

Lund University

Department of Sociology

# **Making the world a better place, violently.**

- *A study of the narratives of Djurfront*



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Supervisor: Erik Hannerz

## **Abstract**

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In this thesis I investigate the narratives through which Djurfront makes sense of and justify animal rights, actions, demonstrations as well as the use of violence. But also how these narratives within Djurfront are formed and maintained. By using narrative theory and narrative criminology I investigate how Djurfront creates and shapes their narratives, but also how these are used to encourage (violente) action. The theory of underdog stories is used to understand Djurfront's view on themselves, their opponents, the purpose of their struggle and what keeps them motivated. With netnography as my methodological approach I examine news articles, interviews, Djurfront's instagram account and texts published by Djurfronts activists. I also asked Djurfront questions via email and conducted four qualitative interviews with activists from other animal rights organizations to answer questions the collected netnographic material could not fully cover. This thesis contributes to an increased understanding of how animal rights activists create meaning around their actions and approaches to conducting the fight for animals. But it also shed light on how they make moral sense of violent actions and what techniques they use to do this.

**Keywords:** Djurfront; Animal rights; Animal Rights Activism; Narratives; Cultural Criminology.

## Popular science summary

### **What makes animal rights activists use violent methods to pursue their activism?**

According to Djurfront, animal rights activism needs to become more radical. It is no more than right that people who use or eat animals suffer, or are being harassed. But how can Djurfront see it as a matter of course?

To answer this, I have examined the narratives through which Djurfront makes sense of and justify animal rights, actions, demonstrations as well as the use of violence. But also how these narratives within Djurfront are formed and maintained. A narrative can be seen as a story, something that explains what *has* happened, but also points to where one should go in the future. For example, when Djurfront talks about demonstrations they have carried out and how they will not give up until a mink farm has closed down, it is a form of story.

Since the government designated animal rights activism as a special issue for the police in 2019, it is also important to create a knowledge and understanding behind the activism. What drives them, how do they view animals, why they sometimes use violent methods and what do they consider to be right and wrong. My study contributes to an insight into Djurfront and how they can see radical or violent methods as a matter of course in the fight for the animals. In order to solve a problem, we must also understand the root of the problem, which I want to contribute with the help of my study. By gaining an insight and increased understanding of Djurfronts motives and activism it will also be easier to design strategies for dealing with animal rights activism.

To investigate this, I have studied Djurfront's instagram, texts and articles that have been written by their activists as well as news articles that include Djurfront in some way. I also asked Djurfront questions via email, which they answered as a unified group. In addition to this, I have also conducted 4 interviews with members from the animal rights organizations Djurens Rätt, Djurrättsalliansen and a former member from Djurfront.

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## 1. Introduction

I grew up in a family where animals have always been a central part, partly because my father is an immense animal lover and my mother a vegetarian for about 20 years. So I have since childhood learned to care for animals, nature and that all living things are equally important. For a few years now my sister has been vegan and I myself am a vegetarian, in the slow process of becoming vegan as well. On the other hand, I have never been directly involved in animal rights organizations other than following their posts on social media and for about a year being a monthly donor to Djurens Rätt (Animal Rights). I would describe my participation as passive and without really any major thought about why, it only felt natural to support in some way, more than stop eating meat. Therefore, until about one year ago, I was relatively unaware of the ‘radical’ part of animal rights and even less familiar with the actions and demonstrations carried out in the fight for animal liberation. Through an acquaintance on instagram who started sharing posts from several different animal rights organizations I got an insight into the actions and demonstrations that were going on. It was also the first time I was introduced to the animal rights organization Djurfront (Animal Front). Their black-clad activists, pictures of minks in cages, films from demonstrations were like a whole new world in animal rights for me. I started to wonder how it is possible for groups and activists to see violence and radical action as something moral, necessary and legitimate in the fight for justice. Words such as ‘militant’, ‘extreme’ and ‘radical’ are not synonymous with what animal rights stand for, for me at least, and it piqued my interest to further investigate what this animal rights group and animal rights activists actually are and what they stand for.

From the outside, there seems to be a form of tension between showing compassion or doing the right thing but at the same time being more radical and violent in their approach. Both right-wing movements like The Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR) and left-wing like Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) and The Revolutionary Front have all commented on moral in their actions and how it sometimes can be justified, necessary or morally right to use violence/radical actions to reach the goal (See, Sandberg 2005:11; Samordandemotextremism 2021; Ledarperspektiv #10, 2018). That morality can be ambiguous and that it shows in how activists behave is something that Jonas Lindblom and Kerstin Jacobsson (2014) identify and believe that society's perception of an activist can oscillate between the ‘idealistic’ and the ‘militant’. The former is that the activist is seen as a kind-hearted person who wants to fight societal problems and does so out of consideration, but in many cases activists are seen as

'militant', an outsider who disrupts everyday life with his seemingly provocative or transgressive actions (Jacobsson & Lindblom 2014:135). So what happens when society sees an activist as 'militant' and the activist may see themselves as 'idealistic'? How do they create meaning around their actions and how do they make their (violent) actions morally defensible? This is something that I further want to investigate and since I am interested in animal rights, I have chosen to focus on the Swedish animal rights organization Djurfront.

The common ground for Sweden's most established and well known animal rights organizations - Djurens Rätt, Djurrättsalliansen (The animal rights alliance) and Djurfront - is a society where animals can live for their own sake, without being exploited by humans. In 2009, Djurrättsalliansen published the film *Ett liv som gris* (A life as a pig), a major revelation that for the first time provided an insight into how the Swedish pig industry is deficient and how pigs are being exploited (Djurrättsalliansen 2020a). In 2019, Djurens Rätt conducted another opinion poll where it emerged that almost 9 out of 10 Swedes believe that companies should set and maintain a higher level of animal protection than the minimum level in the established legislation (Djurens Rätt 2020a). To work with documentation, disclosure, opinion formation and democratic influence is an approach that the two mentioned organizations have chosen to use. They both write on their respective websites that they work on the basis of a non-violent policy where neither animals nor humans should be harmed in the fight (Djurrättsalliansen 2020b; Djurens Rätt 2020b). But individual influence is not enough - that was at least what some animal rights activists felt in 2017 and decided to create Djurfront. Djurfront is an organization that instead of the approaches mentioned above has chosen to focus on creative demonstrations, startling actions and to confront animal oppressors face to face (Djurfront 2020). One of their activists writes in a debate article:

I believe that those who subject animals to suffering deserve to feel bad and that it is very ethical for someone who harms animals to suffer /.../. It is not more than right that those who expose animals to these crimes get to taste their own medicine. You should not be able to get away with torturing and exploiting animals - Zhu Hansson (2020a).

This approach has resulted in newspaper headlines, prosecutions, convictions and many debates in the media where they are described as for example militant vegans and as "an organized, violent extremism that society must stop before terrorism escalates further" (Haldesten 2020). Unlike Djurens Rätt and Djurrättsalliansen, Djurfront's media attention has included a lot of criticism and demands from higher authorities to put an end to their actions



(Dahlman 2019; Haldesten 2020). In early 2019, Göteborgs Posten (GP) published a major review of, according to them, “militant vegan terror” and let 32 Swedish farmers testify about their experiences (Verdicchio 2019b). Most farmers express disappointment over that their reports to the police often were dropped due to lack of evidence, even though some of the threats against them sounded as follows; “We will execute you in the garden”, “Tonight you parents house is on fire”, “Time is ticking for you and your children" (Verdicchio 2019b). Following GP’s review, animal rights-related crimes received a great deal of attention around the country, which also led the government to point out this type of crime as a priority issue for the police in 2019 (Dorian 2019b). After a brief scan over animal rights groups in Sweden, Djurfront became the clear choice since they openly describe themselves as a radical group. For example one of their prominent profiles Rebecca Zhu Hansson, that often acts as spokesperson for Djurfront writes in a debate article:

I believe that we who are animal lovers act in self-defense when we fight for the liberation of animals. In the end, it's about justice. It is no more than right that those who expose the animals to these crimes get to taste their own medicine - Zhu Hansson (2020b).

The aim of this study is to investigate the narratives through which Djurfront makes sense of and justify animal rights, actions, demonstrations as well as the use of violence. But also how these narratives within Djurfront are formed and maintained.

My research questions are as follows:

- How does Djurfront characterise and legitimize the use of violence in their struggle for animal liberation?
- What techniques do they use to overcome barriers to violence?

## 1.1 Outline

This thesis will consist of six chapters. Starting with the introduction where I present the subject with some background information and put my research issue in context. Further I will present previous research, which include historical aspects of Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and two categorizations of animal rights groups namely animal welfare and animal rights. I will also discuss different views on how to justify violence and make moral sense of it, and conclude the chapter with how narratives and emotions are used within animal rights groups. Followingly I will present my theoretical framework where I begin with narrative theory and discuss what a narrative is, but also how it is used. I also discuss narrative criminology in addition to narrative theory and finish with the section on underdog stories. Then I will present my methodological approach where I discuss my data sampling, selections and delimitations, interviews, ethical considerations and how I analyzed and coded my material. Further my analysis chapter is presented, divided into three subchapters; The cause of Djurfront; Techniques to identify the good and the bad side; Characterizing and legitimizing the use of violence. The first part (5.1) focuses on Djurfronts main narrative and their cause, but also how they compare themselves to a bigger cause. The second part, chapter (5.2) consists of how Djurfront both define the enemy and what they are fighting, but also themselves and how they portray themselves as a hero, fighting for the vulnerable. The final chapter (5.3) looks into how these narratives and causes then result in (violente) actions, demonstrations and radical methods, but also how they make moral sense of it and how they use language to spread their activism. The last chapter is a conclusion where I summarize the most important parts and findings.

## **2. Background**

With this literature review the aim is to set the academic context by presenting research from previous scholars in the same or related fields. Initially, I present the group ALF, which is one of the main groups that Djurfront sympathizes with and is a part of, therefore I consider it relevant to get a brief historical overview. Further I present two ideologies that simplify the process of categorizing different animal rights groups, animal rights and animal welfare. I continue with raising different perspectives on how to justify the use of violence and when it may be legitimate to use. Lastly I present how narratives and emotions are used in animal rights groups to strengthen their own ideology but also to communicate and engage the public.

### **2.1 Animal Liberation Front**

Rachel Monaghan (2013) summarizes in her article how the more extreme form of animal rights gained momentum in England in the 1970s when Ronnie Lee and Cliff Goodman created the group Band of Mercy which later became the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). The new group developed more radical methods such as vandalism, destruction, liberation of animals and started to focus on slaughterhouses, fur shops and companies to create change for the animals. The group has never had a central leader but has instead announced that "Any group of people who are vegetarians or vegans and who carry out actions according to ALF guidelines have the right to regard themselves as part of the ALF" (Monaghan 2013:939).

On Djurfront's instagram, ALF's logo is regularly seen, for example on flags, activist's clothes and on clothes that Djurfront sells as merchandise. It is thus clear that Djurfront supports and is a part of ALF, which is the reason that I'm including the history, goals and methods of ALF. The three overall goals for ALF are; to save as many animals as possible; destroy the livestock industry through economic sabotage; to try to convince the public about atrocities against animals and to get more people to become vegan or vegetarian (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2016:230). Since ALF always claimed to be a non-violent group, society also raised their eyebrows when a previously unknown group, Animal Rights Militia (ARM) in the 1980s began to take responsibility for various attacks aimed at intimidating or harming people, for example letter bombs sent to politicians (Monaghan 2013:936). Because ALF and ARM have similar views, but ARM is willing to go a step further, i.e. use force and threaten the public about possible dangers while ALF acted "underground", the groups were

assumed to cooperate (Połuszna 2015:56). In Sweden, Djurfront seems to have a connection to the Swedish group of ARM (Djurättsmilisen or DMR on Swedish). The Center for Violent Extremism for example wrote in their report that central figures in Djurfront have previously been active in DMR and carried out actions in their name (CVE 2020:19).

## **2.2 Animal Welfare and Animal Rights**

Elzbieta Połuszna (2015) identifies two ideological divisions within animal rights groups that may be important to keep in mind when categorizing organizations; Animal welfare and animal rights. Animal welfare makes some difference between humans and animals and is not completely against animal exploitation, as long as it is done in a humane way without unnecessary suffering (Połuszna 2015:67; Francione & Garner 2010:5-6). Animal rights, on the other hand, opposes all forms of animal exploitation and believes that animals should be treated with the same respect and dignity as humans, they should be recognized as living beings and not seen as things (Połuszna 2015:68; Francione & Garner 2010:22). In terms of methods, animal welfare distances itself from all illegal activities and instead focuses on changing i.e. legislation and praxis, while animal rights believes that more radical and drastic changes are needed because laws do not leave room for compromise (Połuszna 2015:74). But despite these differences, most activists, regardless of ideology, can often accept - and sometimes support - various forms of civil disobedience, and at the same time refrain from acts of violence (Połuszna 2015:ibid).

As I mentioned in the previous section, ALF distances themselves from violent methods, but at the same time activists in Djurfront - that are part of ALF - say that people who exploit animals should get a taste of their own medicine and that it is ethical for someone who harms animals to suffer. It arouses my interest in how Djurfront actually views and defines violence and the use of violence. But also how they describe themselves as a group, if they describe themselves as a non-violente organisation will they also describe themselves as a group that goes under animal welfare or animal rights? By investigating the narratives though Djurfront makes sense of and justify animal rights, actions, demonstrations as well as the use of violence I can relate it to this previous research and see if there are any similarities or differences between Djurfront and ALF.

