflected and situated both in the shared collective past and in the future of their kin (Godbout & Caillé 1998:141). But we must also keep in mind that the sack of potatoes from the introductory case gets wasted. This thus illustrates a possible mismatch between ways of life, of food provisioning and management practiced by the parental generation in the countryside and the practices and infrastructure of food management in the contemporary households in the city. The developments in the large-scale macro-factors explained in the previous chapter, are some of the roots to this mismatch.

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[231] Money can be a subversive factor when out of place, endangering the social and relational elements (See e.g. Lien 1987:55), but gifts or transactions involving money can also play a major part in maintaining social relations. The case where fish is gifted in addition to a token sum of money illustrates how money can also contribute to maintain social distance.

Hau - The Spontaneous Gift and the Flow of Generosity

In one of his most discussed passages, Mauss (1995:26-27 [1924]) argues that a part of the giver rubs off on, and becomes a part of, the gift. This stretches the act of gifting into the future, further than the actual situation when the gift is handed over. Mauss (ibid.) uses ethnography from the Maori people of New Zealand and draws on the notion of *hau*, which he, in short, sees as the spirit of the gift. His interpretation is that a part of the donors' soul becomes embedded in the gift, and through its desire to return home to its original giver, compels the recipient to make a return, to reciprocate (Graeber 2001:154). There is an obligation within the gift itself, and Graeber (2001:180) finds *hau* to represent a movement, an intentional action. He discusses this on two levels; first, the reciprocity between giver and receiver of gifts on a personal level, but also, offerings which must be made to Gods to remove *tapu* over the forest, so that it can be accessed safely by humans (Ibid: 181-182), harvesting from its bounties. Through these sacrifices, the Maori acknowledges both the divine generative power of food in nature and their appropriation of it, making it subordinate and opening up the possibility to harvest from it. But there is more to this; as recent studies of the *hau* has shown (Godbout & Caillé 1998:130-134). *Hau* has positive and negative aspects, dependent on how people act in relation to the flow of giving - a social cultural phenomenon the acts of giving and the gifts constitute. The negative aspect relates to *hau* as an instrument of sorcery. The *hau* is what makes sorcery possible, and it arises when a counter-gift, an *utu*, is not circulating and becomes immobilised. The object then becomes a tool of sorcery and the *hau* then kills, as it embodies the hatred stemming from the interruption of the flow of generosity.

The positive aspect relates to this flow of generosity. First, to initiate this spiral of generosity, precious goods, *taonga*, have to be placed in the forest so that the forest will bring forth birds that the Maori can eat. However, this act that removes *tapu* from the forest is not about reinstating balance, but relates to this first gift that starts a flow. This first gift is the initiative, a graceful gesture without which nothing can exist (ibid. 132-133). If you give to the forest, the forest will give to you, as the gift is the condition *sine qua non*[232] of all fertility (ibid. 133). In a sense, the gift can be seen as the manifestation of inter-subjectivity, where one gives in turn. The gift is both a material medium in a socially creative act and a potentially valuable nutritional matter in the

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232 Indicating something indispensable.

creation of human beings (Graeber 2013). Due to this, the gift is perceived both as something of value (like food, gold, hides, heirlooms etc.) and as a phenomenon that represents some of the more fundamental values of a society – of generosity, of maintaining life.

My observational data on gifts did not cover both the giving and the reciprocity of the gifts of food discussed here. The acts of gifting observed usually took place between close family members, and as a consequence, they were not necessarily reciprocated, neither materially nor immaterially within a short time-span, if at all. Due to the closeness in relations between the giver and recipient, what I witnessed was more akin to acts of sharing in relations based on *total prestation* (Graeber 2001:158-159, 217-218), of baseline communism (Graeber 2014), without spontaneous desires to balance out the exchanges.

There is however one exception when it comes to reciprocity. It was caused by the unexpected gifts from an informant to the anthropologist - me.[233] This took place during the rummage of the deep-freezer in Ingrid's basement. It was perhaps the third or fourth time we met:

> *Ingrid: "And then we usually buy bacon, to have with the lutefisk. And I have made sauerkraut myself.*
>
> *Ant: And then you have packed it…*
>
> *Ingrid: Yes…do you eat sauerkraut?*
>
> *[Short silence]*
>
> *Ingrid: Then you will get one from me.*
>
> *Ant: Thank you very much!*
>
> *Ingrid: And here we have some fish…here is some coalfish. Do you eat coalfish?*
>
> *Ant: Yes…I do.*
>
> *Ingrid: Here is a bag of coalfish from me.*
>
> *Ant: Yes, yes. That is very nice.*
>
> *Ingrid: There, you can have a box of sauerkraut from me.* [She hands me a box].
>
> *Ant: Ok, give me a small one then.*

[233] The methodological aspects of this case were discussed in Chapter 4.

Ingrid: You know what. You can let it lie [in the freezer] then you can split it up. I am sure that will be possible… "

I felt pleasantly surprised by her kindness that appeared very spontaneous. Instinctively, I felt that I had to somehow respond to her friendly gesture. Later I drove home, to return with two ptarmigans from my own freezer. Catch from last autumn's hunt. They could then make a nice for dinner for the two of them when they wanted. She was very happy, even if she got properly startled when she stuck her hand into the plastic bag I gave her and felt the feathers of the birds. She told me she hadn't eaten ptarmigans since she lived in Canada, many years ago.

I felt almost included in the household by their openness and generosity on the whole. Still, when I received the gifts on this visit, I felt an urge to give something back quickly. I did not know these people well. They were just very friendly and including, and perhaps just as much a testament to their openness as to my empathic participatory presence, I felt so relaxed and at home that I didn't analyse the situation as it evolved.[234] But what was this urge I felt as I drove back home? An urge to reinstate the balance quickly in a fairly new and distant relation as pointed out by Sahlins (1972), an urge to outdo the first gift? Upon reflection, it appeared more akin to the flow of gifts described from the Maori (Godbout & Caillé 1998), even a spiral, as I returned to Ingrid with something perceived to be of a higher cultural value than what I received.

In this case, since I returned the gift, similar to how we can harvest from the bounties of nature when the Gods have removed the *tapu*, the *hau* (the sauerkraut and the coalfish) will not be transformed into an instrument of sorcery. My return gift makes sure the flow of generosity, also one of the esteemed local cultural values, is not interrupted. I can now give and receive, in turn, from the larger social networks I am part of locally. This first gift from Ingrid is the initial graceful gesture, starting a flow of generosity. It manifests inter-subjectivity; how people are connected and depend on each other. The first gift is in that sense similar to nature's first gift of fertility, whose bounties are unlocked by the first offerings of *taonga* to nature, removing the *tapu.* Thus, both the relationship and the flow of valuables between Ingrid, me, and other households can continue and grow.

Through my act of gifting I maintain the flow of generosity, the good *hau.* Disturbing the flow would transform the *hau* of the gift into an object of negative sorcery. This would be an antisocial act, in the vein of how wastefulness concerning food

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[234] This is also discussed in Chapter 4: Methodology.

can be seen as one. Applying a contemporary environmental perspective, antisocial, dominant acts of greed, destruction and unnecessary wastefulness could bring the damaging *hau* upon humanity. The current wastefulness of food - the source of life - when poverty and famine is present is a wastefulness that endangers all future life on earth furthering irreversible damage to the environment and to earth as a whole. Wasteful acts can thus, through the absolute power to destroy, be interpreted as antisocial acts of dominance, hierarchy and violence.

Offering a return gift can be seen as contributing to a further spiral or flow (Godbout & Caillé 1998) or chain of gifts (Strathern 1988) going forward, and not just limited to a bi-lateral relation between us two. Ingrid's act of gifting objects of value and my subsequent one is a manner of displaying shared local values. Applying the Maori-concepts, the flow of generosity starting with Ingrid's gift should be maintained. Someone is generous to you, and you should also honour their generosity by being generous back and also towards others. Such acts of gifting constitute and display important values of society, those of generosity and sharing. The gifted food becomes the symbolic representation of the importance of these values, and through these acts of gifting, we are recognising and realising the importance and value of generosity socially (Graeber 2013). The acts are manifestations of the values of generosity and sharing, and simultaneously it can also create and strengthen social bonds. The social bond is represented symbolically by of the food that is gifted. Someone has put their love, care and energy into buying the food, or even making or harvesting it themselves. Whether the soul of the giver is embedded in the food or not, to follow Mauss (1995 [1924]), the food is still perceived to be more valuable. We have seen this in the practices concerning gifts compared to other foodstuff. Another interpretation is one of a more ambivalent kind. As my return gift opens one door, providing the opportunity for an increased level of sociality and a closer relation, it also opens another one simultaneously, offering the possibility of maintaining individual autonomy for both parties.

One could even argue that I overdid it by offering two ptarmigans I had shot myself that autumn in return (ibid: 192). If I exaggerated the return, it could even be interpreted as what Mauss calls the "clinching gift", the one that settled the matter (ibid: 61-62), ensuring that I regained my sense of autonomy through the act of reciprocity. But there was no thorough calculation present on my part. I did not consciously seek to balance out the relationship, to free myself of debt, nor was that in my thoughts when I picked the return-gift. I looked for something nice enough to give in return, something to show that I appreciated her friendly and generous gesture.

The return gift does not necessarily discharge the obligation. It can also recharge it, creating a continuous cycle of exchanges (Carrier 1994:124). Again consider the image of a flow or spiral of generosity, of humanity and inter-subjectivity manifested through such acts. Additionally, I could not offer Ingrid something too similar to what I received in return. Culturally, it had to be something else. Not like taro for taro mentioned above. Some also claim that the return also has to be more (Godbout & Caillé 1998). Otherwise it could become dangerously close to a transaction, which would be culturally unacceptable, bordering on rude. It would signify a denouncement of the social relation, a refusal of her gift and her generosity. A perfectly balanced return would here defuse the value of the act of gifting, and rid it of the added value stemming from the social relation between us, at that time and beyond.

Doused in a dominant mercantile perspective, one where relationships between people are often replaced by those between objects (Godbout & Caillé 1998:136), the concept of the reciprocity of the gift is easily misunderstood. Wrongly, it could be seen as a representation of a need to settle ones debt, to reinstate balance, and to put an end to all debt (Ibid. 133). This common misinterpretation sees reciprocity as an act where the recipient regains his own autonomy, free from possible demands and obligations that are possible until the gift is reciprocated. It focuses on *one* sole exchange, similar to a commercial sale and purchase. But in a spiral or flow of acts of gifting, the role of the donor is interchanging. One gives in turn, starting with the first gift between Ingrid and me, continuing with my return of something more. Prior to this, also acts where Ingrid received something, as these shared values of sharing and generosity transcend a one to one act of gifting and a return between two people. It is a value embedded in a larger social entity, past this moment in time.

It is both the initiating gesture; the first gift, and the element of returning something more than a more limited mercantile, exchange-laden perspective would struggle to adequately explain. What motivated it? Is it a core value of local culture, following a Dumontian argument (Dumont 1977, 1986)? When the relational dimension of circulation of valuables like food, notwithstanding the social use of food as a means of power, dominance and destruction, has been removed, what can explain this initial gesture and the desire to offer an increased return? Economic concepts like credit and interest certainly come up short. One possible reason for this lies in the flaw of viewing the gifts as elements in a bi-lateral relation that needs to be balanced out, a view relating to the limitations by viewing the act of gifting as isolated, and not as a part of a large network of people, animals, plants, ancestors and Gods etc. (ibid.) throughout time. To view Ingrid's gift as the starting point of this flow of gifting would be to limit it

to an isolated bi-lateral relation. I rather see her gesture as part of such a larger, wider flow of generosity, redistributing the riches of nature, similar to the Inuit example in the next sub-chapter. She acts generously, as she has both done before and is likely to previously have experienced when she herself has been the recipient of what can be interpreted as a continuous flow. It is a shared local, social value, but also a genuinely human act, one I instinctively felt the need to mirror, to reciprocate.

Rather, I see the gift as a total social phenomenon. Thus, viewing gifts as purely economic or as limited to a bilateral relation is a product of cultural essentialisation. This oversimplification, one mirroring an exchange between isolated individuals, is borne out of a state of naturalisation and alienation discussed in the previous chapter. This state is created by a rupture and arises in the gap between person and thing, a space where the market and the state now typically resides in modern society, for better and for worse. By studying, dismantling and reassembling the contrasting concept of the gift, as it remains exemplified in cases like the previous one, an underlying value in society is revealed, even if it is surrounded by mercantile transactions. The flow of generosity, creating and maintaining life manifests itself as a *metavalue* of society (Graeber 2013), contrary to the *infravalue* of individual autonomy and economic growth which only postures as a *metavalue* through a politically fuelled means-end inversion. One does not give something of value to get something in return. It is a profoundly human and social act, also connected to local, cultural values, one that extends past an isolated, momentary exchange between two people.

