

Subversive Eating

*Hegemony and counter hegemony in Swedish
dietary politics*



For Alexis

Abstract

Moving between hegemony and counter hegemony this thesis adds to the field of food politics by contributing to a further understanding of current hegemonic relations within this topic and counter-hegemonic theory in general. In the form of an interview study it draws upon the narratives of radical leftist activists in Lund and Malmö in order to outline a hegemonic framework within food politics in Sweden. By arguing that contemporary dietary hegemony is constituted by discourses that produce specific body ideals and eating disorders, the author suggests that hegemonic reality plays into an agenda of subjective differentiation; safeguarded by societal systems such as capitalism, sexism, racism and speciesism. Moreover, the workings of power are examined in order to conceptualize how hegemonic norms are enforced, as well as to provide a theory of agency that fits counter-hegemonic goals. Finally, the thesis consults the interview narratives in providing examples of counter hegemony within this hegemonic framework. The argument states that counter hegemony is possible, but characterized by ambivalence and paradoxes.

Keywords: hegemony, counter hegemony, eating, food politics, sovereignty, digestivity

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Foreword

The writing of this thesis has coincided with an incredibly turbulent period in my life. In January my partner Maria delivered a little piece of future in our child Alexis. This experience has not only given us backache and a very fragmented sleeping schedule, it has also provided existential insights that I doubt any other life event may transmit. Furthermore it has multiplied my conviction that our contemporary relationship to food has to change, so that the next generation will not have to deal with the self-hate and eating disorders of today. With this said, I would like to extend my dedication of this text to Nelia, Alice, Ezra, Rupert, Naemi and all other children of the future, who hopefully will have much easier and less complex relationships to food than their parents and grandparents had.

Firstly, I'd like to thank Maria for the extraordinary patience that you have had during the writing of this thesis and the countless sacrifices you've made in order for me to be able to finish my writing. Moreover, for all the proof reading and the many invaluable comments you've provided. Secondly, I am grateful to my other children, Pysen and Flizan, for their emotional support in early mornings and late afternoons, and much-needed distraction. Also, thank you Jens, Moa and Philip for your many read-throughs as well as intelligent and constructive commentary, Molly for lending me your literary eye and your extensive knowledge of the English language, and the rest of my fantastic family and friends for support and making life worthwhile.

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1 Introduction

Eating is not only a practice vital to the survival of all living things, but the very process where the other is incorporated into the self and the dividing lines between external and internal become blurred. When we eat, the hard fought for mental boundaries between ourselves and the rest of the world are compromised, leaving, for a brief moment our existence open for reinterpretation. One cannot speak of this as a process of absorption, as the self is not unharmed by this forceful event; since as much as the self alters the form of the other through eating, the other changes the composition of the self; in the most obvious sense because the building blocks of the food become building blocks of the body. In Chad Lavin's words: "we are not only what we eat but also what eats us" (Lavin, 2013, xvi). This is the cause of a radical fear integral to the eating process: the fear of losing control over the border between the self and the outside world. Since to lose this control would mean the loss of subjective integrity (Bildtgård, 2002, 18).

Therefore, for ideologies based on the individual agency anchored in the self-determination and discreteness of the self, the establishment of control over the eating process has been of paramount importance. Particularly, as I demonstrate, in liberal ontology where controlling the eating process becomes a question of "to eat or be eaten". In this sense, what we eat, how we eat and the context of our eating have the potential of radically altering our subjectivities and our experience of reality. Consequently, it's no surprise that food politics has become a central node in the discursive-ideological struggle.

Much of the inspiration for this thesis came from my reading of Lavin's *Eating Anxieties: The Perils of Food Politics* (2013). Lavin's argument intrigued me and left me full of wonder, at the same time that I felt frustrated by the picture of contemporary food politics that it provides. The experience consequently led to a need of being able to do something for the betterment of this reality; and since the discussion held by Lavin on the potential of overthrowing current relations didn't entirely satisfy me, I decided to investigate the topic further. After having conducted some fascinating interviews surrounding subversive food

activism in Sweden I was determined to ask: *What is the nature of Swedish dietary hegemony? And, how does counter-hegemonic food politics work within this framework of hegemony?*

Here, I use a definition of hegemony provided by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2014; 1985). For them the process of *articulation* is the establishment of particular relations between *elements* into *moments*. Where an element is a social position previously unfixed by articulatory practice, and a moment is an element fixed through articulation. *Discourse*, in these terms, is the structured totality of such moments (ibid. 91). According to Laclau and Mouffe, there is nothing that can be perceived that is not articulated through discourse. Discourse is all-consuming (ibid. 93). Importantly though, the argument goes that no moment is ever complete; an element can never be fully fixed since meaning is *contingent*, that is, possible but not necessary (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 25). *Objectivity* is seen as the final outcome of historical and political struggles over meaning, in other words, “sediment discourse”. *Hegemony* in turn comes in between the objective and the political, as a filter, which suppresses some interpretations in favor of a dominant perspective (ibid. 36-37). Hegemonic relations can in this context be seen as heavily protected ideas of how to interpret reality that are little contested.

Counter hegemony, on the other hand, is this minor but contesting force to hegemony. As contingency is a necessary attribute to all articulatory practice, including hegemony, it is a field of struggle rather than anything else. Counter hegemony, as I use it, could be likened with Laclau and Mouffe’s concept of *antagonism*, which is the presence of discursive alternatives that delimits the sphere of objectivity (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014 (1985), 108). Simply put counter hegemony, in my argument, is the challenging of hegemonic forms of the interpretation of reality.

This thesis aims to provide a contemporary example of counter hegemony within Swedish food politics. Furthermore, by doing this, my hope is to contribute to a broader understanding of counter-hegemonic politics in general. However, in order to accomplish such a thing, one first has to provide an understanding of existing hegemony (chapter 2, 5, 6) and its historical roots (chapter 3). As for the greater argument, I have, together with radical leftist activists, conducted a series of semi-structured interviews, which function as the empirical source of the study. These interviews include both narratives of hegemonic food politics as well as examples of subversive activism. On the one hand, I claim that these narratives suggest that current hegemony in food politics helps secure the idea of the sovereign subject, and on the other, that counter hegemony is indeed possible within such a hegemonic reality. However, I argue that the nature of this counter hegemony is very complex and full of paradoxes and ambivalence.

In chapter two I supply the theoretical foundation of the thesis. I discuss two central concepts for understanding contemporary hegemony in food politics and counter hegemony in this setting; namely the idea of the “sovereign subject”, understood here as the absolutely opaque self-entity, which figures independently of the outside world and that I argue is fundamental in liberal conceptions of the world. This is something that, as I return to in later chapters, is constituted around a fetishism of difference underlying oppressive systems such as speciesism, capitalism, racism and sexism. Moreover, I argue that the concept of the “digestive subject” – the absolutely transparent self-entity constantly permeated by the outside world –, borrowed from Lavin, constitutes an anti-thesis to this sovereign subject. As I argue that hegemonic (liberal) food politics leans heavily on the concept of the sovereign subject, the digestive subject in turn becomes a signifier for counter hegemony. While these two concepts represent ideal types and fail to completely capture the nature of either hegemony or counter hegemony, they act as guiding tools in the exploration of this field. Moreover I introduce a theory of counter hegemony inside a hegemonic framework, which I return to in chapter seven.

In the third chapter, I retrace the history of Swedish food politics and link it to a larger western historical narrative. I claim that the control of people’s eating has been an ongoing discursive struggle throughout history.

The fourth chapter discusses the methodological approach of the study. I introduce the concept of digestive epistemology as a way of relating to the knowledge production process. Moreover I position myself in this study and perform critical reflexivity concerning the power relations involved. I also argue for the relevance of the interview participants to the research.

In the fifth chapter I engage with the interview material in order to approach the current hegemony in food politics on a micro level; that is, I trace the narratives of the interview participants to illuminate what consequences hegemonic relations toward food entail on a daily basis. Furthermore, I identify the specific groups that are particularly affected by the status quo.

Chapter six proceeds by turning to the macro level. With help from the interview participants, I identify the main constituting societal systems of these hegemonic relations. I discuss the ways in which capitalism, speciesism, racism and sexism combine in order to act as an intersectional safeguard, producing and shielding the notion of the sovereign subject.

In chapter seven, I examine this bio political production in greater detail, focusing on how different social control mechanisms actively shape the subjects of food hegemony. I draw on the narratives of the interview participants in order to identify a few key mechanisms through

which hegemony is reproduced as well as provide a theoretical framework for explaining subject formation and agency within hegemony.

Chapter eight then turns to the activism described throughout the interviews. I ask in which ways these activism can be seen as counter-hegemonic, while I, at the same time, explore the ways in which they contribute to the reproduction of hegemonic norms and discourses. I highlight the paradoxes of these attempts of counter-hegemonic politics within a hegemonic framework and argue that the nature of counter hegemony is full of ambivalence.

To conclude, in chapter nine, I sum up my argument and propose some questions for further research.

As much as this is a study in subject formation in relation to food, it's also an ethnographic study of food politics within a political space, which is in some ways extreme and peripheral. The study aims to draw upon the experiences and narratives of the interview participants in order to outline how activism engage in the contingencies of hegemonic discourses. In other words, by investigating the interview participants' relation to hegemonic food politics, the study seeks to analyze counter hegemony in this field today. It should foremost be interpreted as this; an empirical contribution that highlights already formulated theories. However, in the process it offers some "food for thought" concerning established ideas in the field.

2 Theoretical foundations: Sovereignty and the digestive subject

What is at stake in food politics is evidently not just nutrition and economy. Food politics contributes to our fundamental understanding of the world. How does the human subject relate to others? And is there even a human subject to begin with? In this part I touch upon these questions as well as introduce the two key concepts that this study builds upon; firstly, the “sovereign subject”, and secondly, the “digestive subject”. Moreover I introduce a theory of how counter hegemony might be possible within hegemonic frameworks, from which the study departs. This chapter seeks to lay a foundation for understanding this study. Additional literature will be discussed throughout the thesis.

I admit that defining the concept of *sovereignty* is far from easy, and something that social science have struggled with for a long time. Furthermore, following Jens Bartelson, sovereignty is historically open and contingent rather than stable and fixed (Bartelson, 1995). Therefore I shall not try to produce an elaborate answer to the issue of what sovereignty is, but simply provide a rough definition in order to make my argument understandable. With this said, I contemplate sovereignty as a state of radical separation from surrounding elements, where outside influence on the sovereign entity is minimal. In this sense, the *sovereign subject* is self-constituting and independent from the external, establishing a firm border between self and other. As we shall see, the extreme form of the sovereign subject is a theoretical impossibility as all subjects are produced through external workings of power. However it represents a powerful political myth that shapes our perception of reality and hegemonic liberal political ontology.

There are several reasons why the *sovereign subject* is vital to the liberal political ontology, which today appears hegemonic. Hegemonic in that, following Laclau and Mouffe, it has come to dominate alone without any serious antagonistic adversaries (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, 48). One of these reasons, as Friedrich Nietzsche points out, is that the sovereign subject offers a mode of individual accountability vital to social contract theory (Lavin, 2013, 54). Another is that it legitimizes a cult of difference, laying the foundation of hierarchic relations between

categories of people and between people and non-people – something that is essential for the idea of proprietary extension of the self in all forms (ibid. 35-7). The fetishism of difference, heavily guarded in liberal society, is moreover the very constituting factor of all forms of categorical oppression (racism, sexism, homophobia et cetera). And the categorical chart, following Anne McClintock, is but a technology of possession for those who control knowledge production (McClintock, 1995, 27, 28). Perhaps most importantly though, the sovereign subject provides a notion of individual agency, and a sense of self-determination that is fundamental in liberal theory.

Lavin's study explains how this connects to food politics. Central to his argument is the assumption that eating anxieties in many ways spring from the ambivalent nature of the act of eating. In this act, as I previously mentioned, one is faced with the utter fragility of the borderscape between the self and the rest of the world, leaving the idea of the sovereign subject vulnerable and on display for anyone to see (Lavin, 2013, xii). This fact, that eating exposes the fallibility of the discrete individual subject, which is at the core of liberal ontology, makes privatization of food a liberal necessity (ibid. 23-46). In short, the true relevance of researching food and eating, according to Lavin, has much to do with how these processes challenges dominant ideas of how we navigate reality through charts of categories, and consequently how society should be organized.