### **2.3 Justifying the use of violence and making moral sense of it**

Defining violence is not always easy and Federico Zuolo (2020) believes that if a person is exposed to direct harm, it is considered violence, but when it comes to threats, sabotage or campaigns that pressure individuals, the definition is not as obvious. Even if the acts are considered morally problematic, they are not always classified as violence (Zuolo 2020:80). That crime and violence are sometimes described by animal rights activists as a necessary evil is reinforced when they make the comparison with the liberation of slaves, a movement that was not always non-violent or within the framework of the law (Zuolo 2020:ibid). Francione and Garner (2010) mentions a similar comparison that was made as early as the 1800th century by the utilitarian philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. They identified similarities between slavery and animal husbandry, both groups being treated as things and standing without rights. They believed that just as race should not justify moral exclusion, different species should not ignore each other's suffering (Francione & Garner 2010:8).

Zuolo (2020) mentions both animal rights philosopher Tom Regan and animal rights activist Steve Best who listed conditions for when violence is legitimate - if not mandatory. It should be aimed at defending an innocent subject; it should not be excessive; all other non-violence alternatives have been exhausted (Zuolo 2020:82). What justifies violence is also; the right of all living creatures to equal treatment (anti-speciesism<sup>1</sup>) and self defense, but since animals cannot defend themselves, extensional self-defense develops where activists take responsibility (Połuszná 2015:96). Although ALF has always claimed that they are a group that has a strict code of non-violence, their definition of violence is interesting to discuss. Luís Cordeiro-Rodrigues (2016) writes how ALF has the attitude that violence against sentient beings, human or not, should be avoided, but that violence against sentient beings does not - according to them - include for example the liberation of animals, vandalism or financial sabotage. Violence is defined by ALF as “one individual or group intentionally and aggressively causes physical harm or death to another individual or group without justification and adequate cause” (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2016:229). In summary this means that ALF does not see themselves as violent as their actions are not intended to harm sentient beings and because property - according to them - is not sentient they can not be exposed to

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<sup>1</sup> The rejection of the use of the species of a sentient being as an argument for disregarding its interests and its life.

violent acts (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2016). According to ALF, their actions are also justified and correctly, which contributes to them not seeing themselves as a violent group, because in their view violence can only include actions that have no reasonable cause or reason. But since the exploitation and use of animals in their eyes is wrong and unfair, it is not an act of violence to perform acts for the justice of animals (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2016:229).

In his article, Cordeiro-Rodrigues analyzes the group's actions based on war theory, which is usually applied to terrorist acts, and lists three arguments as to why such actions are not morally justified; they are not measures of last resort; they are excessively violent and do not discriminate targets; and they have no reasonable probability of success (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2016:226). The result also shows that ALF's actions are not legitimate with the arguments; they have not tried non-violent and legal alternatives; their actions are ineffective; the methods are exaggerated and inappropriate (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2016:233). However, he opposes this to some extent and believes that ALF's methods are, after all, a last resort since animal rights activists for several years have tried to eliminate animal exploitation through both non-violent actions and legal activism (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2016:234). How to define violence and what is classified as violence or harm can in other words vary depending on the situation, who and what it is aimed at or who you ask. Again, the purpose of this study is to investigate the narratives through which Djurfront makes sense of and justify animal rights, actions, demonstrations as well as the use of violence. But also how these narratives within Djurfront are formed and maintained. To understand this we also need to understand how Djurfront makes sense of violence and morality justifies it, which this previous research on how ALFs perceive and classify violence helps me with. Since Djurfront is part of ALF, it's likely that they have common views and definitions of violence.

## **2.4 Narratives and the use of emotions within animal rights groups**

Narratives have according to Kurt Braddock (2015) been present throughout human history and they affect multiple things like our emotional states, belief systems behavioural patterns and how we respond to the world around us. Braddock (2015) further explains that narratives are the most important method for groups - for example terrorists - to spread information and attempt to influence others (p.38). In his article, Braddock has chosen to focus on ALF's narratives to see what radical effect a certain communication can have. Braddock questions how ALF uses narratives and identifies the types of narrative themes that can promote radicalization among message recipients (Braddock 2015:39). Using narratives to benefit

one's own ideology, Braddock (2015) believes, is one of the most effective methods because narratives can encourage dissatisfaction but at the same time motivate and reinforce identities that are open to the ideology's message. By making communication easy to understand and concrete for the recipient, their own worldview is also promoted (Braddock 2015:38). This is also suggested by Della Porta & Diani (2006) who believe that in a social movement that wants to succeed, active reformulation of the group's own ideals and motives is required to be able to influence the part of the public that they want to mobilize. In his study, Braddock identifies themes in ALF's narratives, such as victimization of animals; animal emotions; animal morality (Braddock 2015:43,47-50). He also explains that there are seven different types of emotions that encourage people to take action, so for example when ALF produces animals in need and suffering, a feeling of compassion or guilt can appear, which in turn can create the feeling that action is required (Braddock 2015:51-53). With my thesis I want to to some extent continue on the work that Braddock (2015) has done. Since his focus is on ALF, and Djurfrent to some extent is a part of ALF I think his work lays a ground for me to stand on when I study Djurfrent.

Tanner Vea (2020) writes about emotions and considers emotions to be crucial for promoting collective action, both in terms of creating and shaping social movements but also in deciding which strategy to use. The use of emotional configuration is explained as *how* social movements express themselves, both in language and activity and what the connection between emotion, feeling and exercise looks like (Vea 2020:328). The group he examined, Direct Action Everywhere (DxE) was disturbing the 'ordinary' norms in environments where animals are exploited in different ways, DxE also injects emotional configurations in contexts where it is not normally seen as problematic (Vea 2020:335). For example, saying "It's not food! It's violence!" suggests that there is an enemy, which creates a moral sense of wanting to resist (Vea 2020:331). Using the language in the way Vea (2020) describes is something I want to examine if Djurfrent also does, if so *how* they do it and in what situations. Vea also highlights the concept of 'moral shocks' from Jasper and Poulsen, which means that an event or situation evokes such strong emotions that it evokes a tendency for political action (Vea 2020:318). However, it can have the opposite effect if the shock is too great so the recipient instead experiences it as brutal or frightening and chooses to back down (Hansson & Jacobsson 2014:271). Jacobsson & Lindblom (2016) also believe that the distance between what activists try to achieve and ordinary people's world of life is often large, which can also make it difficult for people to relate and receive what is conveyed. An example of this is that

activists question the existing worldview and codes of conduct, so for example an ordinary dish can be seen as a good meal while activists see it as a murder or a corpse (Lindblom & Jacobsson 2016:93).



### **3. Theoretical standpoints**

The overall purpose of my thesis is to investigate the narrative through which Djurfront makes sense of and justify animal rights, actions, demonstrations as well as the use of violence. But also how these narratives within Djurfront are formed and maintained. Narrative theory is the cornerstone for being able to answer my research questions, but I consider it necessary to also include narrative criminology. Partly to understand how narrative can contribute to harmful actions but also to understand how Djurfront can make sense of harm. Further I argue that underdog stories give a final touch in the understanding of how Djurfront presents themselves and is in relation to what they want to fight. But also how they view themselves, their actions and their purpose with fighting for animal liberation. Since all theories are partly connected to each other, it gives me a solid foundation to stand on when it comes to analyzing my material, but their differences help me to see the material from different points of views.

#### **3.1 Narrative theory**

Lois Presser (2018) explains that narrative is in other words a story, and the stories we humans hear inspire us to act in different ways, we can engage in demonstrations, vote in elections or commit violence. We also choose which social network we want to participate in, our workplace or which different groups we want to be part of - or not be part of. In summary, stories are a contributing factor to the fact that lots of people choose to both believe and act in a similar way (Presser 2018:1). Presser & Sandberg (2015) states; “/.../ a narrative is a type of discourse that follows events or experiences over time and makes some point”. (p.2). That a narrative makes some point is connected to what is defined as the plot of the story or narrative. The plot is thus what gives the narrative a meaning because it also makes logical order of causes and events. This is made up of causality and temporality, where the former explains how events are related to each other while temporality explains how events follow in chronological order (Sandberg 2016:154). Denscombe (2010) further explains that when a story is treated as a narrative it is normally expected to do the following; have some specific purpose, containing a plotline linking the past to the present and involve people (p.291). One of the main functions of stories Presser means is to help us interpret circumstances and events, based on interpretations it determines how we should respond to the situation, which means that stories create a moral significance of the situations we are exposed to (Presser 2018:10). According to Presser (2018), a theory based on narrative can

explain how individuals can be absorbed by a certain social environment which also means that they can do harm, without for that matter abandoning the idea that they are a self-thinking individual who makes their own decisions. Presser (2018) continues to say that it is not surprising that there is a lot of research on the role of narratives in social movements as narratives can be seen as a kind of guide to action. Because even though stories are always retrospective and describe what *has* happened, they also point forward and contribute to what *will* happen next (Presser 2018:15).

Using different techniques to ignore things or events that are morally problematic can also be done with the help of our language. Language also shapes the thought patterns on which our actions are based and can be adapted to make, for example, harmful behavior legitimate and reduce personal responsibility (Bandura 1999:195). This can mean, for example, that one “cleanses” the language by camouflaging the harmful and how this contributes to people being able to behave more cruelly than if the action were described without “cleansing” (Bandura 1999). A similar example is highlighted by Carol Addams (1990) who believes that the words e.g. “dead bodies” are absent when we talk about meat, which means that we also distance ourselves from “literal facts” of experience of violence. These examples from Bandura (1999) and Addams (1990) help me understand if and if so *how* Djurfront uses language to create and use their narratives. But also how their formulations and expressions may differ from the ‘cleansed language’ in society.

### **3.2 Narrative criminology**

Narrative Criminology (NC) is a relatively new concept that was coined and developed during the 2000s by Presser (2009), but was further developed after contributions from Sandberg (2010; 2013; 2016). NC is used to both explain and understand how different narratives can inspire and motivate harmful actions, but also how harmful actions can be legitimized and how harm can make sense (Presser & Sandberg 2015:1). Harm is generally understood as an act or deed that in some way harms others (Presser 2013). Narrative criminologists are thus mainly focused on - and worried about - what damage stories can cause in the form of how they create patterns for criminal and criminalized acts (Presser 2018:9). Is it so that Djurfront uses their narratives to inspire harmful actions and if so, how do they legitimize and make sense of this? With the help of narrative criminology I will be able to better understand and answer this.

Despite the fact that NC is relatively new, stories and storytelling have been a central part of criminology for a long time. For example, Sykes & Matza (1975) mention “neutralization techniques” which means that a perpetrator uses certain techniques and narratives to be able to legitimize their immoral actions. These techniques were elevated by Pośluszna (2015) when she wrote about animal rights activists and how their self-images conflict with them as a noble person going to war for the animals and the image of them as a criminal or terrorist. Furthermore, Katz (1990) also writes about narratives and how deviant behavior often follows certain narratives and often is motivated by the fact that their stories have potential for a good retelling. Narrative has thus been relevant in criminology despite the fact that the term NC was not included. An example of when NC has actually been mentioned in research is in articles from Sandberg, Tutenges & Pedersen (2019); Sandberg & Tutenges (2013); Sandberg, Tutenges, Copes (2015).

### **3.3 Underdog stories**

When Presser (2018) writes about stories, she means that all stories tell of some form of change in circumstances. What she further describes as *dramatic stories* includes a drastic change, a form of crisis which, for example, means that the situation goes from, for example, calm to anxious. Dramatic stories also show that action is required and that it is in principle necessary and sometimes inevitable not to act (Presser 2018:88). But what I want to focus on in my thesis is what she calls *underdog stories*, which means that the actions performed are honorable, morally correct but at the same time the success of the action is doubtful (Presser 2018:ibid). Presser (2018) further believes that underdog stories are appropriate to apply to various uprisings or protest movements where the stated opponent or enemies possess more resources or power (e.g. legal powers or personnel). Underdog stories thus include a fight against an injustice or some form of circumstance that is considered morally wrong, offensive or a threat (Presser 2018:88). The boundaries between the underdog and the pronounced enemy appear both materially and morally, e.g. weak vs strong and good vs bad (Presser 2018:90). This means, emphasizing the difference between the two parties also highlights the underdog’s actual position and that the opponent is seen as an impossible obstacle to pass but at the same time reinforces the nobility of fighting against it. For example, Djurfront is a relatively small organization that is materially at a disadvantage against the animal industry, both in e.g. economy and number of people. Djurfront also claims to advocate for animals and defend the helpless against the 'evil', which in this case is industries or people who oppress

animals. So being underdog and inferior but at the same time striving to drastically change the situation shows great courage (Presser 2018:90).

The fight that takes place at a disadvantage also evokes high emotions, because the fight itself means so much to underdog's, the emotions in the story also match the intensity of the moral, which further also matches the intensity of evil (Presser 2018:93-94). Negative emotions have been shown to give us a greater impression than positive emotions, as Baumeister et.al (2001) identified and writes; "Events involving bad emotions remain more salient on people's minds than events involving good emotions" (p.333). It is no secret that there are negative feelings and aspects involved in underdog stories, but in that story it is the enemy who holds all forms of negativity and the underdog is freed from this and stands victorious (Presser 2018:95). To return to what I mentioned at the beginning that underdog stories are dramatic stories, the drama in underdog stories is triggered by the heroes being on the side of justice, even if no one else sees or acknowledges this (Presser 2018:96). But that no one acknowledges or sees that underdogs are on the side of justice does not matter, because the underdog has the 'moral law' on its side to act in the way they do, which leads us further to what Presser (2018) thinks is a power paradox. The power paradox in this case is that the underdog is certainly powerless in the present but at the same time empowered by some force.

