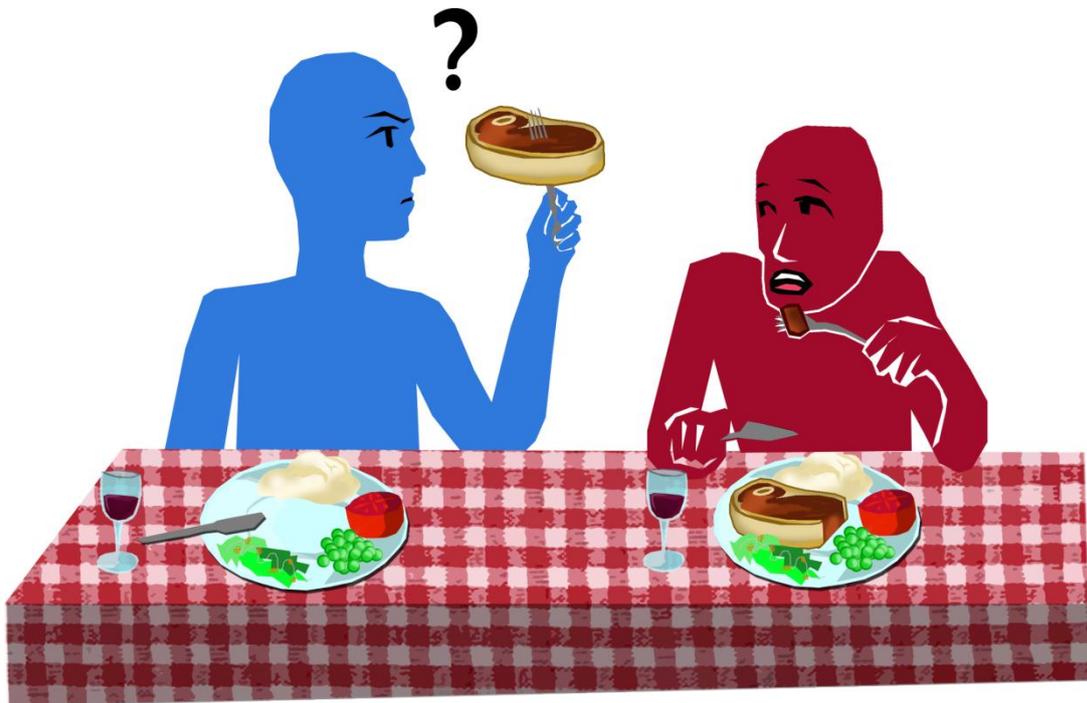


A Need for Meat?

An explorative research amongst flexitarians on the cultural embedding of meat in everyday consumption rituals

Kristel Lageweg



Student number: 830914-496-100
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Supervisor: Prof. dr. ir. Gert Spaargaren
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Master thesis Environmental Policy submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Science in Environmental Sciences at Wageningen University, the Netherlands

Kristel Lageweg

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Supervisor:

Prof. dr. ir. Gert Spaargaren
Environmental Policy Group
Wageningen University
The Netherlands
www.enp.wur.nl

Second Reader:

Dr. ir. Peter Oosterveer
Environmental Policy Group
Wageningen University
The Netherlands

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Abstract

The current debate in the Netherlands about meat-related sustainability issues seems to focus mainly on the individualist and the systemic side of the problem. The (socio) cultural side of meat consumption is often overlooked. The Dutch's meat consumption behaviour is beginning to show transitional signs however, as we are seeing many initiatives pop up that promote a more sustainable form of meat consumption and the emergence of a large group of flexitarians for whom meat is not an essential part of every meal. This explorative research uses Collins' IR theory to examine in what way everyday life routine practices of meat consumption are embedded in wider cultural frames and traditions in the Netherlands and what the implications are for the transition to a more sustainable form of meat consumption. We looked at the consumption behaviour of flexitarians specifically, as this group of three to seven million people holds the largest transitional potential.

Our findings suggest that there are some consumption practices in which meat is still often an undebatable element – mainly those that are highly routinised practices and those in which meat holds a strong symbolic value – but that for many practices there is a definite potential for a smooth move towards more sustainable forms of meat consumption. Other elements, mainly interpersonal interaction, appear to be more important for the ritual experience. As long as these elements are left intact, the group of flexitarians seems to be very open for the sustainable forms of meat consumption.

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Foreword

Writing this thesis has been quite the proverbial 'rocky road'. In the beginning, I did not look forward to spending most of my time typing the time away on my own, so I embarked on this road with what we call 'frisse tegenzin'* in Dutch. Throughout the process however, I started to become really interested in the subject, developing a type of radar for any meat related news. I also started to spontaneously bore friends, family and vague acquaintances by enthusiastically pointing out any remarkable interaction ritual we might be partaking in.

Unfortunately this roused interest and enthusiasm for my thesis subject did not automatically translate into what my supervisor once called 'the graduating fire'. In other words: it took me quite some time to transform my enthusiasm into a written product. In the end though, once I started to see more clearly what the final product would look like, the fire finally kicked in and I even started to enjoy the writing process. The result is in front of you right now. I hope it will stir your interest like it did mine.