On the other hand, Lavin uses the concept of *digestive subjectivity*, in order to frame a type of being where limits of the self are blurred (Lavin, 2013, 47-69). Contrary to the sovereign subject, by constantly digesting and being digested by the external world, the digestive subject is left totally exposed at all times. This mode of being, therefore, prevents all forms of differentiation as all borders are effectively erased. Through this terminology of digestion it's moreover possible to encapsulate other practices that challenge categorical truths in similar ways, for example migration, labor or the knowledge production process (the latter of which I return to in the next chapter). While for John Locke labor is the process where the individual produces property by transforming pieces of the outside world into pieces of the self, here, following G. W. F. Hegel, labor is a process, like eating, in which both the object and the subject is transformed (ibid. 57). In the same way, migration serves as the absolute threat to national sovereignty since migrating subjects do not simply assimilate into society, but simultaneously alters that society.¹

¹ In global capitalism, this anxiety is multiplied since migrants are asymmetrically included into the nation in order to produce differential groups of cheap and flexible labor (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2013).

The consequences of the enforcement of the idea of the sovereign subject in hegemonic food politics are examined further in chapter three. In the meantime let's address the hypothetical desire to alter hegemonic relations. As Lavin argues that the logical way forward in order to escape the liberal hegemonic prison is to confront it at its weakest links; the sources of ontological anxiety. The politics of food, as Lavin notes, is a possible loophole to a subject characterized by digestivity rather than sovereignty; where the self is seen not as a stable atomized form of life, but rather as one continually permeated by the outside world (Lavin, 2013, xix, 66).

As I elaborate further in chapter five, I argue that counter-hegemonic politics are not limited to alternative discourse in order to pose a threat to hegemony, but can figure inside hegemonic frames. I agree with Lavin that a "posthuman"² digestive political subject is impossibility as long as our political vocabulary remains grounded in liberal notions of humanism; perhaps most importantly when it comes to the concept of agency (ibid. 131). I do however believe that the question is not simply how to come up with new alternative vocabulary, but also how to utilize and transform the existing hegemonic political notions in counter-hegemonic ways. In order to do this, following Saba Mahmood, we first need expand beyond the Kantian moral philosophy that underscores liberal political thought, which emphasizes the following of predetermined rules, in favor of a *positive turn* in moral philosophy, which allows for action to precede the development of an alternative political vocabulary (Mahmood, 2005, 27).

On another note, I question the idea that we need an entirely new set of political concepts in order to realize posthumanist politics. For as Lavin proclaims it's only when a discourse resonates with other successful discourses that it has the possibility of amplification and proliferation (Lavin, 2013, 4). Moreover, Lavin states that discourses become hegemonic when they correspond to people's daily experiences. Therefore, in order to win the struggle of hegemony we must utilize what is already hegemonic. As Laclau and Mouffe point out, just as discourse is never truly open for reinterpretation it's never fully fixed and therefore always contingent. It's thus the struggle over the rearticulation of relatively fixed moments that is the essence of the politics of hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014 (1985), 91-3, 100-1). If one could produce an alternative experience of everyday life through action, preferably in the spaces where liberal hegemony is at its most fragile state, following the logic of Butlerian performativity theory (Butler, 1990, 34, 185-93), one might be able to rearticulate the core

² "Posthuman", in this context, refers to a political subject which is not necessarily limited to the human entity but more inclusive and digestive in its essence.

moments of liberal thought to fit a posthumanist agenda. In this sense a counter-hegemonic political vocabulary could potentially grow out of subversive actions in the borderscape to liberal ontological foundations.

It's on this note that this study departs. If alternative political discourses may in fact form through political action, what do such actions look like? The ambition here is to provide examples of such action, with help of the experiences of interview participants. Furthermore, the study seeks to analyze how these actions, and the discourses in which they figure, resonate with, on the one hand, hegemonic political hegemony, and on the other, a digestive alternative to the humanist condition. In order to do this, it's necessary to understand the realities of the interview subjects and how the politics of food are constituted in present Swedish society. I'm interested not in the blueprints to a digestive politics, but rather the nature of counter-hegemonic struggle in contemporary food politics. Furthermore I hope that such a discussion will contribute to an understanding of counter hegemony writ large.

3 A history of the politics of eating: retracing the ideological aspects of food in Sweden and the western world

In order to understand the present political food climate in Sweden, where this study takes place, I find it necessary to first acquire an understanding of the historical framework. While I found a range of studies focusing on American (mostly USA) history in relation to food, eating and politics, and although there are examples of historical research on political and ideological aspects of food (for instance Marianne Ekström (1990), analyses how social factors implicates food preparation, and Torbjörn Bildtgård (2002), investigates how medical discourse has contributed to the political regulation of Swedish eating), the amount of Swedish research, as far as I know, is rather limited. I hope to alter this state somewhat in this section, while still keeping a larger scope in order to connect Swedish dietary history to a broader western political tradition. Moreover, I hope to prove three things; firstly, that the mobilization of eating habits is a central theme in the history of ideology. Secondly, that the discursive frameworks surrounding our relations to food have gone through several transformations throughout history. And thirdly, that the historical change of how we eat and how we relate to our food is a question of discursive struggle rather than linear progression.

Even though research on the Swedish political history of food indeed seems to be scarce, there is an array of studies examining the political history of health, in particular the history of “people’s health” (*folkhälsa*). People’s health denotes, according to Helena Sandberg, the general health state of the population within a specific geographic area, and therefore should not be mixed up with concepts such as “eugenics” or “national health” (Sandberg, 1999, 4). These studies make up most of the local knowledge drawn upon in this historical narrative. One might then legitimately ask: What has health to do with eating and food? I hope to show here that it’s hard, if not impossible, to speak about food politics in any worthwhile way without pointing out how it relates to other discourses, such as health and body ideals. Moreover, I will mainly draw upon two central works on the history of food politics in the United States, namely

Lavin's *Eating Anxiety* and Charlotte Biltekoff's *Eating right in America: the cultural politics of food and health* (both 2013), in order to locate historical "Swedish" trends in broader western political discourses.

Disciplining appetite and eating is nothing new, as the control of the body through diet was present already in Ancient Greek society (Ekstöm, 1990, 71). According to Biltekoff, following John Coveney, ancient Greeks practiced moderation in relation to the pleasures of food in order to prove the virtues of self-mastery and an ethical self (Biltekoff, 2013, 15). For the ancient Greeks, as Michel Foucault claims, *enkrateia* or "restraint" was what was required in order to constitute oneself as a moral subject (Foucault, 2002 (1984), 35). Likewise, early Christians were obsessed with managing the pleasures of eating, since pleasure was considered a mortal sin. The good Christian would thus achieve ethical superiority by renouncing the bodily passions that food offered (Biltekoff, 2013, 15).

It was not until the sixteenth century that the door opened for population wide food politics in Sweden. With the rise of a central state power, the ideas of state responsibility for disease and death were already at hand (Hogstedt et al. 2005, 23). The collective benefits of people's health were thought to be accompanied by a collective responsibility through the state (Sundin, 2005, 434-5). Due to a lack of resources and a prevailing belief that health conditions were in the hands of God rather than the state or scientific progress, it was first in the eighteenth century, with the proliferation of Enlightenment ideas, that these plans were exercised (ibid. 366). The combination of the (overly) optimistic trust in the potentials of science that the Enlightenment brought, and the dominant mercantilist ideology that stated that the interests of the state were paramount, resulted in making people's health the number one political priority during this period. The strength of the nation, according to mercantilist philosophy, depended on sustaining a capable and productive workforce, and Enlightenment ideas provided the solution of spreading knowledge on how to avoid disease and live properly (Sundin et al. 2005, 10; Willner, 2005, 36; Sandberg, 1999, 2). Apart from assuring economic and moral prosperity, the spreading of people's health ideals also established a new form of population control, where the rise of health and medical institutions played a leading role (Sandberg, 1999, 4). It was because this development that the political power, through institutions and processes of knowledge, took control of aspects of life itself; this was the rise of biopolitics (Foucault, 2002 (1976), 142-3).

Importantly, as Lavin describes, there were a parallel development in the way eating was viewed that in some ways paved the way for biopolitics, but perhaps more importantly for our current individualized relation to food. Starting toward the end of the Middle Ages was the

gradual privatization process of eating and other formerly public bodily functions such as the production of snot, vomit, saliva and excrement (Lavin, 2013, 23-26). This resulted in a proliferation of private dining areas and the decline of public eating festivals as well as a surge in the number of taboos regarding the public display of digestive processes (ibid. 23-24). This discursive process of the privatization of food, as Lavin points out, resonates with the major liberal thinkers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century (Locke, Thomas Hobbes and René Descartes), the decay of the body politic (that is, the notion that the political community shares the organic and harmonious organization of the human body) and the rise of the notion of the sovereign subject (ibid. 24-25). For these writers, and in liberal thought in general, according to Lavin, the process of eating (the essential internalization of the outside world into the subject) threatens the very constituting foundations of the sovereign subject, and therefore also core ontological assumptions of liberal ideology. Consequently, eating and other similar activities were to be concealed in the private sphere (ibid. 23-46). These somatophobic notions were enforced by the idea of civilization, which became constructed as absence of bodily fluids and functions in the public sphere (ibid. 26-31). Applying the idea of Descartes, that the mind is separate from the body, became urgent as the body was shared with other (uncivilized) animals (ibid. 29). This became perhaps most obvious in the writings of Adam Smith where the very distance man put between “himself” and other animals (based on the degree of domestication) is the very measurement of civilization (Smith, 1978 (1763), 14).³ This process of domestication could be likened with what Claude Lévi-Strauss terms the cultural transformation of food, which is described in his famous *culinary triangle* from 1966. Lévi-Strauss argues that food is accumulated as human cultural property through the art of cooking (Lévi-Strauss, 2013 (1966); Bildtgård, 2002, 14-5).

In realizing the biopolitical goals of the state, dietary and other health advice were spread across Sweden in the seventeen hundreds (Willner, 2015, 42). The main media for this advice was the *Almanacka*, which at the time was the fourth most widespread publication after the bible, the psalm book and the catechism. One of the most influential writers in the *Almanacka* was Nils Rosén von Rosenstein (1753-1771), who was at the time the highest authority on children’s medicine (Sundin, 2005, 376-378). Rosén claimed among other things that when it

³ According to Smith “mankind” passes through four states of being: 1) The Age of Hunters; 2) The Age of Shepherds; 3) The Age of Agriculture; 4) The Age of Commerce. All of these fazes describe a linear progression, where the progressive factor is in all cases the degree of domestication of other animals (and “nature”). In the Age of Hunters, humans prey on other animals. The Age of Shepherds symbolizes the ability to direct nature, and benefit from the relative control of other animals. In the Age of Agriculture “mankind” starts to produce nature, and utilize other animals as tools, whereas in the Age of Commerce the other animal is fully transformed into a commodity to be quantified and distributed through financial equations.

came to breastfeeding it was instrumental that the milk came from a woman of pious and virtuous nature, since conduct and morality would be transferred through the breast-milk to the baby (ibid. 376). This image of food as a vessel of virtues is one striking example of how food was moralized in Sweden in the eighteenth century.

As people's health propaganda in the eighteenth century proved to mainly get through to the literate and privileged middle-class, the following of the ideals of this literature became a central part of the formation of a distinct middle-class or bourgeoisie identity. Health was a way for the bourgeoisie to split with the immoral and unsound living of the underclass as well as with the extravagance and decadence of the nobility. In this way health became a virtue of the bourgeoisie (Sandberg, 1999, 8). Moreover, this is an early example of what Biltekoff calls the construction of "unhealthy others" (Biltekoff, 2013, 36).

Nineteenth-century Sweden was characterized by a drastic increase in population and a spread of health and dietary discourse to the lower classes (Willner, 2005, 47; Sandberg, 1999, 10). During the eighteenth century the idea of health was constituted around the following of moral provisions. This moralization of the health discourse led to an increased focus on individual blame (Sandberg, 1999, 11). The main innovation in this century regarding dietary biopolitics was the calorie. It enabled the easy measurement of the quality of one's diet, and consequently one's moral status (Biltekoff, 2013, 17). At the same time, mass manufacturing of clothes and furniture for the ideal body made it increasingly inconvenient to be fat (Lavin, 2013, 10). In other words, as commodities became standardized, bodies too became standardized. All this resonated with contemporary economical needs, where industrialization craved technologies for ensuring a population that was fit for work (ibid. 8-10). This was in a time in Sweden where the class-consciousness of workers grew, partly due to a large and offensive dietary movement, calling for a prohibition of alcohol (*Nykterhetsrörelsen*) (Sundin et al., 2005, 11; Ågren, 2005, 472; Willner, 2005, 191).