Presser (2018) explains that the underdog puts everything at stake for something that is much bigger than himself and is faithful to his principles or leaders in a very loyal way - which can also mean a form of suffering. Being loyal in that way can be seen as stupidity, but the underdog sees the struggle and the promise of a life without loss as a driving factor in continuing. The strong loyalty and suffering is also seen as something necessary, not only to strengthen the triumph in possibly winning but also to strengthen the underdog's steadfastness (Presser 2018:98-99). In dramatic stories - and especially underdog stories - there is a shift in understanding and Presser (2018) believes that there are three moments of mis/understanding; broad public misrecognition, the hero's special recognition of the truth and the public's awakening to the truth. The former means that the underdog is misunderstood, underestimated, seen as weak or inferior and will therefore be easily defeated because the real potential is not clear to the environment. Second, the hero or the underdog is the one who knows the real truth, his way and methods are the only right one because his moral views are superior and he can identify bad qualities that others overlook or miss.

Lastly, it includes how the public finally wakes up and realizes that the hero has always been right both in opinions and moral actions, which also means that the underdog will become known and associated with heroism, heart and kindness (Presser 2018:100-101).

In this chapter I have presented and discussed narrative theory, narrative criminology and underdog stories which will give me three different theoretical glasses to analyze my collected material with. But above all, help me to answer my purpose and research question. In the next chapter, I will therefore describe how I have collected my data and material to apply these theories to.

## 4. Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the narratives through which Djurfront makes sense of and justify animal rights, actions, demonstrations as well as the use of violence. But also how these narratives within Djurfront are formed and maintained. To answer this I have collected my data by using netnography which I'm initially starting to explain in this chapter. Second I discuss my selections and delimitations during the process and how I conducted qualitative interviews. Furthermore I also discuss which ethical considerations that have been made and finish the chapter with presenting how I analyze and coded the collected data.

### 4.1 Data sampling

Based on my purpose and research questions I have chosen to use netnography as my methodological approach and collect my data online. In line with my chosen theories it is most appropriate to study Djurfront online rather than at actions or demonstrations. Also, since I conducted my thesis during the covid-19 pandemic, netnography as a method is suitable to respect current restrictions. However, netnography originates from ethnography and like that type of research about understanding cultural and social contexts (Berg 2015:10-13). One of the advantages of netnography is the opportunity to get close to the people you study despite a physical distance, as for example the text that is published is user-generated. Through this, the researcher can thus get closer than what might have been possible in ordinary ethnographic research (Hine 2000:37; Berg 2015:30). Another advantage of netnography is that the material I collect (usually) is not produced for the purpose of helping my study but would most likely have been published regardless, which Alvehus (2013) means also makes the material authentic. Kozinets (2010) suggest three different types of netnographic data, *archived data*, *developed data* and *field notes*, the former means that the researcher collects data from conversations where he/she is not involved, developed data is the opposite and has been created through interaction with the members of the context and lastly, field notes are observations of the selected community and the researchers own reflections of the field. In relation to my purpose and research questions I decided that archived data was the most suitable for my study, however I also used some of my own field notes to see my thoughts and reflections on Djurfront's publications.

Although I easily could get involved and for example comment on Djurfronts posts on instagram it's not only up to me to decide if I can participate or not. Like Aspers (2011:66)

writes, when closed groups are studied, it is not only up to the researcher to decide on participation, it is an agreement between the researcher and the group. But I do not consider it of value for my data collection to be involved, I want to investigate how they themselves communicate, what they publish and how they act without my involvement. Since I'm interested in how they as a group create meaning around activities and violence, and what narratives they use, text-data is the best option for my study. Even though much of Djurfront's activism takes place on site, for example outside shops or in public places I argue that just as much - if not more - of their activism takes place online. But then in the form of pictures, films, debate articles and so on. Online it is also easier to reach a larger audience as publications can be made several times a day while a protest (usually) needs to be planned and can not be carried out to the same extent. In other words, much of the narratives Djurfront creates also takes place online.

Depending on the sources, I've collected my material in different ways. In the next section I describe more in detail what delimitations I have made, but in summary I have used instagram, texts and articles from activists in Djurfront and news/debate articles that talks about or with Djurfront to collect my data. When it comes to instagram I have either taken screenshots<sup>2</sup>, screencast<sup>3</sup> or written down in as much detail as possible what the post has contained in order to use it at a later stage. A similar study has been done by Lucibello et.al (2021) who examined photos on instagram with the hashtag #quarantine15 to examine features related to positive and negative body image, and weight stigma. They collected photos from instagram, analyzed the content and coded it. I've used screenshots and screencast for example when Djurfront has posted pictures or videos on their instagram story<sup>4</sup>. As for all my material it has been a process that required me to return to the same material several times to analyze, reflect and try to find new aspects that I may have missed at first glance.

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<sup>2</sup>Screenshot is an image that shows the content on the phone's screen at the exact moment. Like a picture taken by camera fixed on the phone's screen.

<sup>3</sup>Same principle as a screenshot but instead a digital recording of the screen, that can also contain audio recording.

<sup>4</sup>A story on instagram is a function where you can publish a picture or film that is only visible for 24 hours.

## **4.2 Selection and delimitations**

In netnography there are certain procedures that should be used as guidelines for the researchers approach, where the first step involves deciding which issue, places or topics to investigate. After this, the collection of data can begin and it is important to both plan and familiarize yourself with what is to be investigated (Berg 2015; Kozinets 2010). Initially, I therefore chose to make a selection of which sources I would use to collect my data and chose to focus on the following; instagram where the account “Djurfront” has been relevant. There are certainly more accounts linked to Djurfront but there are different local groups whose content is often visible on the account “Djurfront” regardless, so I choose to focus only on the largest and most active account; Djurfront's own website where they link to, among other things, texts their activists wrote themselves, articles where they received media attention; Articles where Djurfront were mentioned or for example interviewed. In summary, I have chosen to collect my data from Djurfront main account on instagram, their activists own texts and articles but also articles or interviews where Djurfront in some way participates or is mentioned. I started following Djurfront and their activity during the autumn of 2020 to get a little insight into what kind of material they published and how frequent they were. In order not to be overwhelmed by material or get an infinite amount of data to process, I have chosen to limit posts and publications on instagram to the time period january 2020 to april 2021. I have done this in relation to the covid-19 pandemic and as I described above how activism has partly moved online. When it comes to their published texts and articles I have chosen not to set a time frame because that material is not to the same extent and I could include everything I found relevant in my study. The same applies to articles that include Djurfront I have chosen not to limit to a specific time period because much of it has been published before my chosen time period but which still has great value for my study.

## **4.3 Interviews**

Although I had good access to material and data online, there are still some areas that are difficult to reach, so I also conducted qualitative interviews. Even if, for example Djurfront or activist from Djurfront wrote about violence and their views on violence in public texts, I still considered it valuable to ask questions directly to them. But also because all the aspects I am interested in exploring are not mentioned in their social media or texts. The qualitative interviews were done with one former member from Djurfront, one person from Djurrättsalliansen and two people from Djurens Rätt. The goal was to also interview active



members of Djurfront, but after I asked them via email, they instead chose to answer my questions via email as a united group. Although my primary data is from Djurfront's own material, the interviews help me fill in any gaps and questions about how both Djurfront and other animal rights groups perceive and view things. This is mentioned by Kozinets (2010) who says that interviews help the researcher to broaden his understanding of what is examined online (p.47). Initially, I chose to contact an old acquaintance who I knew was interested in animal rights and asked if they were interested in an interview, which they were. It was further through them that I got in touch with another person. Using a snowball selection - that one person leads me to a new person - can according to Aspers (2011) be a disadvantage if the selection is limited to a specific network. So I have instead used purposeful sampling (Patton 2002:230) and chose my interviewees based on their ability to contribute to my study and help me answer my purpose and research questions. I have thus strived to find people who can supplement my collected data and enrich it with information that I can not get otherwise. I've chosen to include people from other animal rights groups because they help me answer my research questions, so even if they are not active or members of Djurfront, they have knowledge of what I am researching, which makes them interesting for my study. Both active and former members were of interest and I did not choose to make a distinction in, for example, gender or age, but everyone who was available was of interest.

In addition to this I published a public post on my instagram where I wrote that I was looking for people to interview, which led to me through acquaintances getting in touch with two more people to interview. The choice fell into conducting semi-structured interviews because it both helps me to have certain fixed questions that help me answer my research questions and purpose, but at the same time provide space to add or ask follow-up questions when needed (Skrävad & Lundahl 2016:132). Aspers (2011) mentions how the interviewer can contribute to reduced feelings of discomfort or insecurity in the person being interviewed through a clear structure of the interview and having a relaxed attitude. I therefore briefly explained my thesis, my purpose and informed them that they could at any time choose to cancel, skip questions or subsequently regret their participation. I also informed them about their anonymity and how I would process the material and that it would be deleted when the thesis is completed. Throughout the whole process, it has been important for me to maintain the anonymity of my interviewees, I have therefore chosen to use fictitious names and exclude details that could lead to identify them in some way in my analysis.

As a researcher it is almost impossible to not influence your research since you design, context and questions they study. As Brandt & Eiró (2017:37) points out, it is important to consider who you are and if you have any structural features that may influence, i.e age, gender, class. In my case I have some knowledge of the field and certain events in animal rights, such as seen in the media. This made it easier to be able to relate certain things to each other or talk about specific examples. In some interviews I was asked if I myself was active within animal rights, if I was vegetarian or vegan, and I chose to be sincere and honest to promote chemistry. But the distance also became clear, because despite my knowledge of certain areas there are many things they have answers to that I didn't know. Because they are involved in animal rights in a different way than me, they also possess knowledge that I must ask them about. So in this case with the interviews, I think my previous knowledge of the field has been an advantage.

Since my thesis was conducted in the spring of 2021 and in the covid-19 pandemic, all interviews have been conducted via zoom with respect for current restrictions which I feel has worked well. After approval from the interviews I also recorded the interviews, both via zoom and my phone to make sure that no material would disappear. The interview lasted between about 40 and 70 minutes and were all conducted in Swedish. After the interviews, I transcribed them shortly afterwards to keep them fresh in my memory and even though transcribing can be time-consuming I consider it necessary. Transcription allows me to get “close to the data”, and at the same time as it brings the talk to life again which is valuable before the analysis and an easier form to analyse than an audio recording (Denscombe 2010:275). As for Djurfront I contacted them via their contact form on their website and then kept all types of contact via email. In the questionnaire to Djurfront which was answered via email I tried to be concise but at the same time cover as much as possible. Instead of having simply yes or no questions I instead tried to focus on questions that called for longer and more open answers, for example “What was it that made you start engaging in Djurfront?” or “How should you describe your view on animals vs humans? Are there any similarities or differences?”. Since my original interview form was designed with questions for an individual I had to reformulate the questions a bit for Djurfront so that it would suit them to answer as a group. But overall the questions were the same, just a few linguistic changes like changing “What made you get involved in animal rights” to “What made you start engaging in Djurfront”. I also informed them that they could skip or exclude questions they did not

want to answer and that they were welcome to contact me again if there were any ambiguities.

#### **4.4 Ethical considerations**

In principle all research contains ethical problems, but qualitative studies that often require the research to have some form of relationships with the participants can make ethics even more difficult (Hammersley & Traianou 2012:1). One way to be reflexive in one's research is to use "everyday ethics" and this is important when including people in research and it means to be constantly aware of, constantly sensible and reflective about one's research (Guillemin & Gillam 2004). As I mentioned in my introduction, animals and nature have always been a part of my life and I am to some extent familiar with animal rights despite my passive participation. I have noticed that this has to some extent affected my thesis which has made me constantly reflect on my roles and *how* it may affect. This goes in line with Denscombe (2010) who explains how the researcher has a central role and that their identity and values will be reflected in the final material, and therefore emphasizes the importance of self-reflection. As I mentioned above, my knowledge and part of the field has been a certain asset in my interviews because I have been able to create a relationship with those I interviewed. But when I have processed or searched for material both from Djurfront and other sources, it has been important for me to try to keep an objective view of it and not just fall for the news or publication that appeals to me on a personal level. I am also aware that I may miss certain aspects of my collected data because I am to some extent supporting animal rights and what is done for the animals. Maybe, for example, a farmer or hunter had treated my material in a different way and with different glasses than I do, but I have continuously returned to my research questions and my purpose to remind myself of what it is I am investigating and how I should relate myself to the material. For example, Hannerz (2015) writes about how his own interpretations made him believe that concepts and symbols had the same meaning to all his participants (p.72). So in order not to limit myself to only my own opinions or thoughts on the subject I have continuously during my thesis used reflection in the form of my own writing and by ventilating with old study friends. Partly to share thoughts but also to keep my own feelings and reactions out of my thesis. If the material evokes strong feelings or personal options it has been important for me to be able to talk "outside" my thesis and get it out of my system. The material has in some moments aroused an incredible amount of feelings in me, especially when there have been pictures and films with animals that are tormented or hurt. But I have continuously tried to process this and reflect in order to

return to the material and try to deal with it with an objective eye. But I am also humble to the fact that complete objectivity is impossible to achieve. As a researcher there will always be opinion, personal thoughts and feelings about our study and what we are studying.