Generosity, Sharing, Gifting & Power

Within the contemporary realm dominated by a market economy based on key ideals in capitalism like growth, profit, private property and perceived individual autonomy, other moralities still are present and practiced in everyday life. The sharing of food and other basic necessities appears to be fundamental and intrinsic in small-scale egalitarian societies (Graeber 2014:69). They are everyday practices manifesting a cultural, social morality. This is exemplified by the traditional acts of sharing between neighbours on the countryside farms when harvesting in bulk, or of fish between relatives and friends today - a similar seemingly communistic relation where food flows between the households dependent on who caught fish or had excess resources. In principle, not everything is shared, but when the need is strong enough and the cost reasonable such principles of sharing are often applied. Along with the occasional local practice of making extra food for dinner in case someone pops by, the redistributive practices of

food from the countryside to the city of Tromsø in close relations can also be interpreted as examples of baseline communism (Graeber 2014:69).

Amongst the Greenland Inuits (Graeber 2014:75), thanking someone for food is not customary. You wouldn't say "thank you", as sharing food is the common standard. Queried for an explanation, the response was that they were not barbarians. "It is human behaviour, and gifts make slaves, and by whips one makes dogs" (ibid). There is also a Norwegian saying used when lending a hand, helping someone or sharing something: "Ingenting å takke for", which translates directly to English as: "Nothing to thank for". Many other cultures and languages have similar expressions. This can imply that there is no indebtedness as a consequence of this gift or gesture apart from the cultural expectation of doing likewise when the occasion calls for it. These acts are seen as something everyone would, or at least should do, as shared human values, not a settled exchange which can be isolated in time and space. Among the Inuits, gifting is different from the abovementioned sharing of food. They would per definition share with one another, e.g. when someone has food and another needs it. A gift is different, and interestingly, not every kind of food is accepted as a gift in egalitarian societies as these are shared per definition (ibid). Thus not all kinds of food can be labelled or used as a gift, incurring the common cultural consequences of such.[235] Comparatively, not all objects are considered fit to be gifts locally in Norway either.

There are subtle but important differences between the baseline communistic acts of making extra food for potential guests, gifting fish, berries and meat to close relatives and friends, compared to gift exchanges that maintain and create hierarchies and distance. Local practices of redistributing fish, berries and the like in close relations do not invoke a classic debt situation as created by a gift, which would typically include the obligation to reciprocate. The local practices, whether labelled as baseline communistic acts or *total prestations,* are akin to what Strathern (2012:409) here describes:

> *"To give in return does not mean to give back, to repay, it means to give 'in turn', a practice recognisable in prestations of altruism between close kin."*

Redistribution in these relations, whether classed as sharing or gifting should be seen as practices in an ongoing cycle or spiral, and not as isolated acts. Giving, receiving, reciprocating is a process. It is a spiral of generosity similar to the *Hau* (Godbout & Caillé 1998:132-133), a flow of value creating acts, while also reflecting a larger system of

[235] It would be interesting to further examine the status of fish in Northern Norway in this regard.

value – the shared values of a society. I argue that utilitarian arguments an the focus on exchange wrongly isolate acts in this cycle, perhaps due to their scientific-philosophical vantage point. I find that a dialectical, constantly evolving perspective is more useful, seeing these acts as creating patterns of actions (Graeber 2001:xii)[236].

Local Generosity and Market Dominance

The creation of the market is deeply connected to the radical split between producer and user described in the last chapter. The split entails a subsequent inversion of the means-end order, where covering human needs is subjugated to the quest for economic growth and profit making. There are claims that what circulates in the commercial market no longer has social ties connected to it (Godbout & Caillé 1998:155), and the social bond must find refuge elsewhere in society in the midst of the individual household economies. However, as we have seen in previous empirical cases, commodities can also create and maintain social relations, dependent on social context, as underlined by Gregory (1997). Gifts also remain essential elements in close relations locally. Acts of gifting are still taking place parallel to procurement through the formal market infrastructures. According to Graeber (2001), one of Mauss' points was that that the logic of the marketplace had failed in its attempt to dominate Western society, pointing towards the lasting presence of moral, societal dimensions in exchanges.

The claim that Western society never fully embraced the market-logic might also be congruent with the political climate at the time Mauss wrote this. And even if the current dominance of the market-logic cannot be refuted, we have seen how food flows generously, freely, between close kin and friends in relations resembling those of *total prestations* (ibid.). We have also seen how generous acts can initiate and strengthen social relations. The flows of generosity, like these giftings of food and other acts of baseline communism (Graeber 2014), are remaining continuities that are both defying and reminding us of the market dominance. Mauss (1995 [1924]) argues that this split between person and thing cannot succeed completely. A key remnant is the relationship to children, and the child, as it is the prototype of all gift relations (Godbout & Caillé 1998:39). We have seen through several cases in this chapter how acts if gifting in direct downward kinship lines remain as prevalent local social practices, seemingly open-ended and devoid of mercantile considerations.

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[236] The perspective on practice has similarities to Barth's approach labelled generative process-analysis. See e.g. Barth 1966).

The ever-presence of gifts is necessary as a reminder, as these islands of sharing that people maintain at the heart of a market capitalist dominance are what allows us to imagine a different society. Mauss found that such practices of hospitality and generosity affirms the existence of an alternative. It is something that allows people to see the larger structures as unjust (Graeber 2001:227). The scalar differences between these acts and the large-scale food production, and also the aggregated waste of individual households, make this gap difficult to see and bridge. Through daily gestures such as the local practices of gifting food between relatives and friends; the sack of potatoes, the fish, berries and meat, or by making extra dinner for a potential visitor, the cultural definitions of what is seen as valuable, the values of local society, are reproduced (Munn 1986). Implicit in such everyday gestures lays a whole cosmology (Graeber 2001:82), of social relations, community, kinship and generosity and sharing.

When following the cycle of household food management and analysing these practices, we saw how food received or obtained through a personal relation is managed differently. More careful practices indicate that this food holds a different kind of value (Graeber 2001, 2013), a value which goes beyond the mere potential use value of the food, or a value related to its price. The social relation it has been obtained through plays a major part, even if the material component of the food intrinsically maintains its significance. The different treatment of these gifts of food, offers a window into the values of society, revealing why widespread waste of food is allowed to take place on the current scale. The gift reminds us of an alternative to the dominant, impersonal and excessive provisioning routines through the formal market infrastructures. It shows us that the local consumers are on the whole detached from the larger food-cycle, rendering them into a state of alienation (Marx (1988 [1932]), while also allowing them individual choice, freeing them from degrading social ties of serfdom and the like. The removal of the social relational elements of transactions allowed by the modern market infrastructures, provide access to excesses of cheap resources to massive benefits and increased standards of living. However, it also harbours an anonymity that fosters waste and detachment in the current conditions of wealth and cultural discourses of individual consumption brought by the scale of production and consumption.

The Dangers of the Gift and the Dangers of the Market

I postulate no extreme argument for the elimination of the state or the market, a harmful and impossible endeavour, as a large society needs these institutions for

objects and services to circulate between strangers (Godbout & Caillé 1998:191-192). Without gift-exchanges we would find other kinds of constraints, as with socialism subjecting the gift to state solidarity, whereas capitalism wants to subject everything to mercantile principles of production and growth. An approach dominated by ideologies of liberal markets sees social ties as a form of constraint, hence the constant tug-of-war between the social considerations and market interests described by Polanyi's rubber-band of double-movement between these interests (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). The laws of the market and the state only apply to relationships between things in circulation and not to social ties. It is a cruder system, more akin to a mechanism, whereas gifting can be interpreted as a meta-system with the added complexity of a social, cultural dimension that escapes rational calculation (Godbout & Caillé 1998:195), like the Maussian *total prestations* (Mauss 1995 [1924]) or baseline acts of communism (Graeber 2014).

We can maintain that the *hau* is the spirit of the gift - that which is invisible but circulates. However, within the dominant, economically driven paradigm of Capitalism, the gift cannot be comprehended as an actual gift. It is interpreted within the framework of exchange and calculation. However, the gift is a conscious abandonment towards an absence of calculation, a spontaneous humanity on a meta-level. Following the rules of an actual gift, we do not know how to give, any more than we know how to speak a language if we have to follow the rules while we are talking (Godbout & Caillé 1998:204). The reflex of the gift is a spontaneous act as exemplified by Ingrid previously when we went through her freezer, and perhaps also with my instinctive response, acts already present, before reason. Perhaps it remains an element on a proximal level (Vygotsky 1978), an operating logic one step beyond our comprehension. It can also be interpreted as a habitual act in the vein of the habitus concept (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). It goes without saying, non-reflected upon. This description resonates well with my act of returning the gift of the two ptarmigans, just as much as the spontaneity in Ingrid's initial act of gifting of sauerkraut and coalfish to me during our freezer inspection. Devoid of calculation and of a conscious desire to balance out the initial act of generosity, I rather see it as a genuinely social, human act. An unbalance in the offer and the response is maintained through gifts; they cannot be too similar and they cannot be returned immediately. The gift thus ensures a survival through time, of the shared memory, of the bond - a relation is maintained over time through the act of gifting, reinforcing the value of the act.

The formal institutions of state and market attempt to unleash people from social bonds, loosening the bonds between family members, neighbours, colleagues

etc., promoting individualism by removing obligations, while maintaining responsibility for services which in the past was offered through gift networks (Godbout & Caillé 1998:191). People are soon dissatisfied with the absence of social ties the market brings in its wake (ibid: 201). This is a possible answer to Graeber's (2001:162) question as to why so many are not happy with the market, and why the logic of the marketplace has failed to dominate Western Society completely. The gift here acts as our apt reminder, as people gift food without contact with the formal system of market and state. The local acts of gifting fish, meat, berries etc. are labelled as part of an informal economy, and they can also, without ascribing informants intentionality in this direction, be seen as acts of resistance, of defiance or counter-hegemony. They are remnants of the sphere that the dominant discourses of the market and the state grew out of, but which they appear to have failed to penetrate completely.

Compared to market transactions, legally regulated to minutiae detail, the gift relies more on mutual confidence. It is riskier, more dangerous. It is likely to affect the individual socially if the cultural rules are not respected. The gift is also dangerous, as the burden of obligation can turn into a constraint over time if the exchange is not balanced out. The obligation remains (Godbout & Caillé 1998:207). The modern individual can be weary, afraid of being taken advantage of, either to have given away too much, or of having received too much and being in need of reciprocating. He wants to avoid being too indebted. The market is of great help here as it allows people to exchange socially unrestrained under such conditions, keeping alive an illusion of individual autonomy. The market "outside" – the gift "inside", is shown to be the winning formula – one sphere for close relations, one for strangers (ibid: 208). The recent case with the token money illustrates a transgression, as does commodities like the bag of groceries becoming gifts. The social relation in this exchange is somewhere between these outliers, and perhaps this is why a customary, token monetary sum is needed as a supplementary element.

The gifting of food as a practice remains. The food is imbued with sociality and thus has a higher threshold for disposal. The contrasting practices in managing gifts and commodities accentuate the norm; a norm of the impersonal, alienating gap between producer and consumer, between the consumer and the commodities of food and between individual, imagined autonomous households, a norm of excess where food waste is prevalent.

The Gift, the Social and the Animistic

In a Marxian perspective, the mercantile dominance leads to an objectification of the world and of relations. Social relations are reduced to relations represented by objects, between objects. In the environmentally conscious discourse of this project, the production of objects of human desire and the current wastefulness subjugate the concerns of what sustains human livelihood; planet Earth. Traits of such objectification can be seen today, e.g. with meat, treating lived life as objects. The source of life, food, what creates and sustains subjects, that of which life is dependent is perceived as objects of our desire. The wasteful practices, driven partially by such acts of objectification and wealth associated with the growth of Capitalism and mass-production, of an antisocial, excessive wastefulness, represents a rupture with life, our natural surroundings and with human belonging in the world. The surrounding world is turned into objects, perceived as commodities, made to conform to the laws of the market and of physics (Godbout & Caillé 1998:215).

> *"Only in this model (mercantile) there are "unemployed." In the other, there is only a dearth of caribou. If there are many caribou, and you have nothing to do, you do not think of yourself as unemployed, but as someone who is very lucky."(ibid.)*

In the current dominant Capitalist discourse, the *infravalue* of production and accumulation has been transformed into a *metavalue* that sets the premises and defines what is valuable – employment, production and sustained growth. The paradigm of growth is enshrined into a societal goal (Graeber 2013). A previously subordinate domain has in some quarters been turned into a theory of an encompassing order (Bloch & Parry 1989:29), as a capitalist ideology masking as beneficial to humanity as a whole and of human happiness. Excessive consumption and accumulation of wealth are examples of antisocial, individual attempts to perpetuate one's own individuality, i.e. exercised through excessive consumption and wastefulness, denouncing the collective and ignoring the demands of the long-term cycle (ibid: 27-28).

Nowadays, accumulating possessions and making a surplus are seen as goals, as societal values. Previously, it was commonly perceived to be quite the contrary, as it often led to inequality, conflict and violence. When the limits of growth had been reached, many of the manners of dealing with surplus were destructive; war, sacrifices, excess and waste, domination and hierarchy, environmental disasters and destruction (Bataille 1991, Godbout & Caillé 1998:216). Now *Homo Economicus* enshrines surplus and growth, having accepted it as a societal goal, a *metavalue* (Graeber 2013).