In this period the ideas of the body politic experienced something of an upheaval, as Lavin notes (Lavin, 2013, 48-49). What Lavin calls "the digestive turn in political thought" is characterized by a more explicit interest in the process of eating, critique against liberal privatization of food, and an organic view of the human subject's relation to the outside world. In other words the boundary between self and other (that liberal philosophy fought so hard for) is blurred, as the wall between subject and object is increasingly rendered transparent. The three most important names, for Lavin, in this tradition are Hegel, Karl Marx and Nietzsche. In contrast with liberal philosophers, for example, Nietzsche argues that healthy subjects digest their experiences and states "Body am I entirely", to be compared with Descartes'

somatophobia (ibid. 64-5).

The ideas of this digestive turn failed to have any radical impact but contributed to an understanding that the human body that could be compared with a machine, which requires good maintenance in order to work properly (Lavin, 2013, 8). While calorie-rich food continued to be the main solution to this problem in the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was later accompanied by the “discovery” of the vitamin (Biltekoff, 2013, 46-7). Together they served to form the dietary ideals of what Biltekoff calls the *nutritional discourse* (ibid. 15-6). Just as the US-state capitalized on the intimate role of food in people’s lives in order to frame the eating of good nutritional food as a patriotic duty during times of war (ibid. 54-9), the Swedish state also developed dietary advice and body ideals in a nationalist direction (Sundin, 2005, 430-1). As in earlier times, even though it was working men’s health that was prioritized, it was the women of the household who were the targets of dietary propaganda, since they were the ones who were responsible for the health and moral upbringing of all the family members (Anving, 2012, 38-9; Biltekoff, 2013, 73-4). One interesting detail of wartime propaganda was how meat eating was used as a marker of a healthy masculinity (Biltekoff, 2013, 70-73). Furthermore, in Sweden, the ancient Greek body ideals were brought back, and heavily enforced. The ethically imbued slim but muscular body was manifested frequently as a call to realize the demands of the state. This was going to be achieved through exercise and a “healthy diet” (Sundin, 2005, 430).

Biltekoff characterizes late nineteenth century USA through two mutually constitutive dietary discourses. On the one hand, the *alternative food discourse*, which strives for a more responsible and genuine relation toward our food. More than just nutrition, this discourse calls for a localized, environmentally friendly and energy efficient food production and consumption (Biltekoff, 2013, 80-1). This movement, according to Biltekoff, played a vital role in the establishment of the neoliberal ideal of the responsible consumer citizen, by making the connection between societal prosperity and responsible food consumption (ibid. 82). On the other hand, *obesity discourse* served to mobilize food habits to enforce ideals of self-control, while at the same time producing an unhealthy other who threatens societal stability (ibid. 108-120). Leaning on nutritional and alternative food discourses, the eating of fast food and other “obesity producing foods”, became synonymous with moral weakness (ibid. 110). While the fat body became a bodily marker for bad citizenship, thinness represented virtues of self-control, and “eating right” was the key to the equation (ibid. 111).

This has indeed also been the case in Sweden, where ideals of the slim body have been complemented by the demonization of the fat body. The often reproduced urgency of tackling

the obesity threat (Levin, 2005, 94; Ågren, 2003, 15; Prop. 2002/03:35), has, according to Sundin, led to a stigmatized fat body, synonymous with low salary, low education, lack of self-confidence, mental health issues and a lack of self-control (Sundin, 2005, 431; Sandberg, 1999, 5). Moreover, and because of this, it has been portrayed as the enemy to neoliberal ideals and consequently also an enemy of the state. Following Biltekoff's narrative, the problem has been identified in fast food, and foods with high levels of fat and sugar (Sandberg, 1999, 15).

While the proliferation of ready-cooked food has to some extent freed women from the stove, it has led to a more prominent presence of the market in the home, consolidating the idea that women's duty is increasingly transformed from kitchen work to market consumption (Anving, 2012, 45). Once again though, because these consumer goals of "eating right" are mainly available and achievable by middle-class membership, they have served to preserve the notion of white middle-class identity and its moral superiority, and at the same time consolidated the moral inferiority of the working-class and the racialized (Biltekoff, 2013, 139). Fatness becomes a matter of ontological degradation because it threatens the constitutive core of the responsible middle-class identity around liberal ontological presumptions (ibid. 144, 148).

4 Method and digestive epistemology

Positivism, the idea that it's possible for the researcher to apply methods of natural science to social science in order to produce accurate and objective knowledge by observing society (O'Reilly, 2009, 163-9), is closely tied to liberal political hegemony. As it's founded on a combination of the ontological presumption of an objective reality and the epistemological notion that it's possible, through scientific methods, to acquire objective knowledge about that reality, it requires a sovereign subject capable of interpreting the external world without distractions from outside sources. Descartes formulates this as the need for a clear separation between the knower and the known (Lavin, 2013, 29). As the argument so far suggests I reject positivism in favor of a social constructivist and collectivist approach to epistemology. I propose here, with inspiration from Lavin's terminology, a *digestive epistemology*.⁴ Building on ideas of writers such as James Davies, Ghassan Hage and Michael D. Jackson, I argue that the epistemological divide between subject and object is false and that upholding it is misleading and harmful to the knowledge production process (Davies, 2010, 3; Hage, 2010, 129ff; Jackson, 2010, 35). Moreover I argue, following Soyini, that just as ethnographic research (and other kinds of research) must stay critical to objectivity, as, according to Laclau and Mouffe, it's only a hegemonic discursive formation (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, 33), it must also critique the notion of subjectivity, since it springs from the same liberal notion of individual sovereignty (Soyini, 2012, 9). However, this does not mean that objectivity and subjectivity do not matter, since they are indeed very real social constructs that shape the core aspects of our life; it's around such notions that we build our perceptions of the world and these are in turn enforced by societal structures. Consequently, this fact does not make the need for personal reflexivity in research and social life obsolete, rather it serves to productively complicate the roles of specific subjects in knowledge production, opening up for notions of *collective knowledge*.

Although I must concede that the study lacks a developed theory of how to conduct research

⁴ Here, only the concept of digestivity is borrowed from Lavin.

based on such digestive epistemology, I have attempted to translate this philosophical ground to a practical research method, in particular in relation to the interview process.

Firstly, there is the need to disclose my own standpoint in terms of *reflexivity*. As I, as a researcher, have a certain power position, it's instrumental to address this. Since it's impossible to totally eliminate this asymmetrical power relation, what I can do is to reveal my own social privileges and relations with the interview participants (O'Reilly, 2009, 187-194; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007, 129-131). More, than being a researcher, I'm by most people perceived as a white, middle-class, and heterosexual man. This fact gives me a considerable amount of often taken-for-granted social privileges and power when it comes to knowledge production. Moreover, I had a previously established personal relationship with all of the participants, which inevitably acted as a bias and skewed the nature and direction of the interviews. Perhaps much due to the fact that I had a known history of participation in political activities of the nature which were discussed and that I practice a vegetarian diet for political reasons.

Secondly, drawing on what Davies calls *inter-materiality*, the context of the interviews needs to be addressed (Davies, 2010, 23). While some interviews were held in a leftist social center, others were held in my home, the homes of participants or at the university. Because of the private nature of the interviews, I found that choice of venue resulted in no evident consequences.

Thirdly, on an *inter-subjective* note (Davies, 2010, 23), I noticed that interviews with two participants (other than me) generated, on the one hand, more dynamic discussions, and on the other, a potentially unequal division of speaking time, even though I attempted to avoid such a result by acting as a mediator. Moreover, the eminent possibility of me leading the conversation in order for the interview material to fit my hypothesis, although not entirely successful, was going to be avoided by giving as much freedom as possible to the participants in terms of setting the agenda of the discussions. This resulted in a very broad and interesting collection of material, revealing the intersectional nature of the field.

Fourthly, again inspired by Davies and the term *inter-methodology* (Davies, 2010, 23), as participants are considered to be co-producers of knowledge, I have tried to fill the thesis with as much of their statements as possible, in order to add their voices to the research. Moreover, if I have succeeded, these voices are to be the driving force of the thesis, backed up by my own analysis in relation to secondary literature. However, I have made the decision to keep all participants anonymous, both due to the potential disclosure of political affiliations, acts of illegality and other personal matters, but also because of the delicate and sensitive subject of eating habits and relations toward food.

The interview participants are particularly interesting since they exemplify relations to existing food norms that more than anything can be summed up as counter-hegemonic. Moreover, as food activists, many of them have an elaborate analysis of current hegemony within this topic. Although all interviews are conducted in either Lund or Malmö, the participants are not exclusively tied to any geographic location. While some have close connections to these spaces others are rather characterized by a trans-border identity. Furthermore, I find that the radical leftist movement is of interest, partly because of its far-reaching ambitions to transform society, in particular in terms of the individualist liberal hegemony and its emphasis on self-serving atomized and sovereign subjects, and partly since it's a milieu where the ideas of social constructivism and activism circling the overturning of established norms are common. While I would argue that an ethnographic study of this group concerning the subject of food politics is relevant in its own right, there is, according to me, a principal interest in the group's capacity for providing a contrary view on politics that is collectivist rather than individualist.

On a note of translation, all interviews were held in Swedish. The translations are mine and any faults that may occur are my own. I have prioritized the conservation of the original essence of the quotes and the message they attempt to convey, rather than grammatical perfection. This might lead to a more difficult reading, for which I take full responsibility.

5 Being food: the violent reality of food politics

[I] don't understand how, regardless gender identity or whatever, [...] in this society one cannot be eating disordered⁵ [*ätstörd*]. I feel like... No, I don't have any eating disorders [*ätstörningar*] because it's nothing that lies with me, but I am fucking eating disordered since no one leaves me undisturbed with my food!

– Anna

While the next chapter is dedicated to the macro-level of food politics, this chapter deals with food politics on a micro-level. With guidance from the interviews the chapter consists of four parts. The first one deals with the diets circulating in the discourses of early twenty-first century Sweden. The second part discusses the identified body ideals. In the third, I conduct an investigation of eating disorders, anxieties and their moral roots. Lastly I discuss the particular categories that are targets of these discourses.

5.1 *Eating right: fat, nutrition and vegetarianism*

To “eat right” seems to be the number one mantra of dietary politics. As Biltekoff highlights, this phrase appears to be repeated over and over again throughout history (Biltekoff, 2013). Sara explains:

⁵ In English one talks of eating disorder, while in Swedish one talks of *ätstörning* (directly translatable to “eating disturbance”). In this particular discourse the verb *ätstöra* (approximately “to disturb eating”) is used to highlight the external agentship of eating disorders. In order to capture the meaning properly in this context, but still preserve its connection to the noun “eating disorder”, I use the version “eating disordered” to indicate that someone has been *ätstörd* (subject to eating disturbance).

To be sure there is a very strong norm that one should “eat right”. Definitely. I mean we never had as many food shows and generally so much focus on training and “eating right”, it just continues to boom. I mean it’s worse than the housing crisis.

However, the actual meaning of “eating right” is far more elusive than one might think. Depending on what time period one lives in, what geographical and social space one figures in and what specific discourses one has access to the answer might vary significantly. An example of such contextually bound norms are given by Stefan:

I worked for a removal company for a while and it felt like it was more of a body-builder norm there. I mean the “coolest” guys were those who were very muscular and ate a lot of protein or very little protein. Those who “*deffade*” and “*bulkade*” or whatever it’s called [Swedish body-building slang for “attaining defined muscles” and “building muscle mass”, respectively]. But that type of behavior is not normative at all where I usually intermingle, if you put it like that. And in the same way, in the circles where I figure it’s quite abnormal to not be vegetarian I’d say.

Anna suggests, in line with this, a strong connection between what one eats and how one is perceived:

It’s so hard to do right according to others. I mean much of one’s identity is decided by what diet you have, or how you eat.

Even though the number of dietary discourses sometimes feels overwhelming and that navigating such a normative landscape occasionally appears hopeless, as I return to later, I have identified three main dietary discourses. For the first two I borrow the terminology of Biltekoff (Biltekoff, 2013); *The anti-obesity discourse*, which refers to the obsession of avoiding the fat body through a diet to produce the least amount of body fat, and *the nutritional discourse*, which connotes the goal of eating “healthy” nutrition-rich food. These two discourses, in particular, intersect to a great extent. The third one I call the *animalic food discourse*, which is really a collection of a range of discourses concerning how we should relate to eating other animals, from veganism to *meatism* – the complete naturalization of the eating of animals.