In netnography and ethical considerations there are things you as a researcher should review, including what is considered private or public as it can be perceived differently depending on which community or members it concerns. If there are boundaries for private and public, where does the line go (Kozinets 2010). Or is there a risk that the group under investigation (in this case Djurfront) is described incorrectly? Pace and Livigstone (2005) have formulated guidelines to relate netnographic research and believes that communication on the internet can be used, quoted and analyzed without consent if; the interaction is accessible and without password, the information is not sensitive and there are no rules of policy on the site that prohibit the use of the material (p.38). Using these points as guidelines when I collected my data helped me set a clear framework for how I should think when I find new sources and information. It has also facilitated the anonymity of those who have published the material. For example, when members in Djurfront like Rebecca Zhu Hansson - that I mentioned in the introduction - participated in newspapers, interviews or wrote debate articles under her real name, I did not consider it necessary to anonymise as it is already available to the public. Also, when I use a direct quote from such a source, the source of origin can easily be found via search engines (Kozinets 2010; Markham & Buchanan 2015).

#### **4.5 Analyze and coding**

When I started collecting my material, I sorted it into different folders to be able to process and analyze them separately, i.e. "debate articles", "posts on instagram" and so on.

To be able to answer my purpose and research questions I began to analyse the material based on Kozinets (2010) guidelines on how netnographic analysis should be done, using coding or hermeneutic interpretation. In short coding means that a text is studied and in it I find words or sentences that I consider significant and give them specific names or labels. I have to some extent used this, for example when Djurfront uses words or expressions that are usually not heard in everyday life, i.e. "djurförtryckare" (animal oppressor). But what I have mainly used to analyze my material is hermeneutic interpretation which instead of a description strives for explanation (Kozinets 2010:122): What is Djurfront trying to convey, how are they trying to convey this and why have they published just this? By taking a folder separately, looking through all the material, I wrote down what I saw, read and started comparing them with each

other to see any similarities, differences and patterns. What is shown or not shown, are there specific themes and so on. This is the hermeneutic interpretation of the material and I tried to see the underlying reasons for the publications, why certain things were said or written and a deeper meaning was tried to be found. Why are some things written or published repeatedly while some are only mentioned a few times? The codes I create are thus a product of the interpretation process I have done, which Berg (2015:169) means is a result of my knowledge of the field, research questions, theory and general knowledge from the lifeworld. The process has taken time and I have had to return to the same material several times to read it again and see if I missed any aspects or if the coding/categorizations I made fit.

## 5. Analysis

The purpose with this study is to investigate the narratives through which Djurfront makes sense of and justify animal rights, actions, demonstrations as well as the use of violence. But also how these narratives within Djurfront are formed and maintained. So in this chapter I'm going to present, analyse and discuss my collected data. Initially I discuss the cause of Djurfront and what their main narratives are. I will also touch upon what gets people involved in animal rights and how Djurfront compares the animal rights struggle with other historical movements as a strategy. In the next section I discuss who the enemy and hero is according to Djurfront and in this section I also highlight the groups significance for activists and how solidarity and support from each other plays an important role. Lastly I present which (violent) methods and techniques Djurfront uses to pursue their activism. But also how they use morality and language to strengthen their arguments and ideology.

### 5.1 The cause of Djurfront

When I see someone drinking milk, I see someone raping a cow, when I see someone eating eggs, I see rooster chickens being gassed to death, when I see someone eating meat, I see someone killing an animal /.../ - Zhu Hansson (2019a).

How we think of animals is a central part, to say at least, when it comes to animal rights and activism, but how you look at animals can differ quite markedly, which is evident in both my interviews and the collected text data. As I mentioned in the chapter on previous research, Posłuszna (2015) makes a difference between animal welfare and animal rights when talking about animal rights groups. The former briefly means that it is okay to use animals as long as they are not exposed to 'unnecessary suffering' and animal rights are against all forms in which animals are used. Djurfront takes a clear stand on this, partly through their website where they on their startpage have the text "We fight for the total liberation of animals. Until everyone is free" (Djurfront 2020). Djurfront also answers a short and concise "No" in their email when I asked if there is any occasion or situation when it is okay to use animals, for example for vaccines or medicines. In march 2020, they published the text quoted below on instagram and in september 2020, they further developed this and wrote a longer text where they explained the differences between the two categorizations - animal welfare and animal rights - and which group they belong to:

STOP LOOKING FOR EXCUSES! But if the hens live in my garden, can I eat their eggs then? But if I find a dead animal in the forest, can I wear their skins then? But if I only use the animals a little, are you happy then? No! Djurfront is clear in advocating animal rights and not animal welfare! - Djurfront (2020g).

The quote above clearly states that it's under no circumstances okay to use animals, regardless of the situation. Regardless of whether the animals have been treated well during their lifetime or whether the animal died of natural causes, there is nothing that legitimizes that humans should use them. Categorizing oneself under animal rights also becomes a kind of commitment to avoid all forms of animal products, in all contexts. It thus becomes clear that they are against all use of animals and that there are also no occasions when it would be okay to do so. But it also seems that the differences are important because they explain in detail what distinguished the groups. Who belongs to the other group - animal welfare - became even more clearer when I conducted my interviews. When I asked my interviewees if there are any differences or similarities between Djurens Rätt, Djurrättsalliansen and Djurfront and if there is any occasion where it is okay to use animals, three of them describe differences between the groups, but also how they themselves look at the use of animals. I believe this shows that there is a clear difference between animal welfare and animal rights and that the interviewees (and Djurfront) are to some extent aware of it. Djurfront goes under animal rights, Djurens Rätt under animal welfare and Djurrättsalliansen commutes to some extent between the two:

There are more or less three different groups, Djurens Rätt are involved.. god what is it called.. animal welfare. They also want that instead of minks for example to be free they want larger cages. It's a little more, 'yes but keep using animals, but make it a little better for them' /.../ - Sofie, member of Djurrättsalliansen.

We should not expose animals to pain if it is not needed, which is not necessary in my opinion /.../ but I will put myself and people in front of animals, unfortunately. Otherwise I would not have taken the vaccine /.../ - Charlie member in Djurens Rätt.

/.../ You can say like this, militant vs petting along as well, then Djurens Rätt are quite far in that direction and I still think it is a very important part because it is though Djurens Rätt very many are introduced to this idea and then Djurrättsalliansen is in the middle - Billie, former member in Djurfront.

The three quotes show that there is a difference in how you look at animals, Sofie says outright that Djurens Rätt goes under the categorization of animal welfare as they are not against all use of animals, and Caroline says that she will, after all, put herself in front of the animals. Sofie's description of Djurens Rätt and how Caroline talks about the use of animals is also a similar description of how Posluszna (2015) described animal welfare. Djurfront on the other hand, both as a group and individual activists, have on several occasions commented on the view on animals and the use of them. They equate humans with animals, work on the basis of anti-speciesism and strive for all animals to have equal rights and conditions. Seeing animals as their equals or even relatives also contributes to the obvious feeling that "we must act" because who would want to see their family members being exploited or slaughtered? This is also mentioned by the sociologist Kerstin Jacobsson, who in several publications has written about animal rights and animal rights activists. In a interview with GP she says "They see insamination as institutionalized rape and think about what it could mean if 'I' was imprisoned, raped and had to give birth to children that someone then takes away from me" (Dorian 2019a).

I think many find it difficult to relate to our love for animals. Many animal rights activists regard animals as their relatives, which is why many activists see it as an obligation to show the reality of animals to the public - Zhu Hansson (2019b).

Just as the quotes above describe, it can be difficult for society to understand the love that animal rights activists feel for the animals. Most people probably do not see cows as family members or chickens as their friends, but for Djurfront and their activists it becomes a matter of course. Both to react and show the public what is going on because they feel that their relatives, the animals, need their help.

### **5.1.1 The awakening**

But why do people get involved in animal rights? Is it something that emerges in a process or is there a kind of awakening? When I talked with my interviewees they gave examples of how there is a "before" and an "after" when they became vegan, started getting involved in animal rights or realized that animals are being exploited. Three of them describe it like this:

I watched cowspiracy [animal rights movie] and then I became like a vegan right after that movie because I have always been like that, I have tried to hide it and 'no but they are so



good and so'. But when I saw it.. I had never seen it before, how they treat the animals /.../ - Sofie, member in Djurrättsalliansen.

/.../ So I was eight or something when I first became a vegetarian and then I watched a movie called earthlings [animal rights movie]. Which is about cows, chickens and stuff. I thought 'that they do not die so it does not matter', but then when I got to see how they actually had it, I decided on the day to become vegan /.../ - Isabelle, member in Djurens Rätt.

/.../ During that awakening I remembered that I thought like this 'okay but either I have to change something because I feel pissed because I feel that I contribute to this, or I just have to close my eyes and have to stop thinking about it' /.../ - Charlie, member in Djuren Rätt.

All three quotes above point to an awakening, a form of change. Neither Sofie, Isabelle nor Charlie had been aware of the animals' suffering or vulnerability before, which means that they misunderstood the cause with animal rights. But once they got an insight into the animals' situation, it became like an awakening where they suddenly understood the cause. As Presser (2018) explains, underdog stories include some type of crisis or devastating event that contributes to the reaction also becoming urgent and almost inevitable. When my informants saw animal rights-related videos or clips on youtube, it also became a kind of crisis, a wake-up call that contributed to action. An act which in their case involved veganism and / or involvement in animal rights groups. Djurfront on the other hand answers that "Djurfront was created by a group of animal friends who felt the need for a more radical animal rights organization, where confrontations on site are necessary" when I asked what got them to start engage in Djurfront. Their answer is in principle the same description as on their website under the tab "What is Djurfront?".

### **5.1.2 Comparing animal oppression with other historical movements**

To compare the struggle for the animals, or what the animals are exposed to with other historical movements are also common in Djurfront. As I mentioned in the section on previous research Zuolo (2020) wrote about how comparisons with the movement that freed slaves, which were not always without violence and which could also contribute to a legitimization of sometimes reprehensible acts as a "necessary evil". Francione and Garner (2010) wrote about the example from Bentham and Mill that equated the slave movement with animal husbandry and that treating people differently based on race should be as

problematic as different species ignoring each other's suffering. Comparing the animals' situation or vulnerability with history events and movements is a strategy Djurfront has used on several occasions, which can be seen in the three quotes below which are from three of Djurfront's activists:

Fights such as the women's struggle, the slave struggle and the workers' struggle are similar to the animal rights struggle. Someone is hurt by your actions and therefore they must cease even if it feels like you are losing on it - Olle Pohlin (2019).

For the animals, it's a war and we are their only soldiers - Zhu Hansson (2020a).

In the case of the minks, it is a concentration camp where they live their lives in wire cages until they are gassed to death. There you can draw parallels to what happened during World War 2 - Richii Klinsmeister in Hellerud (2019).

Just as I described earlier, their quotes, in line with Presser (2018) show a struggle that is much bigger than themselves. A struggle waged not only against individuals but almost the whole of society, or at least those who allow animal oppression to continue. By comparing the animal rights struggle with other historical events, really shows how Djurfront is in proportion to what they want to fight. A small animal rights organization against animal oppression. Comparing a mink farm with such an extreme event as the holocaust - which is morally wrong in several ways - also shows how unfair, evil and morally wrong Djurfront actually thinks the use of animals is. Comparing the struggle for the animals with other large movements that have not taken place without violence, violent methods or questionable actions also contributes to putting two things in relation to each other, e.g. "why do you think this movement is okay, but not this one?" Most would probably say that violence to liberate jews during the holocaust was completely legitimate, but probably not if a farmer was subjected to violence in order to save the cows, which Richii in the quote above does since he draws parallels to World War 2 when talking about minks.

GP had an interview with the activist "Alex" - listed as one of the most active members of Djurfront in their review - and talked about among other things violence, threats and harassment (Verdicchio 2019f). The journalist asked the question "Could you kill a human for the animals?" and got the answer:

It's not something I planned. It might not be worth it. Should there be a murder the animal rights movement might be branded as terrorist. But if someone were to do it, I think many would support it /.../ You can see it as killing a person to save thousands - Alex in Verdicchio (2019f).

He thus says that it would probably not be worth killing a human for the animals, but if it had happened, many would probably support it. Partly with the argument that you kill one to save thousands. I think this speaks for the same logic and way of thinking as older movements, such as the liberation of slaves, the holocaust or the women's struggle. This again connects to what Presser (2018) says about the fight or the mission being much bigger than the underdog. It is no longer a question of whether you could kill a human being, instead it's seen as saving thousands. In addition, what you have done in the name of the animals would be supported and supported by others, because what you have done is both noble and morally right. This very way of thinking was summed up well in the quote I quoted above, by Pohlin (2019) who said "Someone is hurt by your actions and therefore they must stop, even if it feels like you are losing on it".

In summary, Djurfronts main narrative equates animals to relatives, family members and innocent victims. Also, that there is under no circumstances morally right or to eat or use animals for human purposes. Being part of Djurfront thus means that you commit to the cause and are against all forms of animal oppression.

## **5.2 Techniques to identify the good and the bad side**

### **5.2.1 Who is the enemy?**

When Presser (2018) talks about the enemy that the underdog wants to fight, the difference between the two parties is described both in moral terms, as good vs bad, and material, as weak vs strong. This helps to highlight the underdog's position and also describes how big and seemingly impossible the enemy is to defeat. These strong moral and material differences highlight both the great evil of the enemy but also the underdogs' heroic position.