Paradigms of Capitalism have then come to represent the negation of society, the antisocial. Wastefulness of food in manners currently experienced locally acts are in a larger context an ultimate manifestation of dominance, hierarchy and power, exercised through the ability to destroy[237], similar to the God Shiva in Hinduism.

In the previous chapter I outlined how the development of the modern market was based on a fundamental rupture between subject and object, between producers and users. This is a rupture that in the long run, due to larger distances and differences in scales, transforms social bonds into relationships between strangers governed by the market and the state. We now see that an even more crucial split is appearing: a rupture with the universe, a rupture with the past and the future (Graeber 2013:218-219).

The concept of the gift however, has deep traces from animism – seeing objects and nature as alive, possessing spirit, of humans and nature as deeply connected and inter-dependent. The concept of the *hau* has its basis in animism (Godbout & Caillé 1998:215), that everything has a soul, and the *tapu* held over the forest is removed by a sacrifice to the Gods. This is the first gift, opening its bounties for harvest. A prerequisite for this perspective is empathy and the mimesis of nature that takes place in animism. This mimesis allows for balance between man and nature, man and others, subject and object - not completely separate, nor deeply intertwined (Willerselv 2007). We can view animism and the *hau* in a social perspective rather than a mystical one. There is both a socially and environmentally sustainable balance to be struck, one between killing and death, between taking and receiving – between nature and humans[238], between harvest and sacrifice (Godbout & Caillé 1998:2014-215). The spiral of generosity can return to you again and again, as with the *hau,* if you do not break it. Like a Sami saying reminds us; a giving hand never gets empty.

Acts of generosity, of gifting, link humans to each other, to the larger society and to nature. Gifting anchors humans, and creates obligations that transcend the rupture between person and thing. This gap created between giver and receiver, producer and consumer, steps in the food cycle now split and filled by market infrastructures providing riches, but which also fuels waste levels. Gifting also creates relations that transcend the moment, as the memory of the gift remains and bridges past, present and future, connecting people. The act of gifting can be interpreted as a manifestation of

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[237] Michel Foucault also touches upon this in "The Subject and Power" (1982).
[238] Or as I see it, rather of humans *in* and *as* nature as well.

humanity and as a means of reinstating humanity and a balance between humans and nature, an orderly cosmos.

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the current extensive flows of food from the countryside of Tromsø and into the city households– acts of gifting through kinship and other close relations. These acts are maintained simultaneously, as the majority of food provisioning in the households are done through formal market transactions. The chapter brings together the value-based approach where I analysed the valuations of food through practice and the overreaching contextual development framing these valuations and its changes drawn up in the previous two chapters. I described a historical development towards the dominance of the market and an economically centred logic reflected in the local household practices. In this chapter, I finally illustrate through empirical examples on gifting how different valuations and practices exist and how these influence the thresholds of disposal of food and thus the levels of food waste in local households.

Gifts have a higher threshold for being wasted through more considerate food management, and the management of gifts also enables us to see the practices involving the majority of the commodities of food in the households in a more distinct view. The cases on acts of gifting thus serve to contextualize local practices and bring the complexity of contemporary food provisioning into the fore. These acts of gifting are parts of a material flow, as manifestations of a local, cultural, social, economic continuity. Here I have drawn much upon the classic work of Marcel Mauss: The Gift (1995 [1924]) and Godbout & Caillé's work on the gift (1998) viewing these gifts as total social phenomena. I have looked into their multiple roles, the values these acts currently manifest and represent, using them as a mirror against which contemporary, dominant, market-dependent food management practices and their characteristics in the households become visible. As the households express their regrets that even gifts from close relatives are wasted, like the now famous sack of potatoes or the home-made jam, this confirms that the value of these acts of gifting remains high, that the memories of gifts are strongly present, while also underlining the current excess of food locally.

I have discussed the practices of gifting in close kinship relations, those akin to *total prestations* (Mauss 1995 [1924]). These practices illustrate flows of food on a smaller scale, in lasting relations that are distant from economic rational paradigms, of calculations of exchange. These practices manifest values of sharing and generosity.

These practices also show our mutual dependence on each other, highlighting individual and household autonomy as illusory, and complete market dominance as incomplete and infeasible.

We saw how commodities can also be used as gifts, and how monetary aspects can even play a role in such an exchange. This illustrated how the categories between acts of gifting and formal exchanges, of buying and selling, are not clear-cut, and also how the social and relational aspect are defining element in the act of exchange. In such cases where the boundaries between gifting and exchange, between gift and commodity are unclear or transgressed, this also serves to illustrate the hybrids and the complexity of lived local life. This underlines how these concepts are mere anthropological, theoretical concepts and tools used in our attempt to understand human actions. The cases about token money added to a gift and commodities like pork-chops as gifts show this, and also how the borders between the private- and market-sphere between the gift-, and commodity-sphere are social, contextually dependent constructions.

My own gift-exchange with Ingrid shows the spontaneity of the initial gift and the return gift as acts in a spiral of generosity. Here local values are manifested through practice of gift giving and exchange; values of generosity, community, sharing. This fundamentally human and social act can be seen as a critical corrective to the contemporary tendencies, grounded in market-ideologies. It shows the reductionist trap of viewing these acts of gifting as just instrumental or calculative, or to isolate these acts in both space and time, limiting them to the exchange between us two. Rather it should be seen as a continuous flow of generosity, culturally and socially embedded throughout time - the value of the act of creating humans and life. I then round off by returning to see the gift in an animistic perspective, drawing in the concept of *hau* and of animism. I see this as a reminder and a means to reconnect individuals and people with nature. Nature is part of who we are and what we depend on for our livelihood.

Chapter 14 Concluding Remarks

Introduction

The task of this PhD-project has been to uncover all kinds of reasons behind unnecessary food waste on a household level. Fulfilling the task defined by the Norwegian Research Council entails substantial body of work. A significant amount of empirical material is needed to cover the many contexts and subtopics necessary to uncover reasons behind food waste practices. Through a broad empirical entry point, studying everyday food management practices in local households, I worked to uncover the key-dynamics behind the practices that lead to wastefulness. I have applied a holistic perspective, following the food throughout a part of the food cycle, from its entry into the household until its exit. I traced everyday acts and priorities throughout, from the planning phase to provisioning, organisation and storage, preparation and consumption, re-distribution and finally, waste management.

My Argument

I have used combination of approaches from value- and exchange theory in my analysis of local households practices, drawing up an argument that the practices of food management in the studied households reflect their valuation of food. Using a value-based practice theory, I argue that the low priority given to acts of food management by many household members and the subsequent excessive food waste reflects the low value currently assigned to food in itself, inherently. I have applied a perspective where local everyday practices are treated as manifestations of valuations of food, and then sought to uncover the underlying reasons for these valuations and changes in them.

Due to generational differences found in my material, I have argued that these valuations are deeply connected to developments in several macro-factors in Norwegian society. These large-scale changes have altered the priorities of local households and what they value, thus reflecting, one could argue, their changed values. I found that these generational differences in the valuation of food were constituted mainly by a few core factors like increased income and availability of food, social aspects of consumption and individualism, changes in how time is spent, and the growth of a scalar gap between households and people and infrastructures making up the larger food cycle. Such large-scale changes provided an increased standard of living, while also freeing people from

previously social obligations and bonds connected to food provisioning. However, these changes have also contributed to alienating the individual households on a consumer level. One major consequence of the current dominant valuations and priorities of food brought along by these changes is unnecessary food waste in households.[239] The older informants grew up in a wholly different resource situation, but still maintain their more austere practices today. This underlines both the connection of individual food management to such a larger framework, not to mention a dimension of habituality as these practices remain their preference even with the excesses available to them today.

Thesis Summary and Structure

After presenting the topic and outline of this project in the introduction, an ethnographic and historical framework of Tromsø and Northern Norway followed. Here I described the development from a recent past characterised by rural self-subsistence adaptations in harsh, but resource-rich natural surroundings, towards the times of centralisation and a more global, large-scale industrialisation, coupled with the rapid growth of Tromsø as a city in half of the last centennial.

After thorough and relevant discussions around methodological issues occurring during my fieldwork, I presented an overview of previous key works in anthropology related to waste, pertaining to this work specifically. Here I also presented a handful of theories of value as conceptual tools, as I chose an approach treating the local valuations of food as an underlying premise for food management practices and priorities. Perspectives and concepts on value, mainly from Marx (1990 [1867]) and Graeber (2001, 2013), were then presented. These were later used to analyse different dimensions of value and their relation to societal values, as I opted for a perspective that views local household practices as manifestations of value. Additionally, this practice-based value-values approach was important in understanding differences in valuations between generations in the light of societal changes on a larger scale. What is deemed valuable, e.g. the value of food, depends on the orientation of a larger system of value (Graeber 2001); on shared values.

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[239] A more detailed outline of the argument will follow in the subsequent chapter summary.

Common Household Preferences and Traits

In Chapter 6 I discussed preferences and priorities in the menus and diets in the households. They were analysed in the context of the local everyday situations, and influential factors were unveiled: e.g. contemporary foci on freshness of ingredients, having several options to choose from, cooking from scratch etc. These practices mirrors dominant values concerning local food consumption, but also drive waste levels. These trends focus on foodstuff with limited longevity like fruit and vegetables, bread and baked products, along with dairy products. These practices further heighten waste levels as they foster even higher demands on planning and predictability in a rapidly shifting everyday life. We learned that such planning was not prioritized in most households. Several household members cited the lack of time as a critical factor, while current income levels coupled with food prices and availability contribute to making such wastefulness a possibility.

In Chapter 7, the influence of structural household factors like size, composition and borders were analysed. By looking into communalities and frameworks shaping local practices, I uncovered how stability was an important factor to maintain low food waste levels. One particular discovery was how transitional phases related to changes in sizes, composition and domicile proposed challenges. Adapting to new routines of food management took time. There was a "cultural lag" (Rudie 1984), and habitual aspects were strong (Bourdieu 1977, 1990).

Following the Matter throughout the Food Cycle

Throughout Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 I focused on displaying various empirical dimensions while sticking to the given task of uncovering key reasons behind household food waste. One explicit aim was to allow for the complexity and ambiguity of human action to present itself, while gathering valuable insights for deeper analysis later in the thesis. Following the matter and analysing the practices of the household food cycle systematically shows that a low degree of planning and a high frequency of provisioning are common. Lack of planning and a low priority of food management often lead to over-provisioning and subsequent disorder and wastefulness.

The influence of social occasions on food practices was also identified as an important factor. Social occasions and visitors are external factors influencing household routines. They bring instability and unpredictability when it comes to food management. It requires more effort. By analysing social occasions and other dynamics of everyday

lives, stability and predictability were identified as important factors to avoid food waste on the whole. However, large-scale changes in local society, especially after World War 2, have made the everyday lives of households more fluid and unpredictable. Women have entered the public workforce in full effect, work-hours and workplaces are more flexible and shifting, along with social and spare-time demands for personal fulfilment and realisation. A wider variety in terms of family and household constellations and how their time is spent has surfaced.

The Edible and Inedible – Priorities, Borders, Entropy

When following the matter, it became clear that the increased standard of living and income, over-provisioning and the low priority given to spending time on food management often had a variety of wasteful consequences. The inherent materiality of foodstuff and its temporal dimension - the process of entropy (Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971]), continues relentlessly, regardless of local daily concerns on a micro-level. The fluidity and unpredictability in contemporary lives brought an instability that exposed a disharmony. The rhythms of the everyday life of households and the materiality of foodstuff in their possession would get out of sync. Entropy endured, resulting in unnecessary food waste. These socio-material webs are central factors that frame waste-inducing practices in the households.

Chapters 9 and 10 focused on specific waste practices and how households defined what is considered waste and not. I explored their daily exercises in maintaining borders between categories of edible and non-edible and the intertwined cultural and material dimensions of these categorisations. In particular, I looked at how decision-making was done in situ in relation to dominant values and habits guiding food management. I also looked at the use and misuse of domestic storage and food management technologies.

Mary Douglas (1966) emphasized the importance of drawing borders between the concepts of dirty and clean, between purity and danger. She focused mostly on a symbolic and cultural level, although she did point out a few exceptions she believed to be universally human communalities. She argues for the importance of avoiding anomalies and states of liminality. She saw these as potentially destabilising and dangerous, which resonates well in our context of food and waste and the attempts to draw clear distinctions. However, maintaining a concise distinction between these categories is not so easy, and a variety of ways where the material and the symbolic are

deeply intertwined become apparent. During the disposal phase, I discovered a dynamic, re-definition of thresholds, or “thrashholds”, between the edible and inedible. I drew on Douglas´ concept of matter out of place (Douglas 1966) and additionally, entropy again (Georgescu-Roegen 1986 [1971]).