When it comes to the anti-obesity discourse, just as Biltekoff and Lavin attest, it’s closely related to perceptions of the ideal body, as I will come back to in the next part (Biltekoff, 2013, 109-149; Lavin, 2013, 71-91). Lisa explains this relationship between food and, in particular female, body fat:

I know [...] quite a few girls for whom it's rather important to check how many calories that their food contains, or that food is [...] a regulation of weight.

Though the pathological discourse surrounding fatness (obesity) wasn't explicitly present in the interviews, its practical consequences permeate the discussions. Fat is described as a bioterrorist, constantly threatening the realization of normative goals set up by society (Biltekoff, 315, 2013). Fat in Sweden, as we already confirmed, has been branded one of the greatest enemies to people's health by the state (Ågren, 2003, 15; Prop. 2002/03:35). And just as these sources do, the interview participants locate the close connection between fat and low-status fast food. Moreover, the anti-obesity discourse is not complete with diet alone, it also calls for a fixation on exercise.

However, it's only in combination with the nutritional discourse that the obesity discourse becomes truly relevant for dietary practice. Fat is just one component in a nutritional diet that is designed to prevent obesity and body-fat and more broadly promote "healthy" individuals. Nutritional discourse provides tools like the calorie and vitamins, which make it possible to measure one's food intake in terms of avoidance of body-fat and securing a "productive" body.

The core question of the animalic food discourse is whether or not we should eat other animals. It ranges from *veganism*, which in the interviews is either motivated by political and ethical ideas, such as animal rights or environmentalism, or by health arguments. *Vegetarianism* is constituted as a middle ground between meat eating and veganism, which most often connotes a mostly vegan diet complemented by dairy products and eggs, but sometimes also fish. Vegetarianism is in these discourses constructed as a best-I-can-do scenario, for those who feel that veganism comes with too much stress and anxiety. The argument goes that since our society is built on an enormous animal industry, veganism is for the privileged few, as is confirmed by Anna:

I mean food privilege is also a thing where [...] I have the privilege to choose [to not eat animal products]. Partly, since there is a large supply of vegan products here, and it isn't like that everywhere, but also since I become accepted as that. I have opportunities to live as a vegan.

Lastly, meat eating or *meatism*, which even though a minority of the interview participants confess to it, is portrayed as the dominant and overwhelming force within the animalic food discourse. Something that on the one hand, according to the participants, in a grander societal sphere is seen as the only sound, healthy and proper way to relate to your food, but on the other,

in the more limited sphere where the participants figure is seen as a sign of moral inferiority.

Lisa describes:

It's a big moral debate I think. That it's immoral to buy meat [...] I mean, I think there is a certain point to it [...] We also have a responsibility as consumers but [...] it's, to be sure, a structural problem [...] and I feel like there are people who think: "Ah, if I just buy right, If I buy organically and vegan every day the world will become good. Then I have done my thing and I don't have to do anything else." Do you understand? But it's not true. It's all connected in a bigger system. And then they project these thoughts on me who doesn't do it.

On the other hand, while Peter (who grew up in the United States) explains how he experiences a greater normativity of vegetarianism in Sweden, he notes that the Swedish meat-eating norm is indeed very strong:

I mean if you look in ICA's [the largest food store chain in Sweden] magazine it's hard to find anything that isn't sort of meat with a little meat on top (haha).

5.2 *Body ideals: thinness, fatness and productivity*

The reason why I find it necessary to expand the scope from merely a strict dietary discussion to a broader one, including body ideals is perhaps best explained by a quote from Sara:

[W]hy I had so many problems I think has to do with not just food, but has been much about body and body ideals and the fact that I haven't liked my body. And in that food has become some sort of enemy. So it's hard to just talk about food isolated, for it's connected to other things. I think you cannot just talk about food norms, but you have to talk about other norms as well.

With this in mind when reviewing the interview material I have identified three major body ideals, which govern the interview participants' relationships to food. They are the *non-fat-body*, the *not-too-thin-body* and the *productive body*.

The perhaps most striking of these is the ideal of the non-fat-body, which Stefan names as superordinate; a hegemonic reality that we all have to consider:

I think the skinny-norm is rather thoroughgoing in society. [...] [T]here are some other norms that are very widespread, while other norms might exist within smaller groups. Then there are counter norms as well. [...] I mean that people within certain circles do not regard fatness as something ugly. [...] But most often that is [...] [a] rather active political stance I think.

The fat body is constantly punished for deviating from the norm, as Mead points out: No furniture and no fashion is designed for it (Mead, 2013, 20). However, while this anti-fat obsession in the western world can hardly have gone unnoticed by anyone, there is, as the interview participants point out, another side of the coin, which is much more seldom discussed: what I call here the not-too-thin ideal. In most writings on body ideals thinness is portrayed as simply the opposite to the dreaded fatness. The thin body is most often seen as the superior and desirable body and as a privilege (Biltekoff, 2013, 155). On the contrary I suggest that the thin and the fat body aren't simply two categories on the opposite sides the spectrum of "good" and "bad", but that they both play mutually constituting parts in the biopolitical act of controlling individualized subjects. Both fatness and thinness are effectively associated with inferior attributes as Bim describes:

I mean fat shaming is a gigantic thing, which happens all the time and is a great [societal] structure. Of course. But even if you are leaning toward the underweight side you are subject to similar things [...] [T]here it's ok to comment on one's body completely unchecked. If a fat person is presupposed to be lazy and dumb and a range of other things, you are seen as overly fixated on your appearance, silly and pathetic, like that. [I]t is tied to a lot of other attributes. And the same of course goes for someone with normal weight as well, where you are seen as good and capable [*duktig*] and so on.

Both these ideals are in turn closely connected to the idea of the productive body. Lisa explains how there is a constant pressure to take care of one's body in certain ways in order to live up to specific criteria:

I feel that there is a kind of self-optimization coerciveness. [...] To be healthy and to be the most fit as possible. [...] I [have to] measure how far and how often I run. I [have to] measure what I eat, how many calories. It's a kind of body-normalizing, where you have to have a certain group "to be" so that society can be productive. And then what happens to fat people?

Having a productive body is not just about having a certain body shape, but also about how you take care of your body on a microbiological level. Eating healthy is key here, as Lisa continues:

I have experienced that when I come with my ready-cooked food to the university, that people think that it's, not embarrassing, but they shame me a bit for it. [...] "You haven't cooked your own food", kind of. [...] You know that in one way they think that it harms me, and that since you are supposed to take care of yourself it's embarrassing if you don't. I mean, you are shamed if you aren't healthy. If your body does not function at its best or as it could have functioned. If you don't take advantage of the full capacity of your body.

Therefore, the productive body is not just about exteriority but encompasses the interiority of the body as well. Although, what this productiveness (or full capacity) refers to is not obvious, since even if, like in earlier history, it means to be strong, able-bodied and to embody specific virtues of good citizenship, these virtues have changed and have more to do with self-control and self-awareness than before (Sundin, 2005, 431; Sandberg, 1999, 5). Stefan describes how he interprets the ideal person in contemporary society:

[Y]ou are to be a healthy person. [...] I mean it has partly to do with ideals of external appearance. You should look a certain way, have a certain type of body. I think also it has to do with that you should make the right kind of choices. I mean, being aware of what you eat, and being aware, you know. There are more practices than just appearance that are connected to it I think, that are ideal in a way.

In this context, having a "productive" body, not too fat and not too thin, are bodily metaphors for the virtues of self-control and self-awareness, while fat, skinny and unproductive signify a lack of these traits. In other words, I would suggest that the ideals of productivity, fatness and thinness, on the one hand, converge in the concept of health, and on the other, are key markers of virtue and good citizenship.

5.3 Eating disorders: body anxiety and being in control

The argument follows that these diets and the body ideals they strive to satisfy lead to an existence characterized by eating disorders. Most often these are described as either overeating or undereating. Bim explains how she, despite her love of food, has struggled with this delicate balance for most of her life:

To sit down and enjoy good food is among the most fantastic things you experience in life, according to me. [...] But then of course eating disorders and such have gotten the upper hand in great periods of my life. When it has become destructive. When the only thing I've thought about has been what I put into my body, what I should put into my body, how little I should eat and so on.

Similarly Anna, when answering the question of what role food has for her, she concedes that food is indeed a very loaded topic:

It's nothing that is really just allowed to be, but is always a struggle on some level. So the role is I guess [...] something that has to do with my value in some way. That sometimes I'm worthy of eating and sometimes I'm not. So some form of judging role.

Stefan, on the other hand, hasn't personally had any problems with eating disorders, but speaks with frustration about his female friend and what he sees as her skewed perception of her body and its connection to what she eats. He concludes as following:

Food becomes a very big thing for many. It becomes something that is very important to have control over [...] And I think it has a lot to do with [...] ideals that are connected to it and [...] [h]ow one's body is to look and what you are to do in order to achieve this ideal body.

In line with this, eating disorders serve as ideological tools safeguarding specific virtues, in this case those regarding self-control and responsibility. Moreover, this discourse of over- and under-eating is underscored by a notion that dietary conduct makes possible the achievement of bodily ambitions and leads to happiness. Peter criticizes the idea:

[...] I think that it's a very complex and tricky question since it's very easy to buy that: "Oh, you are what you eat" and that everything you eat affects you immensely. But I think that much of what affects you is really your own relationship to your food. [...] Because this whole food-health thing may so very easily slide over into fat-phobia and this type of thinness persecution, that has for me been very destructive and has been very bad for my psychic and physical wellbeing [*mående*].

Even though it's easy to get the impression that such eating disorders mainly affect women, the reality is not entirely that simple. At least if we trust Anna:

To different degrees, if you are overweight or underweight [...] you are guaranteed not to be allowed to be left in peace with your food. Generally you are not allowed to, not cis-men either. And if you listen to how a cis-man, a random cis-man, would talk about food it's guaranteed not to be a sane view either. They are also "disordered" [*störda*] as we all are eating disordered. Because [...] [w]hat chance have we gotten not to be?

So far I have mainly been preoccupied with eating disorders regarding the anti-obesity and nutritional discourses, the animalic food discourse provides another range of dietary anxieties. First and foremost meatism, according to Bim, is an eating disorder in itself, something that is portrayed as primarily a male problem:

[...] [A]lso the indoctrination of meat culture and food that kills us! Food that gives us cancer. And I mean, that is an eating disorder. [...] It's a collective eating disorder to binge on things that harm us. And then it's we who are doing wrong when we don't want to participate. [...] I think also, when it comes to men, cis-men and eating disorders. I mean masculinity in relation to meat-eating. That it's considered "gay", within quotation marks, to be vegetarian as a man. So, that is, [...] all men are also brainwashed with a million things.

Peter, who identifies as transgender, continues on this line as he calls upon Carol J. Adam's book *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (2010):

There is definitely a much stronger norm among queers and trans-people who are assigned female at birth than those who are assigned male at birth. Because meat is a thing that I gave a lecture on when I was in college: "the sexual politics of meat", which is a very interesting thing for me about how both animals and female humans are used as bodies and like meat. So there is absolutely a strong connection between masculinity and meat.

On the other hand, the interview participants remind us that veganism on the other extreme within the animalic food discourse is in itself a potential source of eating disorder. Sara describes how veganism, due to its inconvenience in our current society has periodically driven her mad:

It has worked well in periods but I have become completely crazy. And then as it's now that I eat what works for me, for example that I'm vegetarian... Or if I would have been vegan. I could never be that to a hundred percent since just generally prohibitions around things... [...] I become completely deranged in my head and it always ends very badly.

5.4 *The categories of failure: class, race, gender, species and functionality in the crossfire of the dietary onslaught*

Even though this section is meant to emphasize the victims, if you will, of contemporary dietary discourse, and while it's a fact that certain groups are affected more than others, it's important to point out that no one is entirely immune. This is something that has come up extensively throughout our discussions.

With that being said, I have determined a few “categories of failure”, that is those categorical lines along which the particularly affected groups are to be found; gender, class, race, species and functionality. However, these categories are in no way all-encompassing, something that is exemplified by Bim's earlier remark about how male vegetarianism is considered “gay”. Clearly, other categories are also at play such as sexuality, age and geography, among others.

Firstly, *class* is something that came up frequently during the discussions. As I described before, dietary advice has often been portrayed as a tool for the wealthy middle-class to assert power over the less affluent working-class, through the construction of the unhealthy other (Sandberg, 1999, 8; Biltekoff, 2013, 36, 139). Lisa highlights this phenomenon:

[...] I think that in popular narratives in our society it's like ill health as a result of certain food is very connected to the working class. I mean that it's they who go to McDonalds. And the ones that have money buy organic and buy well and makes their sushi or whatever. That is, it's a class question. I mean, a controlled narrative that the working class is unhealthy.