As I mentioned in the previous section, Djurfront is against all forms of animal oppression and all use of animals, no matter the circumstances. In line with Presser (2018) who believe that the stories we hear also inspire us to act in different ways but also determine, for example, which social network or group we want to belong to, Djurfront has, as I mentioned

above, categorized itself under animal rights and sympathizes with and is part of the group ALF. So the stories and narratives that Djurfront together create also contribute to a common understanding and perception of things - and in this case mainly animal rights. But how, then, can stories call for illegal or harmful acts? The theory of narrative criminology helps me understand this - which I also mentioned in my theory chapter. Narrative criminologists are mainly worried about what damage stories can cause as they can create patterns for criminal action (Presser 2018:9). As I mentioned in the previous section, my informants were influenced by the narrative that described the animals' situation in movies and youtube clips, which also inspired them to take action. Even if their actions consisted of becoming vegan or getting involved in animal rights organizations, a similar awakening or understanding of the cause in another situation could justify a criminal act. Especially when awakening also contributes to an insight into how unfair the animals' situation is and to what extent animals are exploited. The threat or those who oppress animals suddenly becomes great, perhaps much greater than one could have imagined and the moral and material differences that Presser (2018) describes suddenly become apparent.

Since Djurfront strives for the animals' complete rights and freedom, people who stand in the way of this also become an obstacle that needs to be addressed. People who 'stand in the way' are, for example, farmers, police officers, shop owners who sell fur, people who are involved in research on animals or people who wear fur. For example, two researchers from Lund University - with links to animal experiments - received razor blades and threats by post, both times signed with "regards, the animals" (VK 2020). Djurfront has also a campaign called "Stop Lund's animal experiments", which also reinforces the impression that animal experiments and researchers who work with it are part of what should be fought. In a statement to the newspaper that reported on the events against researchers in Lund, Djurfront says "We call for and support all forms of direct actions in the fight for the liberation of animals and even now give our full support to the individual / individuals who have done this" (VK 2020). This statement therefore aims to ensure that all actions taken on behalf of the animals are supported, even though it involves a threat. So in line with narrative criminology, this could be understood as a narrative that possibly contributes to creating patterns for criminal action. When I asked the question to Djurfront in my email to them how they would describe their view of people who, for example, sell fur, work with animals or breed animals, I got the answer:

People whose business and job is a direct exploitation of animals lack (at the moment) a moral compass and feel that the money they earn from exploration is worth more than the animals' lives, in most cases - Djurfront via email (2021).

It is interesting that they say that these people - at the moment - lack a moral compass, because it also suggests that there is a right or wrong in using animals. They are thus aware of the moral differences that exist between them and the enemy and put them in relation to themselves. People who work to exploit animals lack a moral compass and are driven by making money rather than focusing on the animals' right to a life. It also shows an opposite relationship similar to what Presser (2018) described with weak vs strong, but in this case greed vs compassion. Furthermore, in my email to Djurfront I also asked how they would define the 'bad side' if you see animal rights and animal rights activists as the 'good side'. To this they replied that:

For the non-human animals that are murdered, trapped, testen on etc, it is the people who murder, shut up, test, who are of course evil and also the people and society that allows it to continue. In an injustice as speciesism is, however, it is worth prioritizing that a change for the victims is important. Not that the wicked are punished. But of course prevented from harming others - Djurfront via email (2021).

Djurfront says in the last sentence that it is the victims - thus the animals - who should be given priority and not that the evil ones should be punished. They also blame society that allows it to continue, which also shows how much injustice Djurfront fights against. It is not only farmers, people who own fur shops or in other ways use animals, it is also society as a whole that allows this to happen. A similar statement was made by an activist in Djurfront, when she in a public post criticize an article written by a dairy farmer that according to her "black painted the animal rights activists and romanticize cow release<sup>5</sup>". In the article she emphasizes, just like Djurfront, that it is the animals that should be in focus and not the farmer i.e "the bad guys":

To the animal farmers I want to say: stop exploiting animals, then animal rights activists will stop appearing on cow release. It is not you who are the victims, it is the animals - Zhu Hansson (2019b).

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<sup>5</sup> Literally means 'cow release', and describes the day when swedish farmers realise their cows outside for the summer.

She describes here how activists have appeared on cow releases and how they will only stop if the farmers stop exploiting animals. This is also an example of how narrative (Presser 2018) can inspire action, since the activists describe how their presence is a result of the farmers exploiting animals, there has also been some form of awakening or insight that cow release is wrong. A cow release can seem like a fairly harmless event, but as I mentioned in previous sections, according to Djurfront, there are absolutely no occasions or circumstances when animals are to be used by us humans. Which also explains why she gives a form of ultimatum to the farmers; stop exploiting animals, then we stop showing up.

Richii Klinsmeister, activist in Djurfront, participated in an interview with GP which concerns among other things, previous crimes for which he has been convicted, and is asked if he has any sympathy for those who have been exposed and for how their families feel. To this he answers:

Absolutely no sympathy for those involved in animal cruelty. The only thing I sympathize with is their children who have to grow up with role models who advocate and commit mass murder. /.../ We support the animal liberation front also called ALF. People who sacrifice their freedom for the animals deserve all the support - Richii Klinsmeister in Verdicchio (2019d).

It is thus only children who grow up with parents or role models who "advocate and in addition to mass murder" for whom he feels sympathy. Also in this example from Richii, his statement aims that people who support the animals should receive all kinds of support, even though it may include reprehensible or illegal acts. Which is what the narrative criminologists are concerned about - that narratives can inspire harmful or illegal action. Richii makes a clear distinction between the good and the bad by explaining how people who work with animals also advocate and commit mass murder and how people who sacrifice their freedom for the animals should receive support. That the underdog sacrifices everything for a struggle or purpose that is much greater than himself is done in part because of the life that attracts afterwards, a life without death and loss (Presser 2018). Everything is put at stake, but since the underdog has morals and is on the good side, the rightness of the hero's struggle is also emphasized (Presser 2018:96). So by describing parents as mass murderers, it could also motivate action, as it highlights the unjust and evil enemy that exploits the animals. An enemy that consists not only of the individual but also of society. In addition to criticism of farmers and researchers, Djurfront has also expressed their criticism of the media and especially of GP who have done major reviews and published several articles about Djurfront

(see Dahlman 2019; Haldesten 2020; Verdicchio 2019b; Verdicchio 2020). When I ask the question to Djurfront about how they do to handle criticism from the media, they answer:

As one of Sweden's most radical animal rights organizations we have always been prepared to receive extra harsh criticism in addition to the praise we also get. In many cases, this criticism means that our actions have a difference and that people who make money from animal exploitation feel afraid that their activities will no longer pay off. But just the knowledge that we will always receive criticism until the day when the goal is reached makes it very easy to handle - Djurfront via email (2021).

Djurfront thus says that they are prepared to receive criticism until the goal is reached because they are the most radical animal rights organization. Also that the criticism often means that their actions have made a difference and partly caused the enemy to fall, or at least begin to worry. Since the media contributes to, for example, making farmers' voices heard (Verdicchio 2019b), the media also becomes part of the resistance that is to be fought. As I mentioned above, Djurfront believes that the focus should always be on the animals and not those who use or use animals. The fact that the media, for example, criticizes Djurfront's actions and takes sides with farmers or owners of fur shops means that they also become part of the problem, which should be combated.

The police is a group that are regularly seen on Djurfront's instagram and can be seen in pictures, films, instagram stories and are also mentioned in their texts. The purpose of this is usually to show how Djurfront gets attention and attracts excitement. At one point, a film is published in which one of their activists is caught by two police officers while other activists try to stop the incident and are then asked to back down several times. The police can also be seen in a news clip published by Djurfront where the police take down activists from the roof of a slaughterhouse where they carried out a demonstration - without the slightest resistance from the activists. My first impression is that Djurfront aren't hostile to police but neither sees them as a group that should get praised for their actions. However, that changes when I see what Djurfront writes about them on two different occasions on their instagram: "the police are never on the animals' side, but that does not stop us". They also make a slightly longer post about what they think about the police about three months later:

What do we think of the police? Djurfront are politically independent and our focus is of course on the animals. /.../ The police are an obstacle to achieving the animals' total release

and therefore cooperation is not favorable. Animal oppressors try as best they can to hide behind the power of the police. /.../ Therefore, we see the police for what they are, an obstacle and what do we do with obstacles? Takes us past them to crush the oppression of animals - Djurfront (2020i).

This also shows an example where they describe something that *has* happened, i.e that the police have stood in their way and that animal oppressors are hiding behind the power of the police. But it also points forward and calls for actions when they write “what do we do with obstacles? Takes us past them to crush the oppression of animals”. Which goes in line with how Presser (2018:15) describes stories as something that thus is always retrospective but also contributes to what will happen next. The underdog, Djurfront, has as Presser (2018) described, undergone an awakening and thereby realized how unfair and morally wrong the use of animals is. Based on this, they have taken on the honorable task of fighting the animal industry and those who allow it to continue. That neither the media nor the police have realized that Djurfront actually fights for the good side does not matter, because the underdog has the ‘moral law’ on it’s side (Presser 2018). They thus see the police as an obstacle despite the fact that there are no direct conflicts between the two groups. But that the police are familiar with Djurfront is no secret as animal rights activism became a priority issue for the police during 2019 which I mentioned in the introduction. It was also highlighted by my interviewee Billie, a former member of Djurfront, who says that the police's constantly vigilant eye over Djurfront was another reason why they chose to leave the organization.

### **5.2.2 Who is the hero?**

In my theory chapter, I discussed Presser (2018) and highlighted her dramatic stories and more specifically underdog stories that briefly aim at a story with some sort of drastic change, such as a crisis or that the situation goes from calm to anxious. It also includes that there is an uneven balance between two parties, that the actions performed are morally correct / heroic even though the actions may be doubtful (Presser 2018). Underdog stories are often applied to movements that try to challenge an opponent with larger means in the form of, for example, finances, number of people or resources. In my example with Djurfront, their opponents are the animal industry and people who use animals in some way, which directly puts them at a disadvantage, both in terms of number of people, resources and finances. But then the question also arises, how does Djurfront view themselves and their actions? Do they see themselves as heroes, animal defenders or a group that only acts morally correct despite



doubtful actions? One of Djurfronts activists has in an article called “are people that help the most vulnerable heros?” touched on several of these points and writes for example:

Painting activists as heroes is in my eyes quite problematic as it suggests that the work they/we do for the animals would be something that one should get a pat on the back for. Something one should get a ‘thank you’ for. Had you been in the position the animals are, you would probably have expected that someone stood up for you - Zhu Hansson (2018).

Her quote goes to some extent against what Presser (2018) highlights that an underdog sees himself as a heroic person, who does the only right thing, a person who performs noble deeds and should be praised. But while Zhu Hansson (2018) writes that she did not want to be seen as a hero, she also conveys the feeling that she is actually the one who does the right thing and that people should act like her. In her text, she goes on to compare how a person who interrupts a rape should not be hailed as a hero when acting in a way that "everyone should do". She also writes that she nevertheless appreciates ‘thanks’ and ‘cheers’, but that the best thing you as an outsider can do is to become active yourself, fight for the vulnerable and at the same time not demand anything in return for it. There is a hint that what she is doing is the right thing to do, which also highlights the differences between djurfront and what they want to fight. As I mentioned in the first section, the cause of Djurfront, her actions and way of thinking are how we should all do, without raising each other to the skies for that matter - which is in line with what Presser (2018) argues. Zhu Hansson (2018) concludes her entire article with a strong quote that I think sums up both her thoughts and essens of underdog stories: “I’m not a hero. I’m only doing the right thing”.

Presser (2018) writes about how underdog stories include some type of fight against something that is classified as, for example, unfair, morally wrong or as a threat. Presser (2018) also mentions how in especially underdog stories there is a shift in understanding and one of the three moments of mis / understaning is; the hero's recognition of the truth, which means that the underdog is the one that knows the real truth. His way and methods are the only right one, because his moral views are superior. That Djurfront and animal rights activists are the group that shows the whole truth and knows how it is actually highlighted in an article that criticizes how dairy farmers deceive consumers and children, where it is written, among other things:

[Named female journalist] gives the reader the impression that she cares about the best interest of the children, but how can one care about the best interest of the children when one withholds reality from them? The children's love for the animal fails, they are involuntary brainwashed and forced to support something they are deeply opposed to. /.../ She wants to educate pedagogically, but she leaves out a lot. The activists on the other hand, show the truth. The whole truth. It is the activists who educate, not the animal farmers - Zhu Hansson (2019b).

It is precisely the last part that I think is extra important: "the activist on the other hand, shows the truth. The whole truth. It is the activists who educate, not the animal farmers". It shows strongly that Djurfrent also sees themselves as morally correct, how their methods and opinions are what should be followed and above all that it is the activist who knows how it *actually* is. Which I mentioned above is how Presser (2018) describes a shift in understanding; the hero's recognition of the truth, which means that the underdog is the one that knows the real truth. That there is a right and wrong side to this is also highlighted in two other articles written by two activists in Djurfrent:

Animal rights activists who are fighting for animal oppression to be history need reinforcement. Listen to them with an open heart and be ready to stand on the right side of history - Pohlin (2019).