We experienced how food edging closer to the category of waste would be disposed of, but also uncovered ritualized practices related to leftovers where their disposal was postponed, where initial good intentions to avoid food waste would often fail. Even if these Initial intentions led to subsequent food waste, they made the disposal more acceptable, culturally and morally. Another example was the delay of disposal of food that had gone off discovered during the fridge and freezer rummages we did together. This indicated a degree of shame, as life-rendering food, highly valuable in itself, and something we all depend on, was wasted needlessly.

We discussed several practices pertaining to the threshold between food, value and waste, and while discussing the potential use value of food and its relation to price, other borders and categorisations emerged as important. Recurring cycles of disposal was identified as a strategy some household members employed to re-instate a sense of order in their food inventories. This illustrates other dimensions of the concept of entropy presented by Bateson (2000 [1972]). Thresholds of value and waste were established, negotiated and renegotiated, as households fought to avoid chaos in their inventories. To cope, they regularly disposed of food to reinstate order and clear categorisations, attempting to keep entropy at arms length.

During the disposal phase, we also saw how a reliance on the symbolic abstractions of expiry dates was prevalent. It is connected to the loss of sensory knowledge and capacity to judge edibility amongst many household members. There was also not much consideration given to how the expiry dates are abstractions that actually depends on the food having been stored and cared for properly beforehand. If not, the expiry date is not a trustworthy tool to judge edibility and quality.

The Valuations of Food

Analysing the practices mapped out in Chapters 8, 9 and 10, a generational divide became obvious. The households of the older generations managed their food more carefully, wasting less. The younger households confirmed this, regularly sharing narratives on how older relatives managed their food more diligently. Through their practices, the households of different generations seemed to value food differently. For

the younger generations there was a clear gap between ideal and practice, as they explicitly expressed that wasting food was wrong, while maintaining very wasteful practices. These different valuations led me to use theories of value as the analytical approach. The dominant position of purchasing price and its influence on food management practices contributed further to cement that decision.

Exploring the relations between food, money, value and waste in Chapter 11, I argued that there is a strong emphasis on price of purchase in current local valuations of food. This emphasis is manifested through everyday priorities and practices in food management (Graeber 2001, 2013). Following the food throughout the whole food cycle within the households, the dominance of an economically centred mind-set shaping practices and priorities regarding food and time management surfaced. This mind-set was reflected in common local practices of using price as a yardstick in valuations of food. For instance, purchasing prices influence household decisions and priorities, like how well the food is cared for, thresholds of disposal, and economic savings are also a main motivation for waste reduction. I found economic perspectives towards value to be deeply embedded in many aspects of contemporary social life, guiding local practices, framed by an almost unlimited access to a wide range of food at prices affordable for all the households I followed.

Abstractions and Scales

Marx (1990 [1867]) postulated that a gradual development towards the dominance of the monetary abstractions of value, an emphasis on price and exchange value, would occur in modern capitalism. Such abstractions take place on several levels, and some are connected to the scalar gaps (Eriksen 2016) that have developed in modern capitalism. Such gaps are facilitated by the before-mentioned macro-changes in the region. Gaps can occur between individual households and industrial or market infrastructures, between local small-scale producers and larger-scale entities. Such gaps simultaneously foster distance and dependency, alienation and vulnerability.

In the local households, the most evident gap I discovered was the movement from the potential use value of food as nutrition towards a stronger emphasis on exchange value and price as defining for the valuation of food, exemplified through their priorities in food management. Related to this, a financialization of local economic practices can also be observed. Farmers, anglers and hunters rent out their rights to work and harvest of the land and waters, rather than spending their own time and labour opt for monetary means directly. The skill and knowledge related to food

procurement and management in the local environment and households are on fewer hands and in fewer heads. Abstractions also extend to the sensory, as a reliance on the symbols in the form of an expiry date was prevalent. This dependence is connected to a loss of sensory knowledge and capacity to judge edibility, and this abstraction of knowledge is another case of increased distances rooted in large-scale industrial, market developments.

A parallel of increased distances and abstractions was exemplified in the introduction of the thesis in the story about the sack of potatoes. In that case the incompatibility between the sack of potatoes and the physical and technological household infrastructure and their habits of food management stands out. Ironically, this took place in what had likely been a cold-storage cellar, perfect for storing potatoes, before becoming refurbished into the flat they now rented as the owners opted for monetary income. The decision to refurbish the cellar was connected to macro-developments in the region and beyond, while bringing further socio-economical and cultural changes, enhancing the alienation, abstractions and scalar gaps (ibid.).

Changing Times – Changing Values

Ushered forward by macro-developments in Norwegian society, I have argued that food has been, if not devalued, certainly re-valued, and that this is fuelling food waste levels. Not claiming this to be a very recent novelty, I argued nevertheless that a shift has taken place: from one focusing more on the inherent, potential use value of food; food as life-dependent nutrition, ensuring survival, creating human beings, towards one where the emphasis is on how food is a mean to reach other ends. These ends can for instance be a firmer healthier looking body, increased energy, obtaining desirable sensory experiences, or using food as a vehicle for social displays of competence, identity, status or wealth. Generational differences in the empirical material also point to such a shift in emphasis and valuation.

As age materialized as a key variable, I investigated socio-economical macro-factors that could have influenced these generational differences in valuations of food and thus, wastefulness. In Chapter 12 I presented one possible explanation for this shift. I argued that several large-scale socio-economical changes in Norway have contributed to these generational differences in food management. I argued that the changed valuations of food are connected to shifting social and cultural ideals; of values on a larger scale, and that the older households of study still maintain practices and habits of

yesteryears. In Chapter 3, presenting the ethnographic and historical context for this study, a backdrop of recent socio-economical changes in the region had hinted at such developments. Due to these generational differences, I then backtracked slightly to historicize. I discussed a bundle of changes on a macro-level in the region of Troms and Tromsø. These took place at an accelerated pace in the decades from 1960 and onwards. I presented key local narratives from different generations of households: we met the shopkeeper in the village in Lyngen, heard of the demise of corner-shop in the suburb of Tromsdalen during the arrival of the supermarkets, and their current sprawling geographical distribution. The narratives illustrated how this process has gradually taken place amongst households on a consumer level, helping us see the developments towards the current situation.

The narratives are also empirical examples of how the market infrastructures and access to a wider range of cheaper, fresher food developed in the area. During these decades from 1960 and onwards, the urbanization and centralization of the population increased in the region. We experienced changed labour and household structures as more women entered the public workforce, and a gradually lower percentage of the population was involved in food production as the socio-economic structures changed. Along with an increased industrial production, stretching out globally, with equally sprawling related distribution and market infrastructures and new household technologies available, local inhabitants experienced a sharp increase in standard of living. This was an unprecedented, unhindered access to a wide range of cheap consumer goods, including food, on a broad level in the population.

These large-scale social and economic changes left an imprint on household values and the everyday lives of households. Their lives changed both at work and at home. Increased wealth and access to a wide range of foodstuffs for households ensued, but time became increasingly scarce and the knowledge and priorities towards managing food changed. With this, the valuation of food changed, manifested through their practices, lowering the threshold for wasteful practices. Whereas the older generation grew up in households where food was managed according to values of austerity and modesty, manifested through careful food management and low amounts of waste, their children and grandchildren have adapted to a wholly new resource situation and standard of living. The younger households were found to be more wasteful, a finding also supported by the quantitative modules of the larger Food Waste-project (Hanssen & Shakenda 2010, 2011, Hanssen & Møller 2013). Generations below the age of 50 remain critical towards food waste, but almost exclusively in discourse. Their everyday food management practices are now taking place

disconnected from several phases the larger food cycle, and in an environment of characterised by abundance.

Macro-Changes and Alienated Consumers

After establishing money/access to food, time and scale as key variables behind wastefulness, I then looked deeper into the argument of alienation and generational differences grounded in macro-factors. The analysis was based on the background chapters 3, 5, 6 and 7, ranging from topics like local ethnography to the topical context on food and households, along with empirical findings presented in chapters 8, 9 and 10, following the matter of food in the households throughout the food cycle.

The macro-developments, gathering accelerating pace after World War 2, brought an increased standard of living on the whole. However, as indicated by the differences in generational adaptation, while bringing prosperity, increased opportunities and more comfortable lives, I also argued that these developments have contributed towards a changed valuation of food. This has taken place not only on an economic level, but also on a social level, and these valuations manifested themselves through local food management practices. As previously mentioned, food increasingly became a mean to reach other ends. An increased distance between local household practices and practitioners and the parts and processes of the larger food cycle became apparent. Locals are increasingly distanced from the origins of food, our natural surroundings that we as humans harvest from and depend upon, as well as the food production and waste management, not to mention the people who participate in these activities. The differences in wastefulness in the households of different generations are manifestations of changed valuations of food and I have argued that this distance is one crucial factor towards this change.

Based on this historical macro-micro relational perspective, a central argument in this thesis has thus been that the increased scales and distances, this split, fosters a state akin to alienation (Marx 1988 [1932]), but on a consumer level. This state, along with explicit key-factors like income, access and time etc., contributes to the current valuation of food, and towards the food waste levels currently experienced locally. This state is constituted by a split between people, households, institutions, between domiciles and workplaces - the spheres and practices of production and consumption. I argued that the level of access to food in the shape of commodities, the low prices, the availability and changes in time management and in households, all contribute to, and

are, to an extent, products of the processes behind the increased distances from the food cycle, globalised and specialised economies of a massive scale. This fragmentation, this specialisation and gap in levels of scale (Eriksen 2016), be they the globalization of industries and markets, or the increased scale of this industrial production and market infrastructures, are key drivers behind this state of alienation. Individual household practices take part on much smaller scales, and I view their wasteful food management practices expressions of this state. Acknowledging that all households stated that current wasteful practices are seen as wrong, they are nevertheless surrounded by infrastructures promoting current lifestyles, leaving them in a situation that can at least to some extent be described as a double-bind (Bateson 2000 [1972]). They acknowledge that their wastefulness is wrong, but find it difficult to solve this problem within a myriad of everyday concerns. Households make small, everyday decisions in their lives, while wielding little influence over larger structural issues. A sense of powerlessness and a struggle to find ways to influence ones life and bring change can fester. This alienated state, in our case mainly relating to the larger food cycle of the formal economy, is also expressed implicitly through the more careful treatment of gifts of food received through close social relations or food caught or harvested personally.

The Social Dimensions of Provisioning

In chapter 12 and 13, I used contrasting modes of provisioning as entry points to analyse the underlying values that influence priorities in household food management. The priorities are dependent on how and whom the food was obtained through. First I looked at narratives and practices on purchases made through gradually more formal and large-scale market infrastructures. Afterwards, to contextualize these practices further, I then discussed the informal flow of gifts between friends and relatives, also analysing cases where the formal and informal overlapped and became muddled.

Following up on the previous line of thought about macro-changes providing wealth, time-constraints and states of alienation, I argued that an underlying factor for this state can be the scalar gap (Eriksen 2016), a split between acts of production brought along by a complex network of global, industrial production and market developments and local everyday household consumption practices. I tracked this split back in time, discussing the attempted separation between person and thing and the creation of a commodity market, a development important for understanding the division and subsequent increased distance between producer and consumer, as well as the scaling-up of production and distribution. In addition to key-factors like the

increased access to food and the constraints of time in households, I argue that market exchange is pivotal in altering social relations and obligations related to the exchange and management of food. Following the empirical findings on gifts, I then discussed the relationship between person and thing, between subject and object, and how social factors influence the thresholds of food waste.

I argue that the relations between seller and buyer in formal modes of exchange have changed towards an increasing degree of anonymity. Food also becomes more abstract through the process of mass-production and commodification (Marx 1990 [1867]). It is packaged uniformly, serialised (See e.g. Baudrillard 2006 [1968]), and produced far away, by unknowns. The commodities of food carry close to no social history, and all kinds of previously seasonally dependent produce are now available all year around. With increased anonymity, the involvement between those partaking in exchanges to obtain food has decreased, so has the social knowledge of these. Consequently, along with this, the surrounding moralities and the valuations of the food obtained through these exchanges also change. As a result, I argue that as relationships of secondary sociality (Godbout & Caillé 1998) dominate in the procurement of modern consumer goods today, including food, the level of sociality attached to the food is lower. This lowers its threshold for disposal.

Regardless of this increased distance, the scalar gap and the state of alienation, the local household consumption practices obviously remain connected to flows of production, distribution and waste management. Even if these individual households can appear to be autonomous economic units, and household members express that they feel autonomous, they remain dependent on large-scale industrial and market infrastructures, created and operated by other, mostly unknown, people’s actions.

The Value of Acts of Gifting

The final chapter on gifting brought together the arguments drawn up in the previous two chapters: 1) the value-based approach where I analysed the different valuations of food based on various household practices described previously in chapters, and 2) the contextual and historical developments, used as a genealogical perspective for understanding how these contemporary valuations and values came to be, and how they contribute to current waste levels in diverse ways.