Bim continues to describe this popular narrative:

If you are middle-class/upper middle-class you know better. And then you are supposed to eat accordingly. So it's inscribed in our bodies; that class is shown on our bodies, through food habits and so on.

Similarly, *gender*, as a bodily marker, is indeed a very relevant indicator for one's position in relation to hegemonic food discourse. This is perhaps best exemplified by Erik's reflections on his privilege as a (leftist) man:

Erik: I mean I don't have to care.

Lisa: Why?

Erik: About food and health I mean, a leftist guy like me. [...] That is, it's ok if I don't care, no one will yell at me.

For women on the other hand the reality is much different as Bim points out:

[...] [I]f you are gendered [*könad*] as woman you are good [*duktig*] if you are abstemious. At the same time you are stupid and lame if you think about what you eat. [...] It's impossible to do right. [...] Because you are not to be fat, you know. You are to be thin and perfect in every way, but you are not supposed to be silly and think about your weight either.

Furthermore, as Lisa remarks, similarly to Anving (Anving, 2012, 38-9), as a woman you run the risk of being doubly blamed:

[...] Women are often doubly shamed. [...] Since they are historically responsible for cooking. [...] I mean they are responsible for the health of the men in the family. It's they who were supposed to take responsibility for the health of all family members.

Women, according to this argument, do not only have to carry the burden of impossible ideals that they themselves should live up to, but also have to take the fall for their family's failures (particularly for those of men).

As impossible as it is for a woman to live up to these dietary and body ideals, it's just as impossible for those who have *functionality* variations. Peter describes his situation as problematic since even getting enough food each day is a struggle:

[...] [M]y food habits have been rather bad for quite many years. So I've had to a large degree eat like cheese sandwiches for many, many meals. [...] [I]t has become better with home care service and such. [...] But I still don't have a super reliable system of getting cooked food every day.

Racial stereotypes, just as class stereotypes, are often reinterpreted in dietary terms and used in order to construct racialized people as unhealthy others (Biltekoff, 2013, 140-141). Anna and Bim discuss how racialized people are blamed, on the one hand, for being in the way of a progressive food production, and on the other, for not being able to live up to western ideals:

Anna: It's so mean, like it's whites that have come up with industrialization so that we get so much fucking meat, dairy products and everything.

Bim: Yes, exactly.

Anna: And then it's we who are allowed to be, for example [...] vegans [...].

Bim: Yes, but also the judgment [...] that enlightened white environmental activists judge other societies as being less enlightened.

Again, it's an impossible equation. One cannot be both non-white, but at the same time live up to the ideal of being white and all that comes with it.

Although the most extreme example of such punishment of not living up to the norms of western dietary ideology, must be those who are positioned on the other side of dietary experience; namely the non-human animals, who are sentenced to death for the crime of simply not being human.

6 Systems of difference: the intersectional safeguard of the sovereign subject

In this chapter I will discuss the underlying constitutive structures of current dietary hegemony. Here I attempt to answer who profits and how? Because of the limited space of this thesis and in order not to stray too far from the subject, I discuss the four, according to me, most central oppressive systems of difference. The larger argument is based on the fact that liberal ontological hegemony and its core sovereign subject, feed on a politics of difference; that is, in order to legitimize a politics based on the concept of sovereignty (whether on an individual or state level), it's of great importance to uphold notions of difference. The most central systems of difference in western culture, according to this argument, are *capitalism* (since it legitimizes the liberal ideas of property accumulation and thus enforces the dividing lines between the self and the outside world, and at the same time offers invaluable tools for biopolitical production), *patriarchy* (as it provides yet another system of hierarchic differentiation between human subjects, through which humanity may be split into superior and inferior categories that in turn may be linked to good and bad traits, virtues and behavior as well as ontological status), *racism* (as it serves as both a protector of the liberal state system, which is constantly threatened by being permeated by alien elements, and as a defense mechanism for western liberal ideas by constituting other "civilizations" and thought systems as barbaric and morally degenerate, and finally *speciesism* (due to the need of constituting the human subject as superior to other animals and nature itself).

For the attentive reader it's obvious that these differential systems of oppression overlap and intertwine on several points. It's my ambition to portray how these systems in many ways constitute each other in mutually beneficial ways, and thereby compose an intersectional complex that safeguards dominant logics of difference.

6.1 *Capitalism: class, profit and functionality*

Property accumulation, which is at the very heart of capitalistic philosophy, is justified in liberal literature as the extension of the sovereign subject into the world through labor (Lavin, 2013, 36-37). As the monetary system offers a way of accumulating property through the labor of others, by an exchange of tokens of crystallized effort (money), some are able to extract themselves from the original production process. This results in a society built on different classes, where some own the means of production and accumulate property, and some borrow the means of production in order to attain salary for their work (Marx, 2013 (1867), 629). However, as Bourdieu teaches us, class is not just about economic relations but entails relations to social, cultural and symbolic capital as well (Skeggs, 1999, 20-1). In the previous chapter I argued that the working class suffers as a result of the dietary establishment, economically and in terms of moral status. Moreover, in the same way as the (upper) middle-class achieves higher moral ground by projecting bad food habits on the unhealthy working-class other, the affluent capitalist class gains economically by exploiting the eating anxieties of the “lesser classes”. Sara explains:

[I]t feels like everything is just an enormous [...] way of controlling people to consume certain things [...] I mean people capitalize on eating disorders, people capitalize on homophobia and transphobia, you have to realize this.

By offering a solution to the need of fulfilling dietary and bodily norms through consumption of “healthy” and morally superior products, the capitalistic need for profit and the biopolitical goal of forming responsible subjects of self-control and self-awareness become intertwined. In Bim’s words “there is a whole industry that profits from this self-hatred” that dietary and body ideals produce. Billions of dollars are spent by the food industry in order to uphold such notions that one isn’t complete without constantly buying a little more of their “healthy” products (Nestle, 2013).

Just as “the too-thin body” and “the fat body” are suppressed by capitalism as they threaten the standardization of goods (Lavin, 2013, 10; Mead, 2013, 20), it’s also important to note how capitalism relates to the ideal of “the productive body”. Productivity in this setting, as previously noted, is not strictly about having a body capable of executing and enduring specific

work tasks. This capability (employability if you will) is also mediated by virtues such as self-awareness and self-control. Translated into a terminology of functionality, the extent to which one fulfills the criteria of good citizenship (bodily and morally) determines one's function in capitalist society. In this way, social, cultural and symbolic capital is focused around the normate (the normative body), at the expense of all who differ (Thompson, 1997, 8; Rydström & Tjeder, 2009, 128-131). This becomes especially clear in the case of Peter, who due to his functionality variation is unable to, on the one hand, satisfy the norm in a bodily sense and, at the same time, because of the limited access his condition allows him to economic, cultural and social capital as well as his restricted mobility in public space, he is refused any chance of meeting the moral demands of dietary hegemony. Accordingly, it seems that, like women, those with functionality variations are often subject to a double failure.

6.2 *The dietary machinery of sexual domination*

Even if the strength of the male order, as Bourdieu points out, is obvious in that it needs no justification (Bourdieu, 1999, 21), I think it's important to note that western *patriarchy* leans to a large extent on the idea of the split between mind and body, early formulated by Aristotle. According to him, women, in contrast to the superior mind and soul driven males, were monstrous deviations from the generic human, captivated by emotions and bodily functions (Hesse-Biber, 1996, 18). An idea that clearly resonates in Descartes and the mind-body distinction (Descartes, 2008 (1641)), and likewise in the idea that man represents culture and that woman stands for nature in the western philosophical tradition (McClintock, 1995, 23-4, 29; Connell & Pearse, 2015, 163-9; MacCormack & Strathern, 1980). These political myths have without a doubt played a vital role in the establishment of women's worth as tightly tied to their bodies. This is perhaps particularly visible in the latter, which in combination with the nature-culture distinction formulated by Lévi-Strauss – where food has to be cooked (culturalized) in order to be separated from the sphere of nature (Lévi-Strauss, 2013 (1966); Biltgård, 2002, 14-5) – identifies women as potentially subversive to the man-nature border. Controlling women's relationship to food, in this sense, becomes important in western thought. As Anna expresses in the previous chapter, bodily appearance, and by extension eating, is a process of valorization for women. Consequently, while men are still subject to a range of

dietary ideals (particularly those concerning moral attributes), it's women who are exposed to the bulk of eating anxieties. Moreover, following liberal tradition, where "mans" progress is determined to a large degree by "his" separation from, and domination over, nature (Lavin, 2013, 26-31; Smith, 1978 (1763), 14), this process of the naturalizing of woman legitimizes sexual domination. In fact, patriarchal control over women, which to some extent functions through dietary norms, becomes essential for the constitution of man as an enlightened being. I return to this at the end of this chapter.

By dividing humanity into these rough categories of body and mind, male and female, patriarchy does not only legitimize a division of labor and social hierarchy, it also provides a biological ground for individual attributes. Upholding the idea that gender is a biological trait is therefore central to patriarchy. Apart from the sexual division of labor this fuels, it also means a sexual division of space; whereas men are free to roam the public sphere, the woman is confined to the domestic realm of the household (Bourdieu, 1999, 22). This fact only serves to multiply the dietary pressure on women. For, as Lisa notes, "Food is something that is regulated in the home, on a private level". What Lisa claims is a lack of collective responsibility for food, and that "every person is responsible for it themselves", in this sense simply means that the responsibility for food lies with the woman alone. This gives rise to the manifold burden held by women that I have argued so far. Women have to, not only keep the pantry in their heads, as Ekström argues (Ekström, 1990, 146), but constantly calculate how to meet the body and health norms of all family members. Men, on the other hand, are through this division freed from most such labor.

6.3 *A white supremacy of diet*

What does *racism* have to do with food? On the one hand, the fact that race, just as gender, has been subject to ontological subordination through a process of naturalization (blackness has traditionally been equated with primitiveness and proximity to nature in western thought), is connected to food politics. McClintock, in her studies of colonialism, captures this myth in the concept of anachronistic space, where colonized peoples of color, as well as members of the working-class and in particular women, are bundled off to an alternative and anterior time within geographical space, before the entrance of a white male enlightenment, characterized

by agency and self-control (McClintock, 1995, 30). In order for these people to escape the prison of anachronistic space they have to go through a civilizing process, which, for example in the Algerian case, led to the “unveiling” of Arab women so that they would fit European standards (ibid. 31). In terms of dietary politics, I claim that the same process is in place when it comes to western demands of assimilation to norms of diet and appearance. Moreover, as bell hooks describes, white culture appropriates other cultures in a process which hooks fittingly names “the eating of the Other”, where “cultural, ethnic and other differences” are “commodified and offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate”. In this sense “the Other is eaten, consumed, and forgotten” (hooks, 1992, 39).

On the other hand, I argue that race, in this context, is a tool for constituting a white supremacy of diet. This is important since in order to legitimize a white western dietary hegemony, following Hegelian dialectics⁶ (Hegel, 1977 (1807), 69), an unhealthy other is needed. Racism offers this. As Biltekoff describes, obesity discourse was quick to brand racialized and poor people as carriers of the obesity threat, thereby forming white middle-class identity around virtues of thinness and health (Biltekoff, 2013, 139). Furthermore, since obesity, like other health risks historically have been, was not only framed as a threat to the individual but to the nation as a whole (ibid. 122), dietary discourse resonated with ideas of racialized people as national dangers. Returning to the discussion on sovereignty, this lack of individual self-control demonstrated by racial stereotypes constituted non-whites as subversive to the ideals of the sovereign subject and by extension the sovereignty of the nation (Lavin, 2013, xxvi-xxvii). In this light the judgment of non-white societies, in terms of food production and consumption, as pointed out by Anna and Bim, can be seen as an essential element of the enforcement of white superiority and sovereignty in the dietary arena.

6.4 *Speciesism: the brutal frontline of humanity*

Speciesism, coined by Peter Singer, refers to the discrimination of another because of its species and is, I propose, core to current dietary hegemony and the idea of the sovereign subject

⁶ Simply put, Hegel states that in order for one to differentiate oneself from others, one has to relate to those others as opposites. In other words, in order to constitute one’s superiority, there is a need of an inferior other (Hegel, 1977 (1807), 69).