We must begin to take animal suffering seriously. For them, it is a constant nightmare, a war. To demand that our relatives not consume products of animal suffering in our presence is, in my opinion, an extremely small requirement, a requirement we as vegans should make. We must force people to choose sides. I choose the side of the animals. We should all do that - Zhu Hansson (2019a).

Standing on the right side of history and choosing the right side - the side of animals - also suggest that there is a wrong side, and that the activists are the one's acting right. The activists are the one who fights for the animals, do the morally correct and act for the vulnerable and defenseless. Zhu Hansson (2019a) also makes a parable of war, which again puts the fight for animal rights in relation to a larger purpose, a fight bigger than themselves. The same applies to the quote from Pohlin (2019) which, in line with Presser (2018), also aims to ensure that the hero's recognition of the truth is the right one, as he suggests that it is the animal rights activists who are on the right side of the history.

### 5.2.3 Solidarity, emotions and cohesion

As mentioned in the chapter on theory, Presser (2018) explains that the underdog is faithful to his principles or leaders in a very loyal way - which can also mean a form of suffering. In the beginning of this chapter I mentioned that Djurfront sees animals as our equals, relatives or even family members. But what is it like to live in a society where you are constantly exposed to impressions, images, films or people who use or eat animal products? Kerstin Jacobsson talks to GP about her research and how activist who see other people but a package of milk see it as abuse and rape, which can be or is very stressful and painful (Dorian 2019a). This also makes the group very important, especially when it comes to militant activists. In the chapter on theory I discussed Baumeister et.al (2001) who wrote how “Events involving bad emotions remain more salient on people’s minds than events involving good emotions” (p.333). But also how negative feelings are involved in underdog stories, whereas the enemy holds all forms of negativity and the underdog is freed from this and stands victorious (Presser 2018:95). Arousing emotions and reaction to motivate the action also highlighted by Braddock (2015) who wrote about how ALF described animals in need and suffering, which could evoke a feeling of guilt or compassion in other people. Like ALF, Djurfront has used this method and describes in one of its posts on instagram a demonstration against the fishing industry and how it aroused feelings in the passers-by:

Today Djurfront-Gothenburg did a creative demo against the fishing industry and its victims. We got a lot of attention and people backed away and many looked scared. We shouted slogans and also received a lot of comments. But most importantly, our comrades who lay bloody on the cold ground aroused feelings in passers-by and we hope it also aroused feelings for the suffering that the fishes have to endure because of us humans - Djurfront (2020n).

Djurfront says in the quote that they hope that the demonstration aroused feelings about the suffering that fishes have to endure because of us humans. Which is completely in line with how Braddock (2015) described how ALF described animals in need or suffering, in order to arouse feelings such as guilt or compassion. But also Baumeister et.al (2001) who said “events involving bad emotions remain more salient on people’s minds”, which could be the reason for Djurfront striving to evoke emotions at by-passers and thus call for action.

Having a united group, strong cohesion and support in each other is important, not only based on Kerstin Jacobsson's example - that I mentioned above - of how activists are constantly exposed to animal oppression in society, but also because Djurfront is a relatively small

organization. Billie, a former member of Djurfront, describes how the organization, due to its number of members, is also quite dependent on members being willing to go to various demonstrations in the country. Billie also described how there was pressure from Djurfront, which was admittedly not personal appeals but rather a message addressed to all members:

So it was very often that messages came up, 'oh okay now we are not enough here so then we unfortunately have to..' or 'it would have been nice if more people could come to this thing' - Billie, former activist in Djurfront.

That the group, solidarity and community are important thus becomes clear, not only because of their number but also because of external factors. But despite this, it can be stressful or challenging to be engaging, it is recurring for Djurfront that the animals should always be put first, what is best for them should always be prioritized, in principle no matter what the activists themselves feel. This is mentioned by my interviewee Sofie, a member in Djurättsalliansen, who says that sometimes you have to ignore yourself and think about the animals' situation. That you as an activist see it as difficult to go to a demonstration is not close to what the animals go through every day. A similar statement is made by an activist in Djurfront, who says that no matter how psychologically stressful it is to be an animal rights activist, it is not about them and their preferences or feelings, but the focus is on animal suffering (Zhu Hansson 2017b). Like Presser (2018:98-99) states, eventual suffering is seen as something necessary, both to strengthen the triumph in a possible win and strengthens the underdogs steadfastness.

Although Djurfront is a small organization where it requires members to step up and go to various demonstrations, there is also a strong community and strong support for each other. Not only within the group but also from other countries and groups around the world. Since Djurfront sympathizes and is part of ALF, which is found all over the world, there is also a huge network of contacts with activists who cheer on each other and support from other countries. Like I mentioned in my previous research, ALF stated that "Any group of people who are vegetarians or vegans and who carry out actions according to ALF guidelines have the right to regard themselves as part of the ALF" (Monaghan 2013:939). An example of this is the instagram account "unoffensiveanimal" which publishes so-called hit reports<sup>6</sup> from around the world, often performed under ALF's name or logo. In other words, strengthening

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<sup>6</sup>Submitted reports on actions / deeds committed, such as destroying hunting towers, liberation of animals or vandalism.

the community and keeping the motivation up can be done in different ways, both with international support and within the group. For example Alex, activist in Djurfront, says this in an interview with GP:

There are examples where Swedish animal rights activists have been sentenced to prison. I know that these people received hundreds of letters in prison from animal rights activists from all over the world, expressing support and appreciation. The support from the rest of the animal rights movement is definitely something that drives me - Alex in Verdicchio (2019f).

What Alex says shows that the group is becoming important to the activists after all, because they generated support and motivation. Not only from the closest group in Sweden but from all over the world. It also relates to what Zhu Hansson (2018) said about her not being a hero, she is just doing the right thing, to sacrifice herself for the collective and for the struggle also makes the group very central because it is emotionally and sometimes painfully challenging. As Presser (2018:93) states; “emotions run high because the struggle matters so terribly much”. But the so-called passive participants - as I described my own participation in the introduction - also play an important role for Djurfront. For example, in situations where activists have been sentenced to fines (see Polisen 2020; Andersson 2020), fundraising has been started to pay the fine and the goals would be reached without major problems. Djurfront may be a small organization to the surface but at the same time seems to have great and active support from its sympathizers. But it is not only support that Djurfront and activists receive, there is a large proportion of dissidents who oppose Djurfront’s activism and goals. I asked the question to Djurfront, how they feel that they are treated by people who are not involved in animal rights and got the answer:

People who are already for justice for the animals show strong support. People who are already against justice for the animals show distrust. People who do not have an opinion get a real food for thought - Djurfront via email (2021).

When I further discussed this with my interviewees and asked how they feel that people who aren’t involved in animal rights or general dissenters treat / look at them, I get quite similar answers from all of them, that people often are sceptical or hostile against animal rights and animal rights activists:

/.../ There are probably many who have compared us [djurfront] to isis or IS I mean haha, in the way Djurfront dresses. It is very much black, always masking, black masking, preferably as difficult to identify as possible - Billie, former member in Djurfront.

Most of them are quite negative to animal rights organizations as far as I have known. There was a lot of pressure from GP against Djurfront about a year ago, so they have to endure a lot. /.../ - Sofie, member in Djurrättsalliansen.

/.../ I was so young and went to school with others my age as well. Then it was probably a lot that you were teased or like 'you have to eat meat otherwise you will die' or 'you have to drink milk otherwise you will die'. So there were very big myths about veganism /.../ - Isabelle, member in Djurens Rätt.

But I had.. sigh.. god he was completely sick in the head. I had an acquaintance or 'friend' who thought it was funny that I was vegan, and he.. he hunted and sent a movie to me when he skinned and killed an animal - Charlie, member in Djurens Rätt.

Both the quotes from my interviewees and Djurfront show a big difference between animal rights activists and what they fight against, animal oppression, people who eat or use animals or allow others to do so. Djurfront says, for example, that people who have no opinion get a real food for thought, which relates to the awakening that I discussed at the beginning. As Presser (2018) described it, that underdog stories include a crisis, or drastic event, which the thinker Djurfront mentions could be. But also Charlie, whose 'friend' sent a film about how he killed and skinned an animal. She describes him as "completely sick in the head", which also suggests a good and an evil side where the friend, who killed an animal, stands for evil. It is also interesting how Billie mentions that many compares Djurfront with IS, which is a terrorist organization, which does not at all agree with how Djurfront views the situation. For Djurfront, it has completely opposite roles where it is instead animal oppressors who stand for all evil and terror and Djurfront for good and justice.

Richii Klinsmeister - activist in Djurfront - answered in an interview with GP what it is that drives him and his statement I think speaks for Djurfront's boundless love for animals and that they always put them first: "/.../ Seeing a single animal run out of its cage and into its future freed is all the motivation needed" - Richii Klinsmeister in Verdicchio (2019d).

### **5.3 Characterizing and legitimizing the use of violence**

In previous sections, I've pointed out how the main narrative of Djurfront equates animals to relatives, family members but also innocent victims. I will now turn to how this is related to violence, radical and drastic methods.

#### **5.3.1 Violence as a means for the cause**

When is it okay to use violence in animal rights and what really counts as violence? To define what violence is, I discussed in the chapter on previous research and mentioned Zuolo (2020:80) that describes that if a person is exposed to direct harm it is seen as violence, but if it is about threats, sabotage of campaigns to pressure individuals, the definition is not as obvious. I also discussed Cordeiro-Rodrigues (2016) who wrote about how ALF's view of violence meant that violence could only be directed at sentient things and thus excludes financial sabotage, vandalism, etc since property isn't sentient. But also that ALF doesn't see their actions as violent since their actions have a adequate reason - rescuing the animals from oppression (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2016:229). In an interview with GP one of Djurfronts activists says this when asked about their methods: "We always consider what benefits the fight for the animals best. Just because something is illegal does not automatically mean it is wrong" - Richii Klinsmeister in Verdicchio (2019c).

Again, it is the vulnerability of the animals that is central and less focus is placed on whether the method is legal or not. As I mentioned in the example above with how ALF does not see their actions as violent because they have adequate cause, this could be a similar example. If Djurfront has the same view as ALF, Djurfront's actions do not have to be wrong just because they are illegal. When I asked Djurfront about how they would define violence they answered: "To knowingly harm someone who does not want to be hurt". How ALF and Djurfront view violence thus differs slightly, at least in how they describe violence. Based on my collected data and general perception of Djurfront I believe that they have a similar perception as ALF, i.e. that violence can only be directed at sensible things. When I further ask Djurfront if there are times when it is okay to use violent methods and if they could in that case give examples of it, they answer only "Self-defense". It is very interesting that they only answer self-defense as it differs from how they previously expressed themselves about violence. Of course their opinions may have changed and what was once said is not set in stone, but how to look at violence and the use of violence is discussed in a debate article from 2020 by an activist from Djurfront:

/.../ In what way would violence not benefit the fight? /.../ Some believe that violence is only about physical violence while others believe that the concept of violence also includes psychological and verbal violence, sabotage, vandalism and more. Violence is thus a very subjective concept but is often painted as something negative. To claim that sabotage and vandalism would be violence and thus negative is absurd. These are methods that mean that no one is harmed and have also proven to be very effective in the fight for animal liberation. /.../ - Zhu Hansson (2020b).

The quote questions in what way violence could not fight, but also questions what violence actually is and how different definitions are made. Violence is often presented as something negative, but that sabotage or vandalism would be violence and thus negative is considered absurd. Cordeiro-Rodrigues (2016) wrote that ALF believes that violence can only be directed at sentimental things and thus excludes vandalism or sabotage, which is exactly what the activist in the quote above does. Vandalism and sabotage are rather seen as effective acts that should not be classified as violent because they are successful in the fight for the animals. Another example is from an interview in GP (Verdicchio 2019f) with the activist Alex. The journalist asks if Alex would call what they are doing terrorism and he answers:

Yes, it's physical terrorism. This is not classic terrorism. But it's to scare people. As I see it, it is counter-terrorism for the animals. We use terrorism against the terrorists. But we are anti-violence. What we do does not hurt anyone - Alex in Verdicchio (2019f).

It is incredibly interesting that Alex describes animal rights as counter-terrorism for the animals and that they are anti-violence, while acknowledging that what they are doing is physical terrorism. This shows that Djurfrost, in other words, does not see themselves as a violent group, which also does no harm despite the fact that the purpose is to frighten people. It also relates to what Billie said in previous sections about society often comparing Djurfrost with IS due to masks, black clothes, etc. We thus have society and people who use animals and see Djurfrost as terrorists or their actions as terrorism. But at the same time, we have Djurfrost who see their actions as counter-terrorism because what the animals are exposed to is the *actual* terrorism. The fact that Djurfrost describes the animals' situation as terrorism further strengthens their position as an underdog and what material and moral differences there are between them and the enemy, just as Presser (2018) explained.



### 5.3.2 Actions and demonstrations

The fact that Djurfront sees animals as equals, relatives or family members could be one of the reasons for more radical or drastic methods. Where is the limit for what is okay and not and can the limit look different depending on the situation? As I mentioned in my introduction, Djurfront has several times received criticism and media attention for their often startling actions. But this is also an active decision made by them as they write the following on the website and in their response to me:

Djurfront created change for the animals through creative demonstrations, startling actions and by confronting animal oppressors on the spot. We include as many methods as possible and understand that there are different purposes. Different methods intertwine to become really effective - Djurfront (2020).