Here I showed how local practices related to gifts of food illustrate the different levels of sociality and valuations of food, and how different moralities and norms are attached to them. These valuations and values are directly influential on local food

management practices and on waste levels. After showing how the gifts of food were treated more preciously, I argued that these local acts of gifting should not per definition be viewed as instrumental or calculative, or as isolated acts in both space and time, a perspective often perpetuated in analysis of exchange. My material indicates that to limit the analysis to the exchange between two parties is too simplistic. Rather, in certain close, developing or even new relations, these acts can also be parts of a continuous and profoundly human flow of generosity: culturally and socially embedded throughout time as manifestations of the values and value in creating humans and life. Even when these gifts are commodities, other people and their actions still remain involved, intermediaries of market infrastructures and exchanges notwithstanding.

The local acts of gifting are highly socially and culturally relevant. They appear as fundamental human practices, a social counter-force, important in keeping the islands of seemingly autonomous individual households together. These practices act as a mirror image that enables a critical perspective towards the dominant paradigm, as fundamentally human and social acts can be seen as a critical corrective to the contemporary tendencies grounded in market-ideologies. Gifting as a practice can both illuminate what ties people together and inspire us to reconnect what has been split. Local gifts of food remind us of both communality and nature in the context of managing our resources in less wasteful manners. I discussed practices of gifting in close kinship relations, those akin to *total prestations* (Mauss 1995 [1924]). I have argued that these practices illustrate flows of food in lasting relations on a smaller scale, a contrast from economic rational paradigms and calculative exchanges. These practices rather manifest values of sharing and generosity. They show peoples mutual dependence on each other, highlighting that the idea of contemporary individual households as autonomous as illusory, and complete market dominance as infeasible.

I now offer an argument on how the local wastefulness can be interpreted as antisocial[240] practices on several levels. The scalar-gap and increasingly alienated states among people involved in the steps in the food cycle makes consequences of local actions of food management more difficult to spot. However isolated they might seem, small-scale, local levels and aggregated global ones remain interconnected and influence each other.

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[240]Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of antisocial: 1: averse to the society of others : unsociable 2: hostile or harmful to organized society; especially : being or marked by behaviour deviating sharply from the social norm. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anti-social Accessed: 05. Sept. 2015. I use the concept of antisocial as descriptive of a harmful disregard for the needs of fellow humans and shared societal concerns, not as relating to behaviour deviating from the norm.

Waste Practices as Antisocial

Going back to Chapter 12, I argued that parts of the current wasteful food practices are connected to the alienated state amongst individual households and household members. The household members are cut off from the larger food cycle - from those who participate in it, the origin of food and our natural surroundings that we all directly or indirectly harvest from, but certainly rely upon. By acknowledging the very same link between the individual households participating and making up the globalized food market and infrastructure, between producer and user, the bond that illustrates both our mutual dependency and how wastefulness of food is an antisocial activity becomes visible to us. Consider for instance how a poor worker cultivating cocoa in the Ivory Coast is struggling to afford the increasing prices on bread. At the same time, a family in Tromsø is enjoying chocolate made from this cocoa, a family who waste a third of the bread they regularly buy. Inadvertently, most likely, this family contributes to increasing wheat prices on the global raw material markets, making it harder for poorer countries like the Ivory Coast to buy the wheat they need to feed their population.

One of my arguments is that the increased distance and subsequent alienated state breeds wastefulness, and wasteful practices can be seen as antisocial, selfish acts. Such acts display a lack of solidarity and of moral and ethical considerations for those who lack food or live in poverty in the world. Large-scale waste of food occurs simultaneously as famine and malnourishment is widespread. Current numbers of undernourished are at 795 million globally[241]. The wastefulness increases food prices on global raw-material markets, maintaining hierarchy, exploitation and inequality. Unnecessary waste epitomizes dominance and violence over fellow humans; individuals, households, animals and nature itself. Market and industry entities clearly obtain profits through unnecessary high levels of food purchases that fuel high waste levels. The level of demand maintains price and profit levels, also fostering economic activity that can grow and even multiply. However, this wastefulness remains antisocial as long as people starve, are malnourished or struggle to feed themselves properly. It is antisocial as people are driven from their land upon which they depend for survival, e.g. making room for industry feeding the wasteful acts of those more privileged, or as differences in standard of living remain or increase.

[241] http://www.wfp.org/hunger Accessed: 10. February 2017.

Wasting food unnecessarily also displays a lack of respect for food as the prerequisite for human life, its source, and as such also of fellow human beings and other species. It represents an estrangement from the very state of being a human. Unnecessary waste is thus antisocial on this profound level as well, even if none of the households I studied renounced the ideal that wasting food is inherently wrong in discourse.

A Deeply Embedded Economic Field of Value

The environmental damages our consumption levels contribute to are now known to us. Current consumption and waste levels cause unnecessary strain on our natural surroundings, locally and globally. Current Western-lifestyles are deemed as unsustainable, and currently spreading to the most populous countries on Earth. Production and consumption levels contribute to de-forestation, drought, pollution, emissions etc., all factors influencing global climate change negatively (See e.g. Stuart 2009). In this wake follows social challenges like e.g. unrest, conflict and migration. Thus, current waste practices are also antisocial on a global, environmental and social level as they contribute to endangering the very sustenance of livelihood on the planet, representing a lack of solidarity with future generations, both of humankind as a species and other earthly life. These thoughts are not new. Karl Polanyi (2001:xxv [1944]) argued that the attempt to split economic activities from a balance of mutual considerations cannot take place without ruining the basis of livelihood in a very short period of time. He argued that an economy disembedded from the non-economic activities in a society, as attempted by the establishment of a free, self-regulating market, cannot exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of the society.

This perspective resonates with the argument about alienated consumers made in chapter 12, as the concept of disembeddedness can be used to analyse the current economic activities of our households. Particularly interesting is the challenge to re-connect different levels of scale, achieving reflection around the aggregated levels, consequences of individual wasteful acts and the ability to influence the current state of affairs. Differences in scale make it harder for household members to see their own actions as part of a larger whole, to connect the levels. The large-scale conditions and the aggregated consequences of their local food practices and priorities appear distant and difficult to fathom, and disregarding and denying these consequences is one known strategy (Nordgaard 2011). This split concerns the relation between wasteful and

excessive individualised household practices and larger scale contemporary environmental concerns. The sprawling, global infrastructures amplify this gap; structures made up by abstract relations and entities that in sum make up the whole food cycle, filled with standardized, serialised commodities where traces of labour are removed.

However, building on the findings in Chapter 11 on e.g. price dominance for the valuation of food, economic motivations for waste reductions and individualistic resource management perspectives, I don't find that we are experiencing a disembedded economy (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). I rather find that a discourse of a liberal economic market logic is deeply embedded in several other aspects of society. This logic has penetrated, even colonized, other social spheres towards a state of naturalisation. Much of the economic activity in our households can appear atomistic, detached and disembedded from other societal concerns and aspects, but my empirical material suggests differently. It points towards the logic, concepts and perspectives of the household economy being deeply embedded in several other aspects of everyday actions rather than being separated, operating completely on its own terms, both amongst local households and in society at large. Considering the influence of the economic sphere on contemporary, local household practices and mind-sets, the empirical material points towards a deeply embedded and dominant paradigm of economic rationality. Encompassing dominance appears to be a more precise description than a state of disembeddedness (ibid.). Local practices on gifting also show how social systems of gift exchange are still important and intertwined with household economics, a resisting, remaining counterforce to this dominance. The dimension of dominance also relates to the argument about the present state of alienation and the scalar gaps.

I argued that most households in this study are alienated from the larger food cycle, generally acting in terms of an individually focused and economically rational perspective on their resource management. Consider for instance 1) the strong ties between price and practice in the households, food was primarily valued by its purchasing price, cheap food being more expendable, 2) how potentially lower waste levels were mainly motivated by economic gains in the households, and 3) how the aggregated levels of waste households produced was seldom reflected upon. We also see how households pressed for time spend more than they need on food, with waste as a consequence, rather than invest time in managing their food more diligently. The food is cheap, so it makes sense to them from an economic point of view. The individual household practices end up supporting large-scale infrastructures with an established

paradigm of economic growth and production. The economic field appears to have subordinated the perspectives of contrasting fields of value (Graeber 2013) to its own logic. It can thus be argued that it is deeply embedded (ibid.) or, if we chose to follow a Dumontian terminology (Dumont 1977, 1986), encompassing the other fields of value.

Value Struggles - Infravalues as Metavalues

Conflicts of interest can arise between the different fields of value, represented by different priorities in household food management and what should be the guiding principles in particular situations, e.g. economic or social concerns, larger ethical or environmental concerns or individual desires. Such power struggles are similar to the tensions that can occur between different levels of scale, for instance the spheres of the individual household and the larger reproductive and lasting cultural collective that both Bloch & Parry (1989) and Polanyi (2001 [1944]) mention. Currently, environmental concerns are in focus, maintaining that the long-term reproduction of mankind is in conflict with more short-term, prominent economic ideals of growth and individual practices of excessive consumption driven lifestyles bringing wastefulness. The current state of consumer alienation is a consequence of and a further amplifying factor of dominance, and this requires an examination of what values that dominate, in what way, and how they relate to each other.

In Chapter 12 I discussed the split of person and thing - the creation of the market. This split allows for a gradual shift of focus from use-value towards exchange-value and price, as postulated by Marx (1990 [1867]). Exchange-value and price becomes the fundament of valuations, fostering commodity fetishism and the rise of a modern desire and wants-based consumerism. In a resource situation dominated by excess and waste, the role of food as a necessity to create and sustain human life has become secondary, with antisocial consequences on several levels. For instance, if food becomes scarce locally, we can expect the current world-view, values and practices to be challenged. Currently, when an economic focus on growth is challenged by scientific results pointing towards the negative influence on climatic changes on Earth. In the political field, debates on what society ought to be like are ongoing. Here different fields of value are fighting each other, vying for dominance. Current debates on climate change, and which actions that should be taken, typically illustrate a situation when fields of value come into conflict. Several of these fields will then lay claims to representing reality (Graeber 2013:232).

In a state and market dominated by capitalist interests, the concerns of the family and household, of the domestic sphere, are often dislodged. They are subordinated to the paradigm of the production of objects and services, the activities of the economic field. Labour and production then pose as a *metavalue*, through a means-end inversion. Maintaining and creating human life, people, then becomes a mean to ensure production and growth. Human lives become a prerequisite, providing labour to ensure production, rather than production being an *infravalue*, a mean to maintain life.

> *"Actually, it is in the domains where labour is not commoditized that we talk not of abstract 'value', but of concrete 'values'. For example, housework and childcare become a matter of 'family values', work for the church a matter of religious values, political activism is inspired by the values of idealism, and so on."* (Graeber 2006:73)

The more hierarchical the society, the ultimate value of the mutual creation and sustenance of life can be disguised. The processes of value-creation get complex and one tends to lose sight of these connections, whether we are talking about economic values grounded in modern capitalism or other ideologically grounded fields are presented as the paradigm. These situated values then define what holds value in societies. This development is also similar to how *infravalues* of society are being presented as *metavalues* (Graeber 2013).

In modern capitalism, claims that employment, production and growth are the overarching goals for human creative actions can emerge, while consumption is heralded as both the path to a life of happiness and a means of social and individual expression (See e.g. Baudrillard 1998 [1970], Featherstone 2007 [1991]). This is a case where an *infravalue* is positing as a *metavalue* (Graeber 2013). The paradigm of profit and economic growth is enshrined into a societal goal (Graeber 2013, Bloch & Parry 1989:29), replacing the sustenance of livelihood. Such a value-orientation is down to a primary allegiance to production, profit and growth, key values in a capitalist economy, enshrining surplus and infinite growth, turning it into a societal goal - *a metavalue.* In this manner, the economic field of value can further assert its dominant position. Due to the current dominance of this paradigm, we now see that an even more crucial split is appearing a rupture with Earth, a rupture with the past ways of human adaptation and the future generations. A human estrangement, a state of alienation (Marx 1988 [1932]) is pinpointed, between people, people and their own creative actions, people and their place in the world and the surrounding natural environment, endangers the future life on Earth.

In our households, the most glaring examples of the dominance of this paradigm are the widespread practices of establishing the value of food primarily according to its price of purchase. We previously heard how wasting rice or pasta was seen as less problematic as it is cheap. Another example is the focus on lowering household costs as the principal motivation for lowering food waste, or the low degree of concern for waste occurring outside their own household or the aggregated levels they contribute towards. The common levels of wasteful food management practices underline this domination, as the affordable food and the continuous and easy access to it caters to current excessive practices, outshining moral and social dimensions. Other local examples show how infrastructure in domiciles, previously used for food management or storage, have been converted to flats to rent out, or where local fishermen and farmers rather opt to let out their rights to fish or their farmland to others. They prioritise obtaining monetary means directly, rather than producing food themselves and then selling it. However, there are fascinating exceptions.