(Singer, 2009, 6). As we recall, the degradation of the non-human animal (here referred to as just animal) is a central theme in western and liberal political thought. This is not only shown through Smith's theory of man's four stages (Smith, 1978 (1763), 14), but also in Locke and Hobbes, where the abandonment of the "grotesque" body that constantly reminds "man" of "his" proximity to nature is vital to the sovereign and autonomous subject (Lavin, 2013, 41-2). Being body, rather than mind, which I have argued is constructed as a sign of racial and sexual inferiority, is in the end, in this philosophical tradition and in the terminology of Adams, an absent referent⁷ (Adams, 2010, 66-9) to the animal as a lower form of life, constantly transgressing the border between self and nature. This process of ontological subordination of the animal is key to the constitution of the idea of the sovereign subject.

The entry into the "final stage of humanity", the *Age of Commerce* (Smith, 1978 (1763), 14), and the commodification and dismemberment of the animal into tradable pieces of meat, dairy products and cloth, has played an instrumental part in this process of ontological subordination of the animal. When non-human animals are butchered and become meat they cease to be animal, while at the same time retaining the absent referent to the animal experience (Adams, 2010, 66). The consumption of meat, as a commodity, therefore, on the one hand, is relieved from the direct confrontation with the gruesome realities of its production process, but on the other hand mobilizes symbolic connotations of ontological subordination of the animal to the eater. The eater, which as Peter previously pointed out, is more often male.

The pattern here is clear: Since meat-eating signifies ontological superiority and in turn, as Adams notes, agency, activity and productivity, it's branded masculine, while vegetarianism, as it's understood as a sign of passivity and monotony, is branded as feminine. This becomes obvious in metaphors such as "beef up", meaning improvement, and "vegetable", meaning passivity and a mere physical existence (Adams, 2010, 60). With this in mind, and the fact that male masculinity is seen as more or less synonymous with heterosexuality, it's easy to understand why Bim describes vegetarianism as coded to be homosexual.

Speciesism is of course not only intersectionally intertwined with sexism and racism (and homophobia) but also with capitalism through the meat and dairy industry. As Peter points out:

⁷ Adams describes the concept of absent referent as the metaphorical discursive process where specific experiences and ideas of one category are suggested onto another. For example, the phrase "the rape of animals" calls on the experiences of sexual violence towards women, in order to describe the reality of non-human animals (Adams, 2010, 66-9).

In some ways I don't think animals should be used for food whatsoever, but in other ways I don't think it's so bad to use eggs for example from a hen who has a good life and isn't killed [...] Then of course the living standards shouldn't be like they are. Which they wouldn't be if there weren't an industry. That was driven by profit.

To sum up the argument of this chapter, capitalism, sexism, racism and speciesism are all systems of difference that work together in an intersectional way, safeguarding hegemonic dietary relations, and thereby also liberal virtues of individuality. Without these systems of difference the sovereign subject would be utterly exposed and vulnerable.

7 Mechanisms of subjection

This chapter has two overarching objectives. Firstly, it aims to theorize an understanding of how the subjects of hegemonic dietary discourse are produced, and to supply empirical examples of this process. Secondly, it proposes an understanding of agency, within the constricting frames of hegemonic discourse, and in this way lays a theoretical groundwork for the next chapter.

7.1 *How are subjects produced?*

According to Foucault power is omnipresent in that it's produced in every instance, in every relation between one point and another (Foucault, 1987, 103). Furthermore, power is productive, and it's through this power that the subject is produced (Butler, 1997, 2). In other words, the workings of power are integral to the social process, and it's through exposure to power that one's social existence is guaranteed. This can be compared to Louis Althusser, for whom the subject is produced through response to an authoritative "hail", as one recognizes themselves as the one being hailed (ibid. 4-5). Foucault calls this "the paradox of subjectivation"; that the process that creates the subject also secures its subordination (Mahmood, 2005, 17). As Judith Butler notes, it's the overwhelming desire for social existence that drives one to continuous subordination to this power (Butler, 1997, 7).

Importantly, as McClintock argues, no category (like the subject) exists in "privileged isolation", but is constituted in social relation to other categories (McClintock, 1995, 9). Following Hegelian dialectics (Hegel, 1977 (1807), 69), Butler states that social existence is won through differentiation to other categories. In other words, the category of the subject is the result of the rejection of other categories. Julia Kristeva explains this as the process of abjection; where those elements that are deemed impure by the discursive power relations within which the subject figures are expunged in order to constitute the social self. However, these abject elements aren't destroyed, but constantly threaten to invade the subject and annihilate its particular existence (McClintock, 2005, 71). As these abject elements make out

what is other than the subject, they are projected onto objects alien to the subject, as in the case of the unhealthy other. This in turn, according to Butler, leads to the fear of the other, as its ability to deny otherness jeopardizes the existence of the subject (Butler, 1997, 27). In Althusser's terminology: that which doesn't fit the "hail" becomes abject, and that which can't refuse these abjections becomes a target of otherization. In the same sense, as the subject is produced as socially existent through this process, the other becomes to some degree constituted as non-existent. I talk about this as a matter of degree since, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out, the subaltern woman is even more othered than the subaltern man (Spivak, 1988, 82-3). This is what ontological subordination means, and the reason why, following Butler, some lives are possible to mourn, while some aren't (Butler, 2011, 12). With this in mind, following Foucault, the questioning of a regime of truth means questioning what constitutes one's ontological status and foundation of existence (Butler, 2005, 23).

Another important aspect of subject formation is that the power relations – read discourses – that make out the social matrix exceed the existence of the subject in time. The discourse that forms us isn't born with us (Butler, 2005, 35). As Foucault famously states: "Discourse is not life, its time is not yours" (ibid. 36). Butler concludes, in line with this, that one cannot separate oneself from the social conditions of one's emergence, and that the "I" can never fully give an account of oneself as it's "implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration" (ibid. 7-8). This suggests a potential fallibility in much of the literature that I have discussed so far; in particular, the theoretical obsession with the sovereign subject. I return to this at the end of this chapter as it means that the acting space of the subject is socially mediated; that is, it's made possible through the collective workings of power.

As I'm interested here in how subjects are formed in relation to norms concerning diet, health and body-configurations, and how these norms figure in the lives of the interview participants, I find it relevant to examine how norms are enforced on an everyday basis. In particular, I'm interested in how power works through the notion of the sovereign subject to the end of making discipline more effective. Following Foucault, the proliferation of the idea of the sovereign subject during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries coincided with a process of individualizing discipline; which is perhaps best exemplified by Bentham's "Panopticon"⁸ (Foucault, 1987, 200-1). As Foucault explains, this idea is much more than a blueprint for a

⁸ Panopticon is the idea of a prison, shaped like a circle around a tower. The cells, which are all facing the inner yard and the tower, are provided with windows so that a guard positioned in the tower can view them at all times. As the prisoner can't see the guard, a guard is not required to be present at all times, since the fact that the prisoners know that they may be under surveillance is enough to make them obey the rules (Foucault, 1987, 201).

correctional facility, but rather the underlying philosophy of a new type of disciplinary exercise of power. Panopticon is a metaphor for the utopic absolute individualization of discipline, where the individual, knowing that they may be under surveillance at all times, internalizes normative discipline (ibid. 202). Obviously, this theory would be impossible without the notion of the sovereign subject, since it demands discrete individuals in order to operate. Where, I wonder, is this individualized discipline better portrayed than in the liberal virtue of self-control, which, as we have seen, is carefully promoted in hegemonic dietary discourse? However, society is not a prison comparable to Bentham's ideal, and there are no tower guards capable of spying on everything we do. No authority watches you when you eat. Then why do the interview participants express that they experience such an overwhelming pressure to conform to social norms? I argue that there are indeed guardians that trigger this internalization of discipline, though they do not wear a uniform. In a much more terrifying way, they are everywhere. They are you and I.

7.2 Narratives of subjection

Having analyzed the interview material I have, in line with the argument so far, identified two main types of control mechanisms. The first type is the external control mechanisms that are actively enforced by exterior societal elements. These come in the form of mass media and state propaganda, commercials, scientific and expert reports, and different types of social shaming ranging from structural discrimination to “innocent” every day comments. The second type is the internal control mechanisms that the subject imposes onto itself. These are mainly internalized versions of externally imposed norms that converge in the virtues of self-control, self-awareness and self-responsibility. These are in turn helped on by technological innovations.

First off, what legitimizes most forms of external dietary control is the “objective” and biological discourse of health, which is produced and guarded by powerful scientific and state institutions (Biltekoff, 2013; Bildtgård, 2002), not to mention capitalist interests (Nestle, 2013). Lisa attests to this understanding:

[...] what appears to be healthy food and what doesn't appear to be healthy food is rather... I mean, of course it has its medical, that is biological base or medical base, but it's rather socially constructed as well. [...] I feel like there is a quite strong biological discourse around [...] how you should eat. And that [discourse] is "objective".

The perhaps most obvious effect of this "objective" discourse can be seen in the pressure to conform to dietary and body ideals from mass media. In Bim's words:

It's everywhere: In all commercials, in town and public spaces. And also all the pressure from media, magazines, papers, in whatever you... It's impossible to avoid that it's that way you should look, and if you don't look that way you should be ashamed and hate your body.

Partly, as Sara points out, these methods aim to make people consume certain things. But not just things, but certain ideals and ways of being and relating to oneself; that is, it's also about producing people that know "how to consume" certain things. This in combination with structures of difference such as capitalism, help secure the ontological superiority of some (upper middle-class) subjects:

[...] [T]he reason why I haven't eaten so well is because it's so fucking expensive to buy good food. [...] [I]t is to be sure a bit sad to have to shoplift tofu since you just: "Oh, I want some fancy pantsy food" like.

However, the next step in this norm enforcement process is, I think, in many ways more effective in forming subjects. This is when individual subjects themselves take up the responsibility of norm enforcement (as we mentioned before, much due to the need of securing their own social existence that depends on these norms (Butler, 2005, 23)). Bim explains this phenomenon in response to why she thinks she gets so much condescending comments for being vegan:

When someone stands out, regardless if that person is judgmental to people that eat meat or not, [people] are forced to recognize themselves and that isn't very fun. I think it's that, it provokes, beyond that everything that breaks with the norm provokes in one way or another.

This type of norm enforcement can take many forms. There are examples of outright and violent acts of shaming like this comment that Anna recollects: "Yeah, I don't think you should eat more now", implying "you will become fat". Or in the other direction, as Anna continues:

I also think about such comments as: “Oh, but how relieving to see you eat more” or “that you eat a little cheese” or like that. When you might have just spoken about how they think you are thin. [...] These are very harmful comments also because it confirms the whole thing you have. As if I eat this piece of cheese I’m going to become super fat. And I mean [...] the direct connection to [...] weight gain [...] So it’s very harmful if someone encourages you and makes comments like: “How good to see that you are going to gain some weight”.

Clearly, comments don’t have to be intentional to have serious impact. Sara indicates that it’s sometimes enough that everyone always comments on “what you have on your plate”. Moreover, interview participants identify well-meant praise as a key factor in norm enforcement. On the one hand, as this example by Bim, with no strings attached: “Oh but you are so thin and you have such a pretty body”. On the other hand, like Anna notes, as a system of permission: “Oh but you are so thin, you can have a piece [of cake]”.

The second type of social control is the internalized type. By experiencing external norm enforcement and knowing that anyone at any time might shame you for deviating from the norm, one applies these methods of dietary control on oneself (as a form of self-defense); the bio-political goal of self-controlling subjects has been achieved through the establishment of an eating disorder. This process from external to internal control becomes very concrete in Peters narrative:

One thing I can say is that when I became a vegetarian I was sixteen. I still lived at home with my parents and my mother was so worried that I would die from lack of proteins or something. So she forced me to learn a whole lot about how much protein different foods contained, and kind of to count how many grams of protein I had every day.

The most basic physical experience of eating, can in this forced upon state of obsessive self-control trigger symptoms of eating disorder:

Sara: [...] [T]his natural, physiological thing that the body or stomach swells when you eat, has been like: “Oh my God, what’s going on?!”. I have felt really bad over such small things.

Moreover, as Lisa notes, recent technological innovations have helped to propel the realization of this self-control ideal:

I mean there is [...] a lot of “apps” [applications for smartphones] that help us control everything we do. There are “apps” that count how many steps we take each day. [...] There are “apps” that check how many calories you have eaten.

Judging from these accounts dietary discourse, and the virtues it produces, are backed up by a powerful machinery of enforcement. This begs the question of whether it’s possible to alter such firm normative structures. This is what the last part of this chapter seeks to investigate.