Actions often have different purposes that in one or more ways create a change for the animals. Among activists, vegans and others there is a wide range of where the line goes. Djurfront is probably the organization that does not want to set any limit because it is often unnecessary to limit yourself - Djurfront via email (2021).

So they do not want to limit themselves or set a limit to their actions or demonstrations, because it is often not necessary. They also say that different methods have different purposes, which in a combination becomes effective. Presser (2018:88) describes the underdog's actions as both heroic and noble, but at the same time the success of the actions is doubtful - like the quote I presented earlier from Zhu Hansson (2020b) who said that the acts (sabotage and vandalism) should not be classified as violent or wrong because they are successful in the fight for the animals. Based on Presser (2018), we can understand that fighting for the animals is heroic, but to vandalize and sabotage to get there is doubtful. In summary, Djurfront uses several different methods to pursue its activism and try to achieve its goals. Methods that in their eyes are fully legitimate because people who exploit animals should not have a comfortable or trouble-free everyday life. The focus should always be on the victims - the animals - and those responsible, or the animal oppressors that Djurfront would say, they feel no sympathy for. Djurfront fights for the vulnerable and defenseless and since they cannot fight back on their own or change their situation, it is also up to Djurfront to act and save them. Using violence or violent methods is not something they outright say they advocate as the ultimate method, but rather says that all methods (even violent) can have different purposes and thus be good in different ways - where a combination is the best.

Animals should always be prioritized, usually regardless of what activists feel or think. What benefits the animal and contributes to their liberation is central. As one of Djurfront's activists states: "Ask yourself: If you were the victim, would you have cared what methods were used to set you free?" Zhu Hansson (2020b).

In the chapter on previous research, I highlighted Cordeiro-Rodrigue's (2016:226) article in which he analyzed ALFs actions based on war theory (usually applied to terrorist actions) and how these are not morally defensible because they are not a last resort, they are excessively violent and do not have a reasonable chance of success. However, Cordeiro-Rodrigues (2016:234) argued that ALF's methods are to some extent a last resort because animal rights activists have fought for several years with both non-violence and violence to counteract animal oppression. A similar discussion has been made by Djurfront's activist, who writes in an article how political influence can in many cases be a waste of time because if political influence had an effect, we would have seen a major change today. She goes on to say that:

*./../* Since neither politicians nor society are on our side, we must find other ways to crush animal oppression. With that said, one does not exclude the other. One can influence politically and at the same time do more radical things, as well as be violent methods - Zhu Hansson (2020a).

This also links back to what Djurfront said in previous quotes about how different methods are used for different purposes and how a combination of these can be very effective. But it can also be related to Posłuszna (2015:74) who described animal rights and how activists under that category are more willing to use violent and more radical methods because laws do not allow for compromise. Whether crime and more extreme methods are justified or not in the fight for the animals is discussed in GPs article with the activist Alex as i mentioned earlier (Verdicchio 2019f). In the interview, he says, among other things, that crime is justified in the animal rights fight. But also that a consistent strategy is to commit crimes that the police will not invest resources in, so-called "low-level-crimes". Furthermore the journalist asks about the handbook that has been distributed to Swedish animal rights activists that contains manuals for how to make bombs and set fires, a book that Alex says he has access to. Alex first says that "just fires are not wrong" and then continues with:

Fire can be dangerous, if the fire spreads so that animals are harmed *./../* If a person were to burn inside, it is sad for him. But I hope it is avoided. As ALF's former founder said 'if there

is any animal tormentor who would die, one would not really be sad. - Alex in Verdicchio (2019f).

Fires themselves do not have to be wrong, but if there is a risk of harming the animals - who are innocent and vulnerable - it can be a dangerous method. It is interesting how he in the first sentence says that it is wrong if animals were injured in the fire but if an "animal tormentor would die, one would not really be sad". There is thus a kind of humanization of the animals, where they are vulnerable and deserve our support and protection, but at the same time there is a dehumanization of the people who work with animals and their right to life is not as relevant. Another example, also from an interview in GP, Richii Klinsmeister, activist in djurfront, that has been convicted for having desecrated two graves and left axes and firebombs at several people (Verdicchio 2019d). The journalist asks how he feels about it and Richii answers: "The only thing I regret is that we were not careful enough. Sitting in detention for almost two years was of course a failed and lost time, but if we managed to save a single animal, it was worth it".

Here, too, we see examples of how animals come first. Despite the fact that Richii has been convicted and imprisoned for his actions, it is, according to him, worth it, if they have only contributed to the rescue of one animal. This relates to both Presser (2018) and underdog stories, where the hero or underdog performs an act greater than himself, an act with a noble purpose, which in this case means that he sacrifices his freedom for the animals. But it can also be understood on the basis of narrative criminology, because Richii partly says that he does not regret the illegal acts and also says that it was worth it if only one animal was rescued. When he puts his freedom at stake for the animals and says that a prison sentence was worth it, he is indirectly saying that an illegal act is reasonable but in a way also necessary in the fight for the animals.

One of Djurfront's most distinctive or unique methods is that they visit for example farmers, or as they call them, animal oppressors, on the spot or sometimes even at the person's home. On their instagram, they market and sell stickers that say that "Djurfront monitors the area", which could be seen as a form of encouragement to pay attention, or that one should be aware of their presence. The method of showing animal oppressors that they have resistance or that Djurfront is present in combination with financial sabotage, Billie, former member in Djurfront, describes it and says:

You smash like their windows, then it is both a message that ‘hello you have resistance’ ‘you have people who do not like what you do and this can happen again. But also an injury directly to their company, that they have to repair the window as well - Billie, former member in Djurfront.

Financial sabotage, i.e. carrying out something that affects the chosen person, the store or the industry's finances seems to be a common method for Djurfront. As I mentioned in my previous research, one of ALF's three overarching goals is to destroy the livestock industry through economic sabotage (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2016:230). Djurfront has also used this strategy, for example when they carried out a blockade at a slaughterhouse in Åsljunga, Sweden, where the goal was to free 4 chickens. On their instagram they write:

We still see this action as a success. We hindered their workday which means an economic loss for the company and we all know that these people only care about money. We also send a clear message that as long as animals are being oppressed people will resist. And finally we hope that this will inspire more people to take radical action against animal oppression. End speciesism, burn down the slaughterhouse - Djurfront (2020d).

This can be linked back to the section "who is the enemy?" where Djurfront in a quote said that people who work with animals lack a moral compass and are driven by making money rather than focusing on animal life. But also what Presser (2018) writes about differences in material and moral differences, where even in this case it is about greed vs compassion. It is Djurfront, which shows compassion by stopping the production of the greedy and immoral people who work inside the slaughterhouse. In addition to blockades and financial sabotage Djurfront has also been accused of threatening the children of farmers and when Rebecca Zhu Hansson acts as a spokesperson for Djurfront and is asked about this she says that “the organization does not threaten children, but in cases where it has happened, it is a strategy”. She then goes on and says:

Because, I guess most parents care about their childre and if you really care, you stop animal cruelty. /.../ It is very sad that the focus is on the farmers and that they should be the victims when we really should be talking about the real victims, who are the animals - Rebecca Zhu Hansson in Lindberg (2019).

This quote also shows the difference between the underdog and the enemy. Had the people who use and eat animals (the enemy) actually cared about their children - and thus also the

animals - they would have stopped working with or using animals. Presser (2018:101) explains how in underdog stories there is a shift in understanding and highlights three forms of mis / understanding where the latter means that the public wakes up and realizes that the underdog has been right all along, which the quote above aims at. Because if those who contribute to animal cruelty had actually bothered and listened to the underdog (in this case Djurfront) who knows how it actually is and how to act, they would have stopped working with animals.

As I mentioned in the section on previous research, ARM took on various actions that ALF did not want to be associated with in England during the 1980s (Monaghan 2013). A similar example has also taken place in Sweden, but with the Swedish group of ARM (Djurättsmilisen on swedish) and Djurfront. It is a threat that received media attention because of its content and the threat was sent by letter to a farmer and contained the following:

Dear scum. The animals must live. You must stop defending oppression. Resign now. I can no longer bear it. Feels crap anyway. Don't care if I sit for a long time. Lifetime is ok. I'm going to execute you for your own good. But: still want to give you a chance. I plan to kill you in November 2018. If I should be prevented, we will come soon. Breivik gave me inspiration. Choose the right one [family member's name] would be sad, right? PS. Weapons are available. Just need to fix a car. DS - Verdicchio (2019a).

For this letter, Djurfront has not taken responsibility for the action, but the letter is instead signed with "ARM", which is an abbreviation for Animal Rights Militia. That it is signed with "ARM" and includes death threats it's similar to the example from (Monaghan 2013) who wrote about politicians receiving letter bombs in the 1980s, also with sender "ARM". This could be an example of a similar event in a Swedish context, that the Swedish ARM takes on an event that Djurfront is behind or in some way supports. Even if there is no concrete evidence that this is the case, it is an extremely interesting coincidence.

Another thing that I notice really quickly when analyzing my material is that continuity is an important part of Djurfront's activism. To not only make one single home visit or a demonstration outside a specific store, but to regularly carry out various forms of actions. When GP talks to a mink farmer in Falkenberg, he shows his diary notes where he has

recorded exact dates and events to which he has been exposed by various animal rights organisations and especially Djurfront (Verdicchio 2019e). Of the 78 incidents he has documented, according to the police in Halland, there are 62 reported police cases connected to him and the farm. One of Djurfront's active campaigns is "Close the mink farm in Falkenberg ", which in short means that they will visit and demonstrate until the farm is closed. It also provides an explanation for the entire 62 police reports that are linked to animal rights activism and the mink farm - one or two visits are not enough. They for example write on instagram how they visit owners of mink farms to remind them how Djurfront never gives up, and that Djurfront never takes a holiday. As long as animal oppression continues, they will continue. Other examples where Djurfronts clearly states that they won't give up until the farm is closed or people resigned can be seen in the quotes below from Djurfronts instagram:

WHEN YOU GET UNEXPECTED VISIT. Yesterday [name of mink farmer] received an unexpected visit from us. As long as he continues to put animals in pain and death, we will show up - Djurfront (2020c).

Today we once again visited Swedish mink's CEO [name] to show what happens if you are an animal tormentor. [name], the faster you leave the easier it will be for you. We will continue to go to your home to show what we think until the day you leave. Animal tormenters should not be allowed to sleep well at night. RELEASE THE ANIMAL, IN WITH [name] IN A CAGE - Djurfront (2020b).

### **5.3.3 Using morality to strengthen their arguments**

The view of what is right and wrong, how we should and should not behave is a question that can differ incredibly much depending on who you talk to. What you think is obvious, someone else thinks is completely unreasonable and wrong. Using morality in your arguments to win over people on the "right side" can be seen as both an effective approach as well as a trampling. The moral of animal rights is most often used to point out what you as a person do, what you should do or what you contribute to.

When I asked Djurfront how they view using morality to strengthen their arguments, for example to say "people who eat meat are bad people" or "if you use fur you are a killer", they answered "Morality is an important building block for a good society". But despite the short

answer there are examples of when Djurfront uses morality to pursue their activism. Djurfront uses, for example, a method they call "shaming", which in short means that they openly (e.g. at a public demonstration) show their disgust for something that is normalized, such as wearing fur or leather. In other words, they interfere with the 'ordinary' norms in an environment where animals are exploited, in the same way as Vea (2020) describes in the example with the group DxE. Djurfront also makes a comparison with pedophiles and rapists and questions why it is okay to show disgust towards them, but when it comes to animal exploitation, you are instead encouraged to educate, be kind and understanding. Here they compare the struggle for animals- just as in the example with the Holocaust or the struggle for women - with something bigger. Comparing animal rights with already established "folk devils"<sup>7</sup> also shows the seriousness of what they are trying to convey. Djurfront further believes that "shaming" as method should be seen as something effective and writes on two different occasions on their instagram:

By shaming someone on the street who, for example, wears animal fur, you make them uncomfortable and hopefully make them associate fur-bearing with something difficult, shameful and uncomfortable. By openly shaming animal oppressors, you show your disgust for what they support / do. You show that animal oppression is serious and acute - Djurfront (2020a).

For two hours we stood outside with signs and flags, shouted slogans and shamed the fur-bearers who passed by. Many were offended and angry but we did not give them the chance to defend themselves but continued to point, shout and shame. It should not be convenient to support animal cruelty - Djurfront (2020f).

The goal is to make them uncomfortable, associate fur with something negative, create a stir and thereby get attention from other people, which could lead to a chain reaction where fur and animal products are the culprit. Its easy to imagine the effectiveness of this method, of arriving to a particular place and being met by strangers shouting that you actions contributes to murder. As Presser (2018:88) states, dramatic stories also show that action is required, necessary and sometimes inevitable, which also is the case in the quote above. Djurfront wrote "You show that animal oppression is serious and acute" which also becomes a call to act and to act quickly. By shouting and pointing at people, they also try to evoke a feeling of guilt, for example. But also evoke feelings in people who are passers-by, if Djurfront portrays

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<sup>7</sup> People or groups who are portrayed in media or folklore as outsiders or deviants.

the animals as vulnerable or victims of murder, it can evoke a feeling of compassion. Such feelings, as compassion or guilt, Braddock (2015:51-53) wrote also encourages people to take action or evoke the feeling that action is required. This is a strategy that ALF uses (Braddock 2015), which Djurfront has also followed in the form of “shaming”. Another example of when personal responsibility is used as an argument or moral pointer appears in a debate article written by an activist in Djurfront:

Behind every piece of meat, herring can, dairy product and egg is a lifetime of suffering. A lifetime of misery. A lifetime of oppression. Do you want your money to finance this, do YOU want to be the cause of the suffering and death of these animals? Do you really want that? - Zhu Hansson (2017a).