The following case is included here in the conclusive remarks as it is a poignant example from a household that is not alienated, and thus, just as with the local acts of gifting, shows a social practice contrasting the dominant individualistic economic mind-set. It represents an exemption to the dominant practices that simultaneously highlight what they value in this household, and the values guiding these practices and valuations. This case shows an exemption, a counter-practice of a social and human disposition. It shows us how we can reconnect what appears as split. It shows how we can reconnect not only the individual households and their relations to the larger food cycle, and the people contributing to it, and simultaneously connect the individual household and the larger collective concerns of social, economical and/or environmental character.

The Two Packs of Milk - Being Part of Something Bigger

In one household I experienced an exceptional practice that allows us to see the dominant wasteful practices and the underlying values clearer. In addition to accompanying Erika and Roger for shopping runs early in my fieldwork, we discussed their shopping practices one evening during an interview held in their living room. Erika then told me that they wouldn't necessarily pick the packages of milk with the longest expiry date in the supermarket, something that was the norm in all the other households. I found this interesting. She said she would rather pick one with the expiry date furthest into the future, and one that expired in a couple of days, if those were the

two options. Erika reasoned that they knew they were going to use one of them by tomorrow anyway. When I asked her why they did this, she said that otherwise the milk with the shortest expiry date might get thrown away and wasted in the supermarket. There are different analytical points to be drawn from this, dependent on the perspectives one chooses to apply.

First of all, I find that this practice displays a consciousness of how their individual household practices are part of a larger world. Contrary to the common perspectives on households as individual and autonomous economic entities, Erika and Roger appear more connected to what goes on beyond their own household. This practice appears as an unselfish act, an act of salvage, an act that concerns what takes place outside the socially constructed borders of an individual local household. This indicates that Erika and Roger do not see their individual household as a bounded entity, but as a part of something larger. This act also unveils that the borders of their and other so-called autonomous households or household economies are but social constructions.

I see the practice of buying milk in this manner is a manifestation of a more collective perspective on resource management, waste and how waste is accumulated. It shows a perspective that expands their individual consumption practices past the borders of their household, just like the productive and social practices local households take part in through both paid and unpaid labour. Additionally, looking at the food management practices of Erika and Roger, their seasonal provisioning routines, often in bulk, would indicate that in this case, the rupture between producer and user (Godbout & Caillé 1998), the split previously discussed in Chapter 12, is not complete. Thus, Erika and Rogers household and household practices as consumers do not appear to be fully alienated (Marx 1988 [1932]) from others. They seem more involved in the larger food cycle, and as we discussed in Chapter 11, still maintain an approach where food as a resource holds value in itself, inherently, as potential nutrition.

Even after living decades in Tromsø, it appears as Erika and Roger haven't fully embraced the widespread contemporary practices of consumption, one where food mainly takes up the role as a mean to reach other ends. They remain connected to the larger food cycle and conscious of their interdependency of others. This closeness and valuation was manifested through their priority of food management, their seasonal routines of provisioning meat, fish and potatoes in bulk, by picking food closer to the expiry dates, as expressed in this case regarding milk. Erika and Roger also have the sensory knowledge to decide when food is not edible anymore. The loss of sensory

knowledge amongst household members is another indication of an alienated state and increased distance, as household members seem increasingly unable to decide when food is edible or not. Many now depend on abstractions like expiry dates on the packaging. Such loss of knowledge also increases levels of unnecessary food waste. Through well-planned, knowledge-based daily food management routines, food waste was very low in this particular household. The high value they placed on food were shown through their daily food management practices repeatedly, valuations that are further manifestations of their overall values. However, their practices are exceptions. Practices reflecting a more isolated, individualistic perspective on household food management dominated, and giving oneself the largest possible time frame for the potential consumption of food takes priority amongst most other informants when provisioning. Additionally, a desire for the freshest foodstuffs available is the norm due to its perceived higher quality and superior taste, with few regards to potential consequences of waste beyond one's own household.

The approach of Erika and Roger could be an internalized practice learnt through socialization, growing up in a more sparse resource situation, living in closer involvement with the larger food cycle on the combined farms in the countryside. This background has shaped their values and what they value. Current food management practices might not be deeply reflected upon; they have just become the right thing to do. Something that goes without saying, perhaps internalized into their habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) through established and deep-rooted everyday routines maintained from their upbringings. Habituated or not, such acts of salvage or avoiding unnecessary waste are, inherently, social acts.

Food – The Source of Life

I interpret these stand out practices as a manifestation of an awareness of the origin of food and the larger food cycle, where food comes from, where the waste goes and the other people and animals who are also part of this flow. Without them this food would not have existed. A whole range of food practices Erika and Roger conduct with regularity indicate that they have a more holistic perspective on food management and waste. Their perspective extends past their individual household – seeing themselves as part of a larger socio-material totality. Thus buying milk in this manner is also in tune with arguments for balancing individual household practices and larger cultural groups and concerns (Bloch & Parry 1989), be they environmental, social or economic.

Through these acts, Erika and Roger show how edible food is valuable due to its potential use value (Marx 1990 [1867]) as human nutrition. Their valuation is not strongly dependent on the exchange value or price of food, but maintains a focus on food as a necessity for human sustenance and survival. Even on the supermarket shelf, the packs of milk expiring the day after tomorrow hold value to Erika and Roger, and they often buy other foodstuff close to the expiry date, freezing it when arriving home.

Due to its material propensities, food holds a potential use value as nutrition for the living, humans and animals alike. This value remains regardless of the imagined borders of their individual household, if they have already paid for the food or not, if it is in their possession or not. Through their acts and priorities, managing what they value, Erika and Roger manifest their values. These acts of salvage can be interpreted as in accordance with 1) their past socialization and experiences, 2) their current established household practices, and also 3) the imagined future; the intended realization of the value of the milk and other foodstuff as nutrition, through the act of consumption, or the alternative where the milk might be wasted in the supermarket. As they appear to value food as a resource in its own right, the most meaningful course of action for them to manage it properly (Graeber 2001).

Solidarity

A useful perspective for analysis can be to view an individual household economy as a separate field of endeavour, a separate field of value. Such a field can be viewed as a game with its own goals, rules, stakes, boundaries and roles (Graeber 2013), a field that can yet again be split into others. This can be done e.g. by isolating the provisioning phase, the social occasion of meals or the cleaning up phase, as each display their own set of rules and goals, depicted in previous empirical chapters. Certainly, when provisioning at the supermarkets, a key goal among households was generally to obtain "good deals". This implies getting as good value for money as possible in terms of quantity of food, and in terms of its perceived quality and desirability. The differing practices regarding the two expiry dates on milk are practices that transcend the common borders of such a field. Through the practice of treating food as valuable in itself, Erika and Roger, perhaps unintentionally, also show solidarity with those who lack food or struggle to obtain food. Such acts can also be considered acts of solidarity with future generations, as such practices are valuable acts of salvage; social acts that also reduce the strain on the environment.

Unfortunately, Erika and Roger's approach is rather the exception than the rule, one that allows us to see the dominant wasteful food management practices for what they are, excessive and unjust (Graeber 2001:227). So hinging on ones acceptance of this paradigm of environmental concern and a need for sustainability, one that is also ideologically based and politically situated, with contemporary large-scale excess and wastefulness being at odds with it, there is a need for the individual household practices to be subordinated to the reproduction of the large-scale social order (Bloch & Parry 1989:25-26). Such a balance would e.g. entail that the aggregate of household consumption levels on earth must be sustainable in the long run.

We have previously discussed how the task of this project is a highly moral and politically situated one per definition. Based on my empirical findings, I argue that excessive wasteful practices are of an antisocial disposition and manifestations of a current state of human alienation (Marx 1988 [1832]) on a consumer level. This state of alienation is reflected in several manners or levels: from oneself as a human being, from fellow humans and from the surrounding environment, earth as our source of life. The wasteful acts that I deem as antisocial are manifestations of such states of alienation, of human estrangement from both surrounding life and the environment.

Connecting Individual Household Actions to Reinstate Balance

One way of increasing the understanding of sustainability and reconnecting with the larger food cycle ties in with the misleading perception of autonomy. The cord of dependency between people is veiled by modern infrastructures, brought along by the increased standard of living in the households, and manifested through their wasteful practices. Few of the household members I met had much concern for, or even displayed a consciousness around concepts of waste on an aggregated level. Their glance was seldom lifted above the, mainly, economic consequences of the wastefulness of their own household. To minimize this sense of alienation (Marx 1988 [1932]), there is a need to reconnect with the larger food cycle, past one´s own household in both space and time. More specifically, I refer to both what takes place before the food is picked up from the supermarket shelves, and what happens afterwards, with what is disposed of. There is a need to see the actions of one's own households in a larger context, to reconnect and see small-scale, individual household actions as parts of collective on a larger scale, one that extends past the individual household in space (Bloch & Parry 1989) and outlasts it in time.

The story of Erika and Roger buying milk acutely captures the pragmatic simplicity of how some of the challenges related to food waste might be overcome in everyday life, while also capturing these on a more conceptual level. It shows how to reconnect the individual parts of the food cycle, currently dominated by an economic rationality, split from each other, fostering a state of alienation. It is a poignant and very practical example of how one can decrease the distances and reconnect the individual household practices to larger scale cultural concerns and aggregated consequences. It illustrates a manner of managing something often presented as a tension or a conflict; one between the various motivations of the different spheres of society following the veins of discussions about the relation between the individual household and the larger society. (Bloch & Parry 1989:28) argue that these two spheres must not be in conflict, and that the short-term sphere should be subordinated to the long-term sphere concerned with the cycle of reproduction. However, this does not necessarily mean concerns for both cannot be maintained, ensuring sustainability over time, but it appears imperative that the spheres of long-term and short-term concerns remain somewhat associated and aligned with each other.

Related, but in terms of different value-orientations in societies, Polanyi (2001 [1944]) makes a point about the “double-movement”. He describes this concept as an ongoing struggle between social concerns and market liberalisation, like a rubber band tug-o-war. A focus on production, growth and excessive consumption, with the consequences of high waste-levels, and the current unsustainable exploitation can be to the detriment of the collective and social long-term concerns, like maintaining sustainability and managing environmental and social concerns. We have seen how the practices of these individual households and larger scale environmental concerns are indeed connected and influence each other. The increased distance from the whole of the food cycle and the alienated daily practices makes it more difficult to spot the unbalanced and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources on a larger scale. This can be referred to as a scalar gap (Eriksen 2016), and as my empirical material suggests, reducing this gap could be beneficial to reduce waste levels.

However, an inherent conflict between the individual household concerns and larger collective concerns is essentially a manufactured one. These concerns are not necessarily in opposition to one another, nor a zero-sum game. Lowering food waste levels increases the household budgets and does not necessarily lower the pleasures obtained though food consumption. When Erika and Roger buy milk and other resources close to the expiry date, their motivation seems grounded in making the most of food as a resource. They show that the concerns and desires of the individual

households and a larger scale collective do not necessarily have to be in conflict. Norwegian households are currently wasting up to 30% of the food provisioned on average. Consuming more sustainably does not necessarily have to entail a lower standard of living for them, even if a certain amount of thought, time and effort would be required.

Relating to Mauss' "The Gift" (1995 [1924]), Graeber (2001:162) argues that there is no inherent gap between individual and collective interests, and that a western cultural bias makes us assume that these two would automatically be in conflict. It can be in the interests of the food industry to uphold the excessive consumption patterns amongst individual households, and while having an efficient food industry is in the interests of both individuals and society at large, excessive demand and wastefulness on a consumer level have only recently been proclaimed to be collective concerns. Imagine how the concerns of specific groups, e.g. consumer groups, the food industry and its shareholders can clash with collective concerns on a larger scale, be them environmental, related to food safety, animal welfare, or labour exploitation. Parties with invested interests in the different fields of value clash and struggle to assert their view as the dominant, or even true one. In this context we can recall the discussions around the concepts of *infra- and metavalues* (Graeber 2013), of encompassing values and hierarchies of values (Dumont 1977, 1986) or discussions of embeddedness (Polanyi 2001 [1944]) and dominance.

Alienated into a False Sense of Autonomy

The social dimensions of daily food provisioning have changed a lot the last half-century, as exemplified by the historical narratives presented in Chapter 12. Market infrastructures fill vital functions in contemporary large-scale societies. Subsequently, they also create expectations and dependency. A wider, global perspective also dismantles the illusion that contemporary households are autonomous, or that their wasteful practices only have local consequences. The idea of autonomous, individual households is an illusion is based on the gap between producer and consumer, a rupture that the development of the modern market and the state brought, and also aim to fill (Godbout & Caillé 1998).

In the current monetary economy, a sizeable pile of money - the tokens and representations of value, symbolise power and autonomy. A number of factors, like a high standard of living, well-functioning economic infrastructures and markets, and a

monetary system amongst others, ensure that the mutual dependency on other people is masked and hidden. This way, the powerful western cultural ideal of individual autonomy appears intact, and the city households appear to be autonomous through their possession of monetary means. However, this perceived independence only lasts as long as there is still food available on the shelves in the local supermarkets. The lack of autonomy would become visible through the absence of goods.