7.3 *Agency in subjection*

I return here to the initial discussion on the possibility of counter hegemony. My argument is twofold: Firstly, that counter-hegemonic politics aren’t limited to a previously formulated political vocabulary, but can figure inside a hegemonic framework as counter-hegemonic action may propel alternative political imagination. Secondly, agency is not dependent on a sovereign subject, as it’s made possible by workings of power that are both collective and historical in nature.

Following Foucault, ethics is understood here as “a modality of power that ‘permits individuals to effect by their own means or with help of others, a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being’, in order to transform themselves into willing subjects of a particular moral discourse” (Mahmood, 2005, 28). Furthermore, since, in line with Laclau and Mouffe, I claim that ethics, like every other thought system, is discursively constructed (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014 (1985), 93), moral philosophy is directly translatable to other discourse as well. While I agree with Lavin that the transformation of political vocabulary is central to any political change, as I mentioned in the introduction, I want to avoid falling into a trap that is set by the logic integral to liberal thought. This trap, I argue, is a Kantian moral philosophy, which overemphasizes the importance of following predetermined explicitly formulated rules in order to become moral (Mahmood, 2005, 25; Badersten, 2002, 92).

I believe that we need to expand the notion of ethics so that it, in Mahmood’s words, apart from the Kantian focus on “justification, legitimation and meaning”, encompasses also

“practices, selves, bodies and desires”. This Foucault inspired view of ethics is what Claire Colebrook calls *positive ethics* (Mahmood, 2005, 27). According to Foucault, ethics are thought of not as a regulatory set of norms but as a collection of practices germane to a certain way of life (ibid.). This idea in turn draws on an Aristotelean view where, focus is on the practice itself rather than the underlying motivation (Mahmood, 2005, 26). For Aristotle the superior virtue is *fronesis* or “practical wisdom” [*praktisk klokhet*], that is, the ability to weigh the vices of every act and do the right thing in every circumstance (Badersten, 2002, 88). Consequently, one does not ask what a particular ethical theory means, but what it does (Mahmood, 2005, 27). This can perhaps be compared with MacIntyre’s ethical theory of goods as internal to practices; goods that in turn are generated by a longer tradition of doing such practices (MacIntyre, 1984, 222; Badersten, 2002, 96).

Similarly to this theory of virtue as conveyed by a practical tradition, and in connection to the earlier argument of a separate discursive time, Mahmood contends that subjects’ actions do not come about through their own individual will but are products of discursive traditions far exceeding their own consciousness (Mahmood, 2005, 32). Since in this sense, the discursive framework that is constitutive for a particular moral behavior to a large degree is ungraspable for individual subjects, focus is turned to bodily behavior in order to satisfy the ideal (ibid. 24). I think that this theory can be utilized in progressive politics as it permits us to leave behind the notion that critical thought should precede political action, and suggests the possibility for action to forego the construction of an alternative political vocabulary.

I previously mentioned a potential fallibility of the literature on subject formation. I think that this is to be found in the fact that most theorists share an idea that agency is a subjective trait that permits the subject to affect structures of power. Instead, I argue that agency is a trait of the structures of power that can be utilized by the subject. Following Mahmood, agency here is a product of the discursive traditions in which subjects are located (Mahmood, 2005, 32). This allows for the separation between agency and the sovereign subject, and the connection of agency and a digestive subjectivity, capable of interacting freely with the outside world and its relations of power.

This enterprise, however, demands a reformulation of Butler’s performativity theory, which, simply put, states that due to the performative character of norms and categories, its constitutive discursive framework can be transformed through the wrongdoing of these norms (Butler, 1990, 34-185-93). It’s, according to Butler, in this productive reiterability that agency is located (Mahmood, 2005, 19-20). As Mahmood notes, as this theory is formulated around the notion of questioning norms, it fails to capture how norms aren’t always questioned or subverted but

“inhibited and experienced in a variety of ways”, and consequently robs subjects that aren’t in the business of unsettling power relations of agency (ibid. 21-2). Furthermore, this binary idea of agency that vacillates between subversion and resistance makes it hard to imagine counter hegemony within a dominant discursive framework. With this in mind, Mahmood suggests a departure from this agonistic framework proposed by Butler, to one where “norms are lived, inhibited, reached for, aspired to and consummated” (ibid. 23). In the words of Mahmood: “we should keep the meaning of agency open and allow it to emerge from ‘within semantic and institutional networks that define and make possible particular ways of relating to people, things and oneself’” (ibid. 34).

8 Tales of counter hegemony

In this chapter I engage with the counter-hegemonic activisms described throughout the interviews. I examine them and ask, on the one hand, in which way they may produce counter-hegemonic ideals, and on the other hand, how they might reproduce hegemony. Simply put, the argument states that counter hegemony, while it's indeed a present trait of these activisms, is paradoxical in its essence.

I have identified three main areas of activity: The first is *norm breaking*; the idea of performing counter hegemony through opposing cemented discourses by attacking them at their weakest points. The most frequently occurring such activisms in the interview material regards vegetarianism (and veganism) and body positivity (fat positivism, skinny-positivism et cetera). It becomes evident that while different activisms may draw upon each other in an intersectional way in order to become stronger and more impactful, intersectional relations may also result in counter-productive and exclusionary situations. The second is the *restructuring of the infrastructure* surrounding food and how we eat. This approach is more materialistic in its core and focuses on providing alternative spaces of consumption and production. Collectivity is a central concept in these activisms, and consequently people's kitchens (*folkkök*), and collective instead of individual responsibility are some of the solutions. The third is the *de-dramatization of food*. Here the reproductive aspects of hegemony are under siege, as activists call for solidarity and the abolishment of dietary shaming (which is intrinsically connected to body-shaming). Food, they argue, must be disconnected from individual moral labels, and become more of a non-issue when it comes to determining one's value and measure of virtue. This becomes somewhat unclear and paradoxical though, since most of the activists call on the moral obligations of eating when it comes to vegetarianism.

8.1 *Breaking the norm*

In regard to *norm breaking* I've identified two main areas of activism; *consumption* and *body positivity*.

The fact that consumption was a frequent subject for our discussions is interesting in at least two ways. Not exactly because it offers particularly effective means of norm breaking, but firstly since it provides a great example of counter-hegemonic activity within a hegemonic framework, and secondly, as its outcome is extremely paradoxical. On the one hand, it's an easy way of affecting and subverting dietary norms on a daily basis by consuming products that upset hegemonic ideals. On the other hand, *consumptionism* – the idea that one can individually alter the market forces through careful and responsible consumption is an essential part of the production of hegemonic dietary subjects, characterized by virtues of self-control, self-awareness and self-responsibility (Biltekoff, 2013, 82).

The most recurring example of consumptionist activism, that in Erik's words means, "to, as responsible consumers, utilize one's spending power in order to change how things are produced and what is produced", was veganism. Stefan explains his vegan-consumptionist activism as: "I don't eat meat so that I, at some level, don't support the animal industry". This type of refrainment from participating in systemic oppressions of differential categories is one way of undermining liberal dietary hegemony, since, as pointed out in chapter four, the subversion of the constituting and safeguarding systems of the idea of the sovereign subject might lead to its exposure and destruction. By not consuming animalic products one makes a statement that the border between humans and other animals aren't that clear-cut.

However, if we recall Lisa's earlier remark about how consumptionist activism might lead to a false satisfaction with one's individual political contribution to a better society, while at the same time ignoring the greater picture of powerful structures, this type of activism become more problematic. On the one hand, as I have already mentioned, consumptionist strategies might reinforce hegemonic ideals, and on the other, as is evident in Marion Nestle's study, one's informed consumption is almost never free from commercial bias (Nestle, 2013). Not to mention the obvious problem, hinted by Sara in the previous chapter, that food is expensive and "buying responsibly" is often even more expensive.

On another note though, the simplicity of taking part in such activism is not without value. For example, Peter points out that due to his functionality variation, through which energy becomes scarce, consumptionism is one of the few political activisms that he can take part in.

While consumption is a clear example of counter-hegemonic paradoxicality, body positivity, at least in the form described by the interview participants, provides a less obvious example of this. On the one hand, Erik describes how *fat positivism* can be an effective way of reclaiming power over the (feminine) body and “to not having to be ashamed over being fat or just to eat what they want to eat”; “To break the norm – the norms”. Stefan elaborates:

For them [fat-positive feminists] I guess it’s a political act not to strive for the thin body. In that way health, body and food can become very political even in another way that perhaps rather is about norms and how to break them and try to change them. [...] [W]ith food and health it becomes somewhere an aspect of patriarchy [...] [and] different forms of discipline against first and foremost women. [...] but also against men, I’d say.

In this way, fat positivism becomes what Stefan in chapter three calls a counter norm; an alternative way of relating to body and diet that counters hegemonic ideals, which I return to in the third part of this chapter. More precisely fat positivism confronts the proposed body ideals and dietary conducts of the obesity discourse and the nutritional discourses as well as disrupts the grander structures of patriarchy by refusing to conform to its rules. The same obviously goes for what one might call *skinny positivism*; that in contrast to fat positivism, which engages with the non-fat ideal, confronts the not-too-thin ideal.

However, body positivism, in particular fat positivism, as Anna points out, can function in an excluding way also:

I think it’s very tricky, since I think it can be extremely excluding for people that have problematic relations to food. [...] [W]hen you in fat activism have the world’s grandest table of cookies: “Everybody come here and eat” like. [...] It’s very emancipating for some in a way, and a good tool for many, but it also becomes an impossibility for many that also would need to be a part of the struggle.

Paradoxically, body positivism, while sending signals that all bodies are beautiful and accepted, might enforce notions underlying eating disorders; for example that there is a connection between diet and body fat. In order to avoid such counter productivity Bim proposes an increased openness and acceptance around eating disorders of all forms, and calls for

solidarity on a broader level. According to Bim there is a need “to spread consciousness that it can go either way”:

That just because I’m a queer-feminist and am a hundred-million percent for fat activism, it isn’t necessarily the case that I feel good participating in it [...] So yeah, I think that just to be able to talk about both sides, and to be able to talk about eating disorders! [...] In the same way that it’s important to be able to say “I’m a survivor” of rape and sexual abuse. That we are all [read women]. That we are so many and it has to be de-dramatized [*avdramatiserat*]. I feel it’s the same thing with eating disorders. For I feel like all the time you become branded as [...] an idiot in many ways, or as less knowing, or as less feminist [...] I mean, it shows a lack of solidarity.

8.2 *Restructuring food infrastructure*

When it comes the topic of restructuring food infrastructure the discussions circled around three overarching subjects. Firstly, *food production* and methods of changing how we relate to the creation of the foods on our plate. Secondly, *culinary infrastructure*, meaning the basic questions of how we eat, where we eat and who does what. Lastly, *alternative space*, that is the construction of spaces free from the bulk of dietary propaganda and social pressure surrounding how we eat.

The overwhelmingly most recurring theme when it comes to changing food production was the countering of the animalic food industry. An industry that, as Stefan points out, has disastrous effects, both ethically and for the environment. In this context however, it’s primarily the subversion of the man-nature border that is at stake. Moreover, Peter criticizes industrial food and seeks a closer relationship to his food, devoid of all the pressures that society inflicts, preferably by growing his own vegetables. Ambivalently enough, this stance can be compared with what I in chapter one, after Biltekoff, call “the alternative food discourse” (Biltekoff, 2013, 80-1); A discursive tradition that, according to Biltekoff, is credited with enforcing the neoliberal virtue of responsible eating and the “responsible consumer citizen” (ibid. 82).

On another note, Stefan highlights how food production is closely tied to urban-rural power relations:

If we are to talk about food production [...] I think that different reforms that would counteract the marginalization of the rural areas could transform the type of structures surrounding food production and food consumption, and who consumes and who produces [...] A leveling out [of these power relations] would be possible by different types of material redistribution. [...] Because it's a problem that the rural areas are constantly down prioritized. And I see it as a food problem. [...] [F]ood is in the end something we need in order to survive. [...] I mean, we in the big cities get our food from the rural areas that we simultaneously, in a way, exploit economically, and moreover inferiorize culturally and normatively.

Moving on to the subject of *culinary infrastructure*, the core (hegemonic) problem that is addressed here is that of the individualist relationship to food that society imposes upon us. Lisa explains that the problem has to do with how we organize our social infrastructure:

I mean, how do we organize our “daily production”? [...] [H]ow do we organize cooking? [...] How do we sleep? Who takes care of the children? Who are to take care of the elderly? [...] They are quite important questions of power [...] Food is something that is regulated in the home, on a private level. Every person is themselves responsible for it. And we aren't collectively responsible for food.