What is really the hardest part? To be seen as troublesome, or to live your whole life in captivity? We must dare to take the conflict. No matter how hard it is, it is our OBLIGATION - Zhu Hansson (2017a).

As she mentions in the quote above, "what is really the hardest, to be seen as troublesome or to live your whole life in captivity" trying to reinforce that feeling of actually doing the right thing and acting morally right, could that be the reason why more people choose to get involved in animal rights. As I described in the first section, the awakening of my interviewees also contributed to an understanding of the cause and they took a stand on animals and animal rights. When she says in the quote "do you want your money to finance this, do YOU want to be the cause of the suffering and death of these animals" she also shows that she has understood where the money goes, what it contributes to when you buy eggs or a packet of milk. She has woken up and realized what it is the animals are actually going through, the truth behind it. A kind of crisis or drastic turnaround, just as Presser (2018) describes dramatic and underdog stores. She now shows compassion for the animals and questions if you really want to be so passive and support the animal industry that only wants to make money and is greedy.

When I talk to my interviewees, there are divided opinions about whether morality to strengthen their arguments actually works or for that matter is effective. They are skeptical about whether morality to strengthen their arguments actually works and believe that respect and an easy-going approach are better for actually reaching out with their arguments to people and making them want to change. Sofie, member of Djurättsalliansen says, for



example, that morality can be good to some extent, for example on signs that say "meat is murder" but to jump on an individual person and say that he or she is a bad person is not as good. Billie, who is a previous member of Djurfront also says in their interview that an demonstration where there was "shaming" was one reason why they chose to leave Djurfront, and describes:

*.../ then it comes past three girls, they are maybe 14-15 years old, with fur jackets and another of Djurfront's favorites is that after every person who has like a fur jacket, to shout 'killer' 'blood, blood, blood on your hands' and all that sort of thing. And they got angry and started yelling at us. Then there are two members of us, who sort of go forward and like haha.. it's so ridiculous.. but starts, how to say, provoke quarrels .../. Then they start quarrels with these 14 year olds and these members are two women, one is around 30 and the other is around 25-30 .../. So they start shouting at each other in this little little alley so everyone hears this. That's when I felt, 'I'm not comfortable with this, I'm not comfortable with this, this does not feel effective for our goal and I do not understand why they do this' - Billie, former member in Djurfront.*

Acting in this way can have several different outcomes and be interpreted in several different ways. For example Zhu Hansson (2017a) who in the quote earlier said "We must dare to take the conflict. No matter how hard it is, it is our OBLIGATION" would probably see this act as something successful although the conflict includes shouting at minors. As I mentioned with the example from Braddock (2015), shouting and pointing at people can also aim to try to evoke a feeling of guilt, which could be the aim in this case. Veia (2020:318) also wrote about the concept of 'moral shocks' which means that an event or situation evokes such strong emotions that it evokes a tendency for political action. But in this case, it probably had the opposite effect, since the girls started shouting back at Djurfront. That moral shocks can have the opposite effect was mentioned by (Hansson & Jacobsson 2014:271) who argues that if the shock is too extreme, the recipient instead experiences it as brutal and chooses to back down.

### **5.3.4 The use of language**

How we communicate and express ourselves can play a big role which I mentioned in the theory chapter and how Veia (2020) highlights for example the expression "it's not food it's violence" which suggests that there is an enemy and creates a moral sense of wanting to act. This is the same strategy that Djurfront in many situations use, with startling pictures and slogans they get attention in public and according to their website they indeed use slogans

like mentioned above; “It’s not food! It’s violence!” (Djurfront 2021). Carol Addams (1990) also talked about certain words or expressions - such as "dead bodies" - are absent when we talk about meat, for example, which means that we also distance ourselves from the truth about experiences of violence. Our language and how we talk about animals is also mentioned on Djurfront's instagram and they have in their highlights<sup>8</sup> saved their posts about a so-called "anti-speciesist language". There they give examples of how we can change our expressions and sayings in order to also increase the animals position in society: Who own this dog, *say instead*, who is responsible for this dog; Meat eater, *say instead*, scavenger/animal eater; Fucking pig, *say instead*, fucking scum; The animals have no voice, *say instead*, the voice of the animals is not heard. At the same time as they humanize the animals and strive to describe the animals in a way that raises their position in society, they also dehumanize the enemy by saying, for example, murderers, animal tormentors, etc. Which I also highlighted in the example of the activist Alex who said that if animals were at risk of fire, it was bad, but if an "animal tormentor" were to die, he would not be really sad.

The main narratives that Djurfront has, i.e. that animals are vulnerable, defenseless and in need of help, are thus built on when they also identify linguistic weaknesses in how we treat animals. That Djurfront is aware of how they talk and communicate about animals is consistent throughout all the material I have analyzed. When activists from Djurfront, for example, talk about mink farms or zoos, they exchange the words, which could be explained with the help of Addams (1990) and Veia (2020) thoughts on language use. Constantly using anti-speciesist language also means that they do not turn a blind eye to the reality or situation of animals, which in the long run could contribute to more people becoming aware of what Djurfront wants to convey. Below are three quotes from when activists in Djurfront commented on mink farms and zoos, but then have chosen to change the words to - according to them - more correct language:

Today it was confirmed that one of Sweden’s largest death camps has closed - Djurfront (2020e).

Zoo or rather, animal prison. Rather a prison, the animals have no opportunity to get out of there. They are deprived of their liberty - Djurfront (2020h).

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<sup>8</sup>A feature on instagram that allows you to collect your shared post from instagram stories in your profile as long as you want.

We decided to do everything in our power to stop the planned concentration camp for minks - Richii Klinsmeister in Verdicchio (2019d).

It becomes obvious that the discursive part is also important for Djurfront and not just physical actions and demonstrations. Because the animal industry and society objectify and dehumanize animals, or for that matter exclude certain words when they speak of meat or animal husbandry - like the example from Addams (1990) - action is required. Through the objectification of animals, it also results in most people not caring or being involved in animal rights because they have not been exposed to the truth. A truth that Djurfront is well aware of and now feels that they must convey - in line with how Presser (2018) describes how the underdog knows the real truth. At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted from Zhu Hansson (2019b) who said how the activists view animals as close relatives also contributes to them feeling compelled to show the animals' reality to the public. Djurfront are aware of the power of words and take advantage of it in their activism, by continuously using words and expressions that contribute to raising the status of animals, the discursive part of activism becomes at least as important as the physical part. For example, the quote below which is written by two activists from Djurfront:

*/.../ The purpose of, for example calling insemination rape is not to diminish something that is actually a rape. To show that what the animals experience is no less horrible for them than what we humans experience during a rape - Lund & Zhu Hansson (2020).*

Since most people do not see people as relatives or friends, but rather go under animal welfare (Pośluszna 2015), the comparison of rape of a human and a cow can sometimes be perceived as offensive. But the activists here explain that they are not about diminishing someone's experience, but rather highlighting what an immoral act rape actually is and that an animal that is exposed to it is a victim, just as a human being. Again an example of how Djurfront equates animals with us humans and does not differentiate us in any aspects. A rape of a human being is just as horrible as that of a cow.

## 6. Conclusion

In this thesis I have shown how Djurfront characterizes and legitimizes the use of violence in their struggle for animal liberation. I've also shown what techniques they use to overcome barriers to violence. In line with my previous research and Pośluszna (2015), there is a clear distinction between the categorizations animal welfare and animal rights, where Djurfront clearly identifies with the latter. Animals are thus seen as equal individuals with feelings, families and the will to live a free life that should be treated on the same terms as humans. Also in the section on previous research I mentioned Braddock (2015) who wrote about how narrative is one of the most effective methods for benefiting one's own ideology. Through this thesis, I believe it becomes clear that Djurfront benefits from the narratives they create to both promote their own positions but also to arouse emotions and thus engage others. As I presented in my analysis, Djurfront's main narrative equates animals to relatives, family members and innocent victims. Also, that there is under no circumstances morally right or to eat or use animals for human purposes. Exactly in line with how Presser (2018) describes the theory of underdog stories, Djurfront fights against injustice, an enemy that is greater both financially and in resources. But since Djurfront fights for the vulnerable, for those whose voices are not heard, their struggle also becomes noble and the underdog (Djurfront) should be seen as a hero. That they can be seen as a problematic group or receive criticism from society is irrelevant to them. They consider themselves to have morals on their side and act like everyone *should*, which also goes in line with Presser's (2018) underdog stories. Using various slogans that indicate injustice, violence and animal oppression, such as "It's not fur! It's violence" which was mentioned by Veá (2020) is a common strategy for Djurfront and to inject words or feelings into contexts that oppress animals also creates the feeling of wanting to act. Djurfront uses this both in its public demonstrations but also during home visits to farmers, on Instagram or in articles. So the use of emotions and morals to influence people is also an important building block in Djurfront's activism. Their language and communication is clear, has moral aspects and attracts the attention of passers-by or recipients. It is basically impossible to miss what it is Djurfront wants to convey with their social media, their texts and opinions. Animals should have the right to a life in freedom and all people who in any way use or eat animals are also part of the problem that needs to be addressed. Ignoring the animals' vulnerability, seeing them as objects instead of equals or passively standing by and supporting the industry is just as bad as exploiting animals.

Presser (2018) argues that one of the main functions of stories is to help us respond and react to different situations and this is something Djurfront works continuously with. Djurfront works actively with publishing pictures and films from their actions and demonstrations, but also writes a lot of texts and articles where they express their opinions and spread their activism. They build their narratives by partly telling about things that have happened, but with the help of that they also show where they want to go in the future. Their posts about how they view people who, for example, use animal products, farmers or police officers also refer to how one should interpret and relate to them. The fact that our stories can call for action and sometimes even criminal acts, I discussed in the section with narrative criminology. Narrative criminology is mainly used to explain and understand how narratives can evoke and motivate harmful acts, but also how these can be legitimized and how harm can make sense (Presser & Sandberg 2015:1). In Djurfront's case, they talk openly about prosecutions, fines or judgments that are linked to the organization and usually take them with very good courage. All actions performed in the name of animals should be supported and in such cases the action itself is not directly relevant, but the important thing is that you actually did the right thing - to fight for the freedom of animals. Djurfront has openly shown its support for activists who have been convicted and is also starting fundraisers to pay these fines. In other words, they do not place much focus on the illegal, but rather that solidarity should be shown to support and help each other. Both within the group but also from other animal rights activists around the world. With the help of narrative criminology, we can understand how these narratives and stories can also call for criminal action because Djurfront actively shows how someone who performs an act - which may be illegal - receives support and help if there are consequences.

As Cordeiro-Rodrigues (2016) mentioned, ALF sees its actions as justified because acts of violence according to them include acts that have no adequate cause. But since the animals' situation is both unfair and wrong, ALF (violent) actions become morally correct. This is basically the same mindset that Djurfront has applied as they several times mention how people who harm or exploit animals deserve to be harassed, have a difficult life or suffer in other ways. Since it is the animals that are the victims and not, for example farmers, it will not be relevant for Djurfront to see what consequences their actions have for farmers. All focus is on the animals and what benefits them most in the long run. When Djurfront talks about the fight for the animals, it is often compared to other historical events to put the

animals' situation in relation to them. In the same way that Zuolo (2020) and Francione & Garner (2010) talked about violence and crime could be a necessary evil, for example when talking about the liberation of slaves or comparing racial oppression with speciesism, Djurfront believes that there is no difference in that movement and the animal rights struggle. In their eyes, it is no more than right that even the fight for animals does not necessarily have to use force, but that it should be accepted to use in situations that require violence. Since the animals can also not defend themselves, it is up to Djurfront to react and fight back, by all means necessary. Like (Posłuszna 2015:96) mentioned, what could justify violence is anti-speciesism and when the animals can't defend themselves extensional self-defense develops where activists take responsibility. For Djurfront animals are like their family, their friends or relatives, which is another reason why violent or radical methods are defensible, because who would not do everything to save their family from murder, rape or captivity?

In summary, you can see Djurfront's main narrative throughout their actions, texts, publications on social media, etc. All animals are equally valuable, they should be treated with the same respect as people and get the right to a dignified life. The love of animals is equated with the love one can know of family members or relatives, which also reinforces the belief that under no circumstances is it morally right or to eat or use animals for human purposes. This is the basis on which Djurfront builds their activism, after they have gained an awakening or insight into animal rights and how it *actually* is, it is also up to them to show society what animals go through and are exposed to. Based on Presser (2018) and her underdog stories, it becomes clear that Djurfront has a clear picture of who the enemy is, but also how they see themselves as a heroic group that stands up for the weak and fights against the great injustice and the seemingly invincible evil. By identifying the enemy and themselves as the hero, they also consider themselves to have morals on their side. This means that they also find arguments and situations where doubtful or violent methods in their view can seem fully legitimate. In the end it's all about the animals and their lives. Everything else is irrelevant, until everyone is free.

In a future study, I wanted to build on the results I presented but examine it from a different angle. For example, talk to the police, politicians, journalists, farmers or other individuals that in some way work to counteract animal rights activism. It would have been interesting to examine in more detail, for example, how they view the use of violence, how they talk about animals or how they view animal rights and activism to compare with Djurfronts opinions.



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