Through common provisioning practices at local supermarkets, as well as the continuous acts of gifting both within households and between the households on the countryside and in the city of Tromsø, households and individuals are connected All over the world such practices connect people to both other individual households and larger social groups. Through a global food market, their actual and acute dependency on unknown people and their efforts for the majority of their food supply becomes clear. The local cupboards are filled with rice from Vietnam and rye from Russia. The freezers contain berries from Finnmark and beef from Botswana. Household food consumption practices remain parts of larger cycles of production, distribution, consumption and waste. However autonomous these household members might appear or feel, grace to contemporary food-industry and market infrastructures, they are highly dependent on the people behind them, on other people's creative actions. Rather than independence, these are relationships defined by inter-dependence, veiled by distance, infrastructures and differences in scales. Contemporary so-called individual freedoms and autonomy are expressed through the consumption of goods and services provided by people from all over the globe, people mostly unknown to the individual person in question.

People depend on other people, household on household, city on countryside, country on country. Along with geographical distances, the structures of large-scale commodity production, distribution and sale obfuscate this link. Consumers depend on producers. Producers depend on each other to manufacture, distribute and sell their products, even if some connections are made impersonal and slightly anonymous by a market set-up and corporate entities; entities with little to no direct contact, handling serialised and generic products. Considering the global food industry today, a parallel is how the population in cities depend on the countryside, a link still maintained in Tromsø through the local flow of gifts of food in kinship and other close relations.

The Freedoms of the Market

Mary Douglas (1966) argued that there is no free gift, as gifts serve above all to establish and maintain social relations. They foster obligations. Consequently, by a cynic, an intentionally, seemingly altruistic gift can always be interpreted as a way to obtain individual gain. Like Douglas (ibid.), the MAUSS-group also argues that it is impossible for a gift to be completely selfless or purely generous, and that this conception of the gift has roots in ideals conveyed by Christianity (Caillé 1994). For them, these conceptualisations are just ideals. But a corrective is essential here. Just as the gift holds a degree of both the selfish and the selfless, the impersonal market exchange, while creating dependency and hierarchy, also offers freedom from obligations, choice and opportunity:

> *"As modern individuals, we do not question the liberating virtues of the market and the democratic state. There is no nostalgia for the past in these pages, no discreet apologia for a supposedly idyllic world which in any case, no longer exist." (Godbout & Caillé 1998:11)*

A multitude of positives follow in the wake of the development of the modern, sprawling infrastructures of food production and distribution, but they also hold people in a powerful bond of dependency, controlling to a large extent peoples means of survival. They ensure riches of food, steady supplies, increased choice and convenience, and also the opportunity for impersonal transactions without future obligations. On the other hand, the discussed macro-changes in Norwegian society that improved the standard of living radically also appear to have contributed to a rupture, one that I argue is manifested by an alienated state (Marx 1988 [1932]) amongst households. The developments entail this state of alienation amongst multiple participants making up the elements of the food cycle as a whole. There is a rupture between producer and user, as the market and the state as large-scale institutions have been expanded and developed to both create and fit into and fill this gap (Godbout & Caillé 1998, Polanyi 2001 [1944]). This leave fragmented and alienated people in its trail, ever struggling to see their role, place and influences in within the larger picture. A more anonymous exchange has become the norm, one where provisioning of food is dominated by relations of secondary solidarity. This contrasts those of primary solidarity (Godbout & Caillé 1998) filled with social considerations and obligations of reciprocity, of continuous spirals of generosity creating and maintaining bonds.

The freedom of the market, represented by the narrative about the new, modern supermarkets and contemporary purchasing practices in Chapter 12, gives the possibility

of exit through balance – by minimizing the importance of the bond, or abandoning the bond itself (Godbout & Caillé 1998:191). These institutions help give rise to the modern, seemingly autonomous individual. In addition to the market, the state also frees us from social bonds, loosens bonds between family members, neighbours etc. The state removes obligations and takes on responsibility for services that previously were offered and maintained through personal relations in social networks. However, the mercantile world-view sees social ties as a form of constraint (Godbout & Caillé 1998:192), a hindrance to the flow of exchanges making up the market. These constraining practices leaves us with an image of a tug-o-war between forces in a society, akin to the double-movement of a rubber-band described by Polanyi (2001 [1944]). Here the logic of the market pulls in one direction, whereas human social considerations, as exemplified by Erika and Roger´s salvaging practices, or the local flows of gifts of food, remain a counter-force, pulling in the opposite direction.

Surplus and Individual Ownership

Individual ownership and surplus are generally seen as something positive in the cultural discourse of food management. However, both factors can also be perceived as the contrary – a source behind inequality, hierarchy, conflict and violence. When the limits of growth are reached, waste is one of the destructive ways of dealing with surplus, along with e.g. sacrifices, war, waste and excess. Positives also exist, like collective redistribution, aid and donations (Bataille 1991). This relates to the double negative of value, as valuables can also invoke envy and greed, making them a burden for both those who own and for those who desire. Valuables can be wasted, gifted or used excessively to exert dominance, or violence, subordination and war. But surplus and valuables currently being wasted can also be used positively as socially creative acts – as acts of generosity, exchange and re-distribution or politically in diplomacy, acts to create new or improved relations (Graeber 2001).

We saw in Chapter 10 how individual property rights can drive waste, as the ultimate proof of property, possession and dominance is the ability to decide to destroy something or not. Waste and destruction can thus represent dominance and power (Foucault 1982). This was exemplified when Lars questioned Jonas' decision to throw away leftovers from his pasta dinner. His query made Jonas respond: "It is my pasta, God Damn it!" Contrary to this practice, above Erika displayed the ability to see food as holding a potential value in itself, regardless of ownership. This represents a gateway towards solidarity and empathy with those who are hungry, rather than wastefulness

and dominance. We should rather treat not just meals, but also consumption as social acts, as acts fundamental to the creation of human beings, which is what consumption really is (Graeber 2011a:502), and that the creation of material products has always been the means to an end, to the creation of human beings and maintaining life itself. As previously mentioned, this relation is often presented in an opposite manner, through an *infra-metavalue* inversion (Graeber 2013), where people would exist to be labourers and to produce, rather than production being just a mean with the aim of sustaining life.

The Gift - Transcending Borders – Invoking Memory

The analysis in chapter 13 highlighted practices of gifting as a lasting link between people, households and the larger food cycle. These ever-present, alternative local practices are universally social. Social relations are affirmed using food as a material medium, and social relations are manifested through acts of gifting of food (Remme 2012). In this regard, one perspective postulates how the overarching cosmology of a society, its genuine *metavalues,* its purpose, will only be revealed through certain rituals and competitions (Graeber 2013:229-233). This is where society comes into being, and the shared, fundamental ideals are exposed. The local acts of gifting could be interpreted as such a ritual; like the regular flow of fish and other kinds of food between relatives and friends from the countryside to the city, or the sack of potatoes gifted when a new grandchild is born from the introduction.

I illustrated how food acquired through these networks of gifting has a higher threshold for being wasted. The act of gifting creates a stronger social and moral obligation to avoid wasting this food. This is connected to the social relation it has been obtained through. This personal dimension of the exchange has been attempted removed completely through the developments of the modern market (Mauss 1995 [1924], Graeber 2001, 2014).

Gifts, like the sack of potatoes following direct downward kinship lines between close relatives, and current acts of salvage and non-excessive consumption to the benefit of the future generations on earth, can be considered social acts that transcend, if not time, certainly generations. But similarly, the widespread excessive provisioning and wastefulness could also be interpreted as a fundamental and shared ideal promoted by political leadership and corporations alike to maintain levels of economic activity with lasting consequences. However, when consumers buy excessive amounts of food

and subsequently waste it, this basically contributes to a flow of profits towards the previous steps in the value chain. These consumption practices represent a good example of an *infravalue* presenting itself as a *metavalue* of society (Graeber 2013), as excessive consumption to maintain production and profit levels, rather than production to cover people's needs for consumption.

We also saw how gifts can be reminders of how humans are connected, individually and also to the larger society and the world. Acts of gifting food anchor humans, and create obligations that transcend the gap between user and producer, between man, animal and nature. These acts also connect people through time, linking past, present and future generations. The current around the clock availability of all kinds of foodstuffs from all over the world, regardless of seasons of the year, in seemingly endless amounts, adds to a short-term perspective which fuels a sense of disposability, with subsequent excessive disposal and waste levels. The gift however invokes memories of obligations and relations. The act of gifting is a genuinely human act, and act that has the ability to both maintain and reinstate humanity in the cosmos (Godbout & Caillé 1998:218).

Exchanges of gifts are also seen as a precursor to the current market-dominated, formal modes of exchange (Mauss 1995 [1924]) ruled by of relations of secondary solidarity (Godbout & Caillé 1998), impersonal relations within an infrastructure where actors are interchangeable. Gifts help us identify steps in the past developments and to see the current modes of distribution and social relations in a critical light (Graeber 2001). They indicate that the splitting of person and thing is a futile endeavour, as traces of human creative actions will somehow remain. Discounting such history would entail an exchange with no producer or provider, no giver, no recipient - an object without history. The social dimensions that attach themselves through acts of gifting and sharing are the reminders of an alternative to the alienated disconnectedness and the prevalent antisocial wastefulness. Just like the case about two packs of milk sheds a critical light on widespread wasteful practices, the gift also allows us to see the current dominant practices as unjust (Graeber 2001:227) and antisocial. Practices of gifting also highlight the contributions of other people and animals towards the creation of these gifts of food, hollowing out the claims of individual autonomy. These local acts of gifting are not alienated practices, but socially grounded ones.

The gifts between close relatives and friends act as reminder, highlighting the bond between individual households, creating them, maintaining them. Locally, people maintain these gift-giving strategies that infiltrate the gaps in the formal systems of

market and state, strategies that can transcend the presumed opposition between the individual and the collective, underlining the individual's part of a larger, concrete entity (Godbout & Caillé 1998:14). The act of gifting transcends the borders both between individuals and seemingly independent households. A social element in the exchange is maintained and exemplified through the redistribution of food harvested in bulk locally, be it fish, berries, potatoes or meat. These are not the acts of isolated, alienated individuals, but acts of social creativity (Graeber 2014) in several ways; creating social bonds and relations, creating and maintaining life, creating and shaping the body physically, also pointing out how food transgresses the conceptual socio-material dichotomy. Mauss (1995 [1924]) claims that the social act of gifting does not just obey the logic of rational self-interest, but also a primal logic of empathy, where the tension between self-interest and disinterestedness, between obligation and freedom overlaps. The social bond and the gift are both; the individual and society, the material and social, not entities, but parts of each other that are mutually constitutive and interdependent.

And even though the gift can also be used in manners of dominance, manipulation and calculation, acts of gifting also remind us how a purely mercantile perspective on exchange is an attempt to atomise and objectify the world. Human relationships and the bonds between humans and the world are attempted reduced into impersonal object-relations of exchange through monetary means, split from the people involved in the production and distribution of the objects. These local acts of gifting however, reconnect the involved with the origin of food, both naturally and socially. The previous phases in the food cycle are given both a place and a face. These gifts are fundamental social and human act, of sharing and redistributing food, the necessity for life. Thus, through its social dimension, this also reconnects the consumer with the potential use value of food in essence, as human nutrition, disconnected from valuations dominated by price, and concepts and logics of the mercantile sphere. This is no clearer than in communistic, open-ended, lasting relations where gifts flow back and forth without calculation, what Mauss labels as *total prestations* (1995 [1924]) and the spontaneous act of the first gift and its origin. This was discussed in Chapter 13, where I interpreted some of the local practices of gifting as relations of *total prestations* (ibid.). In such relations, one gives without a view to a return. It is a flow of generosity between people in close relations, viewed as endless, as permanent. These are local practices where surplus food is redistributed rather than wasted, while also affirming social relations. The practices show how a social dimension is key to avoiding waste as the household members are connected rather than alienated in their practices. These local acts of gifting show how one can maintain and reconnect what has been alienated and

split: 1) humans and nature, acknowledging the origin of food and food as the source of life, and 2) humans with each other, acknowledging and seeing oneself as part of a larger collective, a society, rather than as individual households. Such social practices can enable us to alter perspectives, from an alienated state towards a rediscovery of the inherent value of food as potential nutrition, as a mean to create and maintain life. Thus, we can acknowledge our mutual dependency on nature and each other, bringing us closer towards avoiding unnecessary and antisocial wasteful practices.

The local flow of food from the countryside to the city, these everyday inherently social and human acts where people often give without the view to a return, maintaining a spiral of generosity in close relations, are reminders of the alternative to the dominant market discourse of exchange relations, individualism and hierarchy (Mauss 1995 [1924], Godbout & Caillé 1998). These practices point towards one possible solution to current wastefulness, one where reducing the alienation and distance between the actors involved in the food cycle is central. In that process, we can also increase the consciousness about the origin of the food we depend on and the creative actions behind it. Rather than continuing to waste our present surplus, this local flow reminds us of the need for a connection and balance between individual and collective concerns. The flow illuminates the importance of working towards a redistribution of resources on a larger global scale, without a view to a return. Such social acts would benefit the poor and the hungry, as well as the environment, and even the personal economy of each individual household.