Consequently, Lisa proposes that we should organize our cooking, and all the work that is associated with it in a more collective way:

I think it would be much smarter if we had like people's kitchens [*folkkök*] for the entire society. [...] I mean if I eat food I'm mostly by myself. And I think that it's kind of sad. So I think [...] it would be much smarter [...] if districts could make their food together. For I like to do the dishes. [...] (haha) I don't like to cook food but I like to do the dishes, I like it.

What Lisa proposes would not only undermine concepts of self-responsibility and self-control in relation to food, but would radically expose the eating process for anyone to see and in that sense threaten the constitutive core of the sovereign subject.

Lastly, the category of *alternative space* envelopes activism dedicated to creating “safe” counter-hegemonic spaces within hegemonic society. There are roughly two different kinds of such strategies mentioned in the discussions. On the one hand, there is the “confronting” one; here exemplified by the social center:

Sara: [W]hen you live in such circumstances like this [referring to the social center and the radical leftist environment], you kind of come farther away from the commercial side a bit. I mean,

capitalist society. And I think that the farther away you come, the less you are affected by it. [...] Perhaps it doesn't mean that you have better resistance to it, but it's simply that I don't have so much to do with it, you know.

By "confronting" I propose that it's a material space that one can physically step into, that provides a challenging alternative to hegemonic space. On the other hand, there is the "retreating" one, which is exemplified by the process of retiring into a social space shielded from outer influence. Peter explains:

I don't intermingle in mainstream circuits very much and I avoid the mainstream to a large degree. Actively, I almost never watch TV, I don't listen to the radio. I mean, I screen myself from the outside world because I can't deal with it (haha). So that's one of my best strategies, to just – Nope! – (haha) – Let's ignore that!

In contrast to the first, "confronting" strategy, which can be seen as actively counter-hegemonic in that it poses a collectivist alternative to individualist hegemony, this "retreating" strategy is a more short-term solution to overcome the dietary onslaught of hegemonic society; in many ways embracing the advantages of private space.

8.3 *De-dramatizing food*

The urgency of a de-dramatizing of food was what participants emphasized perhaps the most, throughout the interviews. The reason for this is that they identify the value-laden nature of food in contemporary society to be a key factor in the development of eating disorders and shaming of different sorts. In turn, I have located two different aspects of such activism. One of which has to do with the establishment of an alternative way of relating to one's food; I call this *food-positivism*. The other has to do with the spreading of such ideas, and the development of an intersubjective (one might say anti-subjective) relationship to food; this is to be accomplished through *discussion*. I conclude this chapter with a piece on the ambivalences of these standpoints.

The principal idea of food-positivism is pictured by the phrase *food to live*. Sara captures this notion well:

It happens that someone points out what you eat, or comments or even looks at one's plate – Why is it of any interest?! I mean, it's food! I need food to live!

Similarly Lisa notes, “We will always be hungry”. Consequently, the fact that our tense relationship to food causes us such harm, in combination with the fact that the need for food will not cease in any foreseeable future, leads to the conclusion that food needs to be de-dramatized and furthermore become a matter of positivity and productiveness rather than one of negativity and destructiveness. Bim sums up this argument by reflecting on how her relationship to food and exercise has changed lately:

Now I guess I try to think about it [...] in only the positive ways: “Oh, how tasty it's going to be to eat” [...] Kind of, to try not to bring up negative things concerning health and food, but have it stand for something positive. And if you have a day when you just want to eat ice cream and sit still then that is what you need that day, and then you should respect that. [...] To try not to be so judgmental of yourself.

Stefan continues:

[F]undamentally it should be about feeling well, you might think, but it feels like it doesn't always. [...] I want to eat food because I'm hungry and because I think food is tasty, you know.

This entails a laidback relationship to food, one without judgment or self-shaming. Food ought to be devoid of values, rules and prohibitions and furthermore without destructive connections to body and body-shape. Anna captures this in her concept of shameless food:

Shameless food is food that you get to eat regardless of what it is, and how much you want; And that you don't have to have a specific objective, apart from that you just want to.

Food-positivism, in this sense, and akin to body-positivism, connotes that all diets are of equal value, or rather that diet is not anything to be valued. This includes having a non-prestigious relationship to diets, such as veganism. This idea of course directly threatens middle-class identity as grounded in superior health, diet and body-shapes, and in turn also the idea of the sovereign subject and the virtue of self-control. The next step in the de-dramatizing of food, “discussion”, makes this latter consequence very concrete.

The first part of “discussion” concerns the encouragement of others. I let Bim introduce this concept:

[F]or me it’s positive to encourage others regarding that of being kind to their bodies, and be kind to themselves. To radiate love to my own body, as it is, and disregard conceptions of how one is to look.

However, this type of conversational activism does not just include the proliferation of food and body positivist ideas of how to relate one’s own body and dietary conduct, but provisions about how to relate to the bodies of others and to food. Firstly, as Anna demands, people ought to “shut up about bodies” and the connection between body and food:

Of course it [food] might get to [...] play a part for my health and how I feel and maybe how my skin feels or whatever, but not to a particularly appearance and body-shape. [...] That role it should not play.

Secondly, following Bim’s earlier statement, that people should show solidarity with others, and recognize eating disorders as a collective phenomenon. Furthermore, as Peter points out, it entails the highlighting of the fact that not everyone is able to follow the norms of hegemonic dietary discourse or, for that matter, counter norms like veganism. As we have seen, the reasons for this can vary from having to do with class, to race, gender, species or functionality.

Lastly, one might have noted that there is a core ambiguity in this argument. On the one hand, more or less all the participants stress the need to de-dramatize the relationships to food and body, on the other, however, most agree on the fact that the abolishment of meatism must be a priority. Stefan comments on this paradox that it’s perhaps a more relaxed relationship towards health that is needed rather than one toward food, as the need to stop eating the quantities of meat that we currently do is of paramount importance. Since health and food, as I have argued, are two tightly intertwined concepts, the problem still remains, as Stefan agrees.

8.4 *Ambivalences and contingencies*

It seems as though, while all these examples of activism provide some degree of counter-hegemonic potential, they are balancing acts between the reproduction of hegemonic norms and the establishment of counter-hegemonic ideals, rather than acts of pure resistance. In other words, they fit Mahmood's version of norms as "lived, inhibited, reached for, aspired to and consummated", rather than Butler's agonistic idea of agency (Mahmood, 2005, 23). The narratives discussed in this chapter portray counter-hegemonic activism as not only having to deal with the ambiguity of specific activisms, but also as having to navigate the incoherencies between different counter-hegemonic goals. The former can be exemplified by how, in individualist hegemony, activisms of alternative space and collective food infrastructure that seek to bring the processes surrounding dietary conduct into the public light, could simultaneously render that public space a threat to its alternative ways. The latter is obvious in the paradoxicality of de-dramatized vegetarianism. However, I do not see these paradoxes as counter-hegemonic failure, but rather the inevitable nature of working for political change within hegemonic frames. Furthermore, as Lavin points out, it's only when a discourse resonates with other successful discourses that it can become successful (Lavin, 2013, 4). Consequently, perhaps the question is not whether vegan consumptionism is productive or counterproductive, but how one might transform the hegemonic political strategy of consumptionism into counter-hegemonic activity. Some examples of such alternative conceptions of consumption are given by the interview participants in terms of dumpster diving and shoplifting.

Moreover, these examples show that, in the same way that, as presented by Bim and Anna, eating disorders are of a collective nature, the overturning of them is accomplished through collective activisms rather than individual flawlessness. Agency in this sense seems to belong to the collective workings of power rather than any singular entity, and a digestive rather than sovereign subjectivity appears to fit this reality better. Therefore it's not precisely the lack of an alternative political vocabulary that stands in the way of a post-humanist, post-liberal subjectivity (Lavin, 2013, 131), but rather the means to productively rearticulate those concepts so that they fit a counter-hegemonic agenda. I argue that the activisms discussed above provide reason to believe this can be done through political action.

9 Conclusion

Let's for a second return to the initial question: What is the nature of Swedish dietary hegemony? And, how do counter-hegemonic food politics work within the framework of hegemony? I have argued that Swedish dietary hegemony orbits the protection of the idea of the sovereign subject. According to the argument, this hegemony circles around three main dietary discourses; namely the nutritional discourse, the anti-obesity discourse and the animalic food discourse. All of these give rise to specific body-ideals (the non-fat body, the not-too-thin body and the productive body), which in turn produces different kinds of eating disorders. These eating disorders work to produce subjects characterized by virtues of self-control, self-awareness and self-responsibility, as well as a hierarchic continuum of categories based on how well one conforms to hegemonic dietary norms. Furthermore, I argue that this biopolitical machinery is fueled by oppressive systems of difference, like capitalism, speciesism, racism and sexism, which legitimize and safeguard the constitutive processes of the sovereign subject, as well as confirm dietary ideals of the "healthy" human (white, male, (upper) middle class) while creating a range of unhealthy others. Moreover, I propose that this normative dietary complex is held together by a set of internal and external enforcing mechanisms of subjection, ranging from structural discrimination and propaganda to shaming and everyday comments and finally to internalized self-control. Lastly, I argue that counter hegemony is possible within a hegemonic framework, but that it works in often ambivalent and paradoxical ways.

I'm the first to point out that this study does not necessarily tell an accurate story of the nature of the contemporary hegemonic struggle within food politics in Sweden. Rather it's an argument based upon the narratives of a few activists within a peripheral political sphere, telling their story. Further research might try to capture other groups and other aspects of the matter. In particular it would be interesting to dive deeper into how particular racialized, gendered or classed groups deal with the challenges that hegemonic dietary politics pose. On the other hand, it would be intriguing to see a larger study focusing on the majority population's experience and to investigate how agency might work in groups conforming to hegemonic norms. With this said, given the results of this study, I would call for further research to take into account the broad variety of eating disorders and their different ways of affecting diverse

groups in society. Importantly, taken for granted dietary norms and body ideals cannot remain unquestioned: Thinness should not be brushed off as simply a privileged attribute, but as a complex social position characterized also by shame, eating disorders and social exclusion; likewise meatism is not necessarily a state of normalcy, but a heavily enforced ideological construction with very concrete consequences. On the other hand, subversive diets like veganism and counter norms like fat-positivity produce their own complicated relations to food, which are in no sense trouble free. We need to start to problematize our relationship to food and recognize that eating disorders do not only affect certain peripheral groups of people but is a large scale societal phenomenon that no one can escape. Furthermore, we need to acknowledge, not only that there are powerful economic and political incentives to control food production and consumption, but that we all play important roles in enforcing the destructive dietary norms that contribute to shape the very fundamental arrangements of society, in Sweden and globally.

In any case, insofar the results of this study resonate with a broad range of former research in the field, we may suggest that Swedish dietary hegemony, like dietary hegemony in much of the western world, benefits some at the expense of others. Hence, there is cause to believe that there is room for improvement within this political scene. This study argues that this is possible, even if it's very complicated, and furthermore that the overturning of current hegemony in food politics favors the abandonment of a sovereign view on subjectivity for a more digestive one. Thus, the question should not be whether to eat or to be eaten, as liberal discourse proposes, but whether to embrace one's interconnectivity with the outside world or to wither away in private.

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Appendix: Interview guide

I conducted six interviews with a total of seven persons. In other words: four single interviews and two group interviews with two people except for me. One person participated in both a single interview and a group interview (Bim). Since I learned more and more about the field throughout the interview process, the interview guide was changed considerably from interview to interview. Therefore I provide below an approximate of questions asked and in what order, which are to portray an example of the average interview guide. As all interviews were held in Swedish this is a translation of the original questions.

- 1) Can you start by telling me a bit about yourself/yourselfes)?
- 2) Are you politically active? If so, in what way?
- 3) What have you eaten today?
- 4) Could you go through a typical day for you eating-wise? For example: What do you eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner?
- 5) What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I say “food”?
- 6) What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I say “health”?
- 7) Do you think there is a connection between food and health? If so, in what way?
- 8) What role does food (and health) have in your life?
- 9) How much time do thinking about food and health take up for you an average day? In what way?
- 10) Do you have any goals that you strive to accomplish when it comes to food (and health)?
- 11) Do you have any perception of social norms concerning food (and health) in society? If so, how do they look?
- 12) Do you have personal experience of such norms? And/or, do you know anyone who has?
- 13) Do you see a connection between food, health and politics? And how does this connection take form in your life?
- 14) In a utopic society, what role do you think food (and health) should have in your life?