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Appendix

Appendix A - Letter of Invitation (In Norwegian)

Studie - Kasting av mat i husholdningene

Mitt navn er Tommy Ose, og jeg er ansatt som forsker ved Statens Institutt for Forbruksforskning og skal gjennomføre et forskningsprosjekt om kasting av mat. Målsetningen er å skaffe økt kunnskap om ulike årsaker til at det kastes mat i vanlige husholdninger. Prosjektet er finansiert av Norsk Forskningsråd og gjennomføres i samarbeid med NOFIMA(Matforsk) og Østfoldforskning. Datainnsamlingen skal skje under et opphold i Tromsø fra slutten av april og ut 2011.Dette arbeidet skal bunne ut i en doktorgradsavhandling ved Universitetet i Oslo.

I denne forbindelse er jeg interessert i å komme i kontakt med husholdninger her i Tromsø som er villige til å ta del i prosjektet som informanter. Dette fordi jeg er avhengig av deltakere som er villige til å vise og fortelle meg om hva de gjør for å få fatt i kunnskap som til slutt kan bidra til at det kastes mindre mat som kunne vært spist.

Eksempler på relevante tema for prosjektet er alle mulige rutiner og holdninger i tilknytning til mat og behandling av denne. Det kan være alt fra planlegging av innkjøp, organisering, innkjøp, utpakking og oppbevaring, tilbereding, spising, håndtering av rester og kasting. Typiske spørsmål som opptar meg kan være: Spiser hele familien stort sett sammen? Er det samme person som lager mat som også handler inn? Hvordan forholder du deg til datostempling?

En fin måte å starte på er f.eks. at jeg blir med når dere skal handle mat, eller at vi møtes for en prat rundt rutinene i husholdet deres.

Alle aktiviteter avtales på forhånd når deltakerne har tid og mulighet, og skjer på deres premisser. All deltagelse er selvsagt frivillig, og all informasjon blir anonymisert og behandlet konfidensielt. I de tilfeller hvor lydopptak anvendes vil det bli avtalt på forhånd, og opptakene blir slettet så fort arbeidet med prosjektet er fullført.

Temaet er viktig siden produksjon og transport av matvarer og avfallshåndtering er en betydelig miljøbelastning, i tillegg til at sløsing med mat fremstår som uetisk i en verden hvor mangle sulter. Det er også store penger å spare for den enkelte husholdning. Reduksjoner i kasting av mat er derfor viktig både på et lokalt og globalt nivå.

Ta kontakt hvis du er interessert i å delta, eller bare ønsker å slå av en prat for å få vite mer om prosjektet. Jeg vil uansett følge opp henvendelsen og ta kontakt for en prat med de husstandene som har mottatt brevet i den neste uka.

Her er min side hos SIFO:
http://www.sifo.no/page/Ansatte//10037/76287.html

Ønsker du å lese mer om prosjektet kan du også gå inn på denne siden:

http://www.nhomatogdrikke.no/getfile.php/ForMat/FAKTAARK_ForMat_screen.pdf

Vennlig hilsen

Tommy Ose
tommy.ose@sifo.no
Åsveien 40a, Tromsdalen
Mobil: xx xx xx xx

Appendix B – Interview guide (Norwegian)

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Intervjuguide
Oppdragsgiver: SIFO
Tema: Food Waste
Moderator: Tommy</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Introduksjon/Oppvarming
Fortell om målsetning og rammer for samtalen, konfidensialitet.

Generelt
Hvor mange bor det i husholdet?
(Boligtype/tid de har bodd der?)
Hvor langt er det fra arbeidsstedet ditt til hvor du bor?
Hva jobber du med?
Fortell meg litt om hvilken bakgrunn du kommer ifra. (foreldre, klasse, utd. Sted)
Nabolaget i Tromsdalen/Tromsø som by

Jeg er jo tilflytter – kan du beskrive nabolaget er for meg? (Evt. byen?)
- Liker dere å bo her? Hva er bra med å bo her?
- Sammenlign med der dere har bodd før/er ifra?
- Folk der ift andre bydeler
- Særtrekk
- Forskjeller innad i dalen?
- Lojalitet til butikker, folk, bydelen? Ekornsenteret?
- Var det vanskelig å flytte derifra?
- Dugnadsånd? Sparketur?
- Delingspraksiser i nabolaget – ift. Frukt, bær, fisk etc.</td><td>Merknader:

Husk å probe på interessant ting som dukker opp under samtalen</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Å handle matvarer – Innkjøp</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

	Se for deg at du er ute og **handler** mat i en av **butikkene** du **vanligvis** handler i. Kan du fortelle **hvordan** du/dere **vanligvis** går frem når du/dere handler mat. (Oppfølging ved behov: Planlegges innkjøpene? Hvordan? Hvor mange dager handler dere for?. Hva skal dere ha til middag den neste uka?) Har dere alltid hatt et slikt kosthold? Hva fikk dere til å endre det? Hvor **ofte** handler du matvarer? **Når** på dagen(situasjon)? (Helg/på vei hjem?) **Hvor** handler du? **Probe:** Ulike steder, ulik anledning, ulik person Hvor **mange** butikker handler du vanligvis matvarer i? Hvor **langt unna** ligger butikken du handler oftest i? Er det lett å bare stikke bortom hvis du mangler noe? Har du bodd andre steder hvor butikken var lengre unna? Fortell! Hva hadde det å si? Planlegging/Organisering: **(hvis flere personer) Snakker du/dere sammen** med andre medlemmer i husstanden først/**avklarer**? Hva evt? - Sjekker du **kjøleskapet** før du handler? - Lager du **handleliste**? **(hvis flere personer)** Er det **samme person** som handler som lager mat? Hvis nei - hvordan **planlegges** handlingen da? Tenker du **holdbarhet** på enkelte varer? **Pakningsstørrelse**? Fortell. **Kjøper du inn** slik at du har det du **har lyst på** til en hver anledning? Forklar litt rundt dette.	

	(hvis flere personer) Når dere handler mat, tar dere **ulike hensyn** til ulike **husholdsmedlemmer** ift. produkter dere kjøper? Har dere **eksempler**? Fortell. Hvis du skal prøve å gjette hvor mye **matutgiftene** utgjør i % av **totalinntekten** i husholdet, hvor mange **%** tror du de er på? Har du/dere satt opp et **husholdningsbudsjett**? (Har du/dere **kontroll** på hvor mye som brukes på mat?) - Har det noen gang vært **vurdert å lage budsjett**? Når/hvorfor? **Terskel for endring av praksis** Har dere/du opplevd endringer i livssituasjon eller antall som bor i husholdet, endringer i inntekt o.l som har bidratt til endrede vaner? Har dere hatt bedre eller dårligere økonomi før? Endrede vaner og rutiner? Konkret? **Utveksling av ressurser** – by og land – slekt, nettverk Fisk som inngang – kjøper dere all fisken dere spiser i butikken? Bær? Andre ting som høstes? Er det mat dere spiser som ikke er kjøpt i butikken? Fortell! Lager dere ting, saft, brød, syltetøy, fiskemat etc? Kjøper dere slakt? Arbeid/innsats og kasting av slike ting? Hvor mye tid bruker dere på: å handle/lage mat? Planlegging – hvor mye tid trengs for å planlegge innkjøp og matlaging? Hvordan var dette tidligere? Annerledes?	

	Matlaging **Fortell om kostholdet deres – hva spiser dere på en vanlig dag? Og i helgen? (**Kulturelle faktorer – slanking, mat fra bunnen av etc.) Lages det **ulik mat** til ulike familiemedlemmer? Barn? Fortell. Hvor henter de kunnskap fra om mat og matvaner? Hva påvirker? Hvordan vil du si at du lager mat sammenlignet med dine foreldre? Når du/dere **lager** mat - er det noe dere alltid får for mye av/som er **vanskelig** å **porsjonere** opp? **Rester** Dere/Du har akkurat spist middag, og det er **mat igjen**. Fortell meg hva dere vanligvis gjør da/med maten. **Probe**: **Ulik praksis** ulik mat? **Forskjell** på personer i husholdet? - Når spises restene? Eller ikke? Å spise opp det man har tatt på tallerkenen? Lærer man barna det? Gjør dere det?	
	Arbeidsdeling **a) Flerpersonshushold.** Hvem **planlegger** innkjøpene? - **Hvorfor** er det slik? Fortell. Alltid vært slik? **Hvem handler** stort sett maten hos dere? - **Hvorfor?** Probe: fordeling/struktur. **Hvem lager** de ulike **måltidene** hos dere? Er det **forskjeller** i hvordan dere **lager mat**/gjør klart til måltider? Fortell. **Hvem** kaster **minst** mat av dere?	

	Hva? Hvorfor? Og hvorfor kaster X **mest**? Ulik terskel? Hva er dere mest **uenig** i ift. **mat og måltider**? Hvorfor? Hva er dere **mest uenig** i når det gjelder **mat som kastes**? Hvorfor? Kan dere huske en gang dere var **uenige** om hva som skulle **kastes**? Fortell! **b) Kasting – en-persons hushold** **Hvorfor** tror du at det **kastes** mat? Fortell. **Kaster** du mye mat? Hvorfor/hvorfor er det ikke slik? For å få din **husholdning** til å **kaste mindre** mat – kan du nevne **tre** ting som du ville **endret på**. Hva? Forklar. **Forskjeller mellom generasjoner (hvor passer dette ift. Hvilken type info man før avh av sted….)** Fortelle om hvordan man forholdt seg til mat når man vokste opp. Hva gjorde foreldrene dine annerledes enn dere? Fortell om foreldrene dine – hva gjør de annerledes enn dere? Og besteforeldrene? Hva kan du huske? **Kasting av mat** Hvorfor tror dere at det kastes mye mat i N. i dag? Prøv og husk tilbake, hva **kastet** du av mat **sist**? (Og med det mener jeg mat som på et eller annet tidspunkt kunne vært spist.) - **Hvorfor** havnet den i søpla? **Grenser** Hva er greit å kaste, hva er ikke greit?	

	Når er noe søppel og ikke spiselig lengre? Eksempler? Forskjellig praksis blant ulike medlemmer i husholdet? Hva avgjør om noe skal kastes eller ikke? Hvordan går de fram? Mellomtilfeller(vafler av gammel melk etc.) Kvaliteten på maten de kjøper – hvordan oppleves den? Eksempler på ting de har måttet kaste etter at de har kjøpt det og så fant ut at det var dårlig? Varetyper? Hva var galt? Hvilke typer matvarer tror du at du **kaster mest av**? (3 typer) - **Hvorfor** tror du at det er de typene du kaster mest av? Fortell. Er det **mattyper** som det **oppleves verre å kaste** enn andre? Hvorfor? Forklar! **Probe: Pakninger** - eksempler på bra/dårlige pakninger. Er det **tider på året** det kastes **mer** mat enn andre? Når? Hva? Hvorfor? Er det **anledninger**(les: grilling, fest, jul, hytta etc) hvor det **kastes** mer mat enn andre? Hvilke? Hvorfor det? **Rydding** Hvor ofte **rydder** du i **kjøleskapet**/fryseren, eller matskapet? Hva er det som gjør at du **setter i gang** med slik "rydding"? Kan du huske ting du har kastet i slik opprydding? Hva? **Hvorfor** endte dette i søpla tror du?	
	Informasjon - kunnskap **Datomerking** Fortell meg om **datomerkingen** på matvarer. Hva gjør du når du finner mat som har **gått ut på dato hjemme?** Hva **kaster** du/kaster du **ikke**? **Ser** du? **Lukter** du? **Smaker** du først? Hva kaster du med en gang uten å sjekke? Er det ting du **kaster**	

	når det er kort tid til det går ut? **Kunnskap** Hvor henter du inspirasjon fra når det gjelder mat? Hvor får du kunnskap om mat og håndtering av mat ifra? **Teknologi** Vil du vise meg **kjøleskapet** ditt? Har du oversikt over alt som er her? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke det? Kastet i det siste? Har du/dere **fryser**? Hva bruker du den til? Fortell. Evt. Hva er i **fryseren** din nå – vis meg hva du har. Kastet i det siste?	
	Avhending Hvor **ofte** vil du si at du **tømmer** søpla? Kan du beskrive prosessen? Hva er det som får deg til å tømme søpla? Annet enn at posen er full... Probe: Kastes posen så rett i bossdunken(med en gang)? **Kildesortering** Sorterer du søppelet? Tror du det at man har sortering av matavfall påvirker hvor mye mat du kaster? Forklar. Hvorfor etc? **Matsøppel** Vise meg matsøpla din/deres – fortell meg hva vi ser her, og hvorfor det havnet her?	
	Avslutning Takk for innsatsen!	

Appendix C – ”Waste Diary” (In Norwegian)

”SØPPELDAGBOK”

DATO/KLOKKA	HVA BLE KASTET AV HVEM?	HVORFOR ENDTE DETTE I SØPLA? FORSLAG TIL HVORDAN DETTE KUNNE VÆRT UNNGÅTT?