I would like to thank some people who helped and supported me during this process. First of all my supervisor, Gert Spaargaren. Without him subtly nudging me in this direction, this vegan would otherwise have never considered writing a thesis about meat. It soon became clear that subtle nudging would be a recurring theme in his supervising process; not only did I sometimes need to be nudged back into the writing process, but there was also academic nudging, away from behavioural change and towards a more descriptive, explorative type of research. I really enjoyed the discussions – sometimes even near-debates – we had during our sessions about the direction of my thesis. They have been some of the most fruitful and educational ones of my academic career.

Secondly I would like to thank all of my friends and fellow students that helped brighten up the long days in the library. The list of people that have provided me with much-needed human contact during coffee or lunch breaks is too long to recite here (you know who you are!), but one person deserves a special mention, as she has been there throughout the entire process. Marleen, coffee tastes better with you.

Finally I would like to thank my partner Joost and my family for their constant support and belief in me. Especially Joost has had to bear the grumpy consequences of those not-so-productive days, luckily this never fazed him and would just cause him to cheer me up instead. My family finally, especially my parents, have been a solid support throughout all my years at university. Mum and dad, thank you for putting up with this long study process of mine, the end is in sight!

*'frisse tegenzin' is rather difficult to translate, but let's describe it as 'cheerful reluctance'.

1. Introduction

For us humans, one of our most basic needs is the need for food. However basic this need may be, choosing which specific item to consume has become more and more complex over the years. Availability and cost used to be the main concerns in the past, but increased scientific knowledge has given us the information to now also consider the effect on our health, the labour conditions under which it was produced and the environmental impact of the products we consume. Adding to the complexity of these choices is the fact that often the exact effects aren't known, because they depend on such a large number of variables.

A prime example of a commodity with an impact in many areas is meat. As it became cheaper and more readily available in Dutch society, this was first seen as a positive development. Now also the lower classes had access to a more varied diet, which had a positive effect on their health and life expectancy¹. However, as the average meat intake per person kept increasing, more and more discussions arose about the positive and negative effects of this rising meat consumption². The increase has been linked to a large number of issues, ranging from health effects, pandemic diseases and equality issues to climate change, deforestation and animal welfare. Many organisations and actors have tried to address the observed negative effects of meat consumption, using a range of different approaches and generating mixed results. A common denominator in their messages is that a high consumption of meat leads to an unsustainable situation, as the negative impact relates largely to the environment and wellbeing of humans and animals.

When we look at the current debate in the Netherlands about these meat-related sustainability issues, it becomes clear that the focus is mainly on the production side of the problem and that solutions are often searched for in technology. The demand, or consumption, side of the matter has received less attention so far. Especially the more (socio)cultural side has so far been largely overlooked³. We believe that the lack of attention for cultural aspects of meat consumption could hinder a successful transition⁴ towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption, as the consumption and production of meat have been strongly embedded in Dutch culture⁵.

This exploratory research aims to provide some clues about the cultural embedding of meat consumption in the Netherlands, in order to help further the debate about the transition towards a more sustainable organisation of meat production and consumption. One theory in particular, the

¹ Van Otterloo (1998)

² See e.g. Singer (1975), Sambeek & Bruyns (1994), FAO (2006), and Pierson Foundation (2010) for further background and discussion pieces.

³ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010:11)

⁴ In this research, we use the term 'transition' as theoretically defined by Geels & Schot (2010:11) as "shifts from one socio-technical system to another".

⁵ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010:12)

Interaction Ritual Chain Theory⁶ (IR theory), will be used to analyse the present day consumption behaviour and the role meat consumption plays in it. Thus far, IR theory has not been applied in empirical research on food consumption very often⁷. The theory however seems to provide a promising sociological alternative to the more frequently used marketing and psychology based theories. IR theory can be used to examine people's behaviour from a *microsociological* perspective which puts the focus on situations rather than on individuals. The theory provides us with insights and information about the contexts within which (groups of) individuals operate.

A clear choice has been made to focus on everyday-life food consumption and on the consumption of meat in particular. Even though the consumption of fish, dairy and eggs might cause similar sustainability problems to those connected with meat consumption, it is likely that a different approach is needed in addressing the over-consumption of these products. For one, it is problematic that these items in particular are often chosen to replace the meat component in a meal. To maintain a clear focus, only meat will be highlighted.

The main question of this research is:

In what way are everyday-life routine practices of meat consumption embedded in wider cultural frames and traditions in the Netherlands and what are the implications for the transition to a more sustainable form of meat consumption?

To answer this main question, a number of sub questions will have to be addressed:

- *What does the transition towards a more sustainable meat consumption look like?*
- *What do everyday food consumption rituals look like?*
- *What can be said about the role of meat in food interaction rituals?*
- *What elements of meat-based interaction rituals are important for the transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption in society?*

The build-up of this thesis is as follows: in Chapter 2 the transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption will be placed in a historical context, leading up to a description of the current situation. In this chapter, the social and scientific relevance of this research will also be elaborated upon. In Chapter 3, the theoretical framework will be built by first explaining IR theory and consequently, in Chapter 4, by focusing on its specific use in addressing meat consumption practices. In Chapter 5 we will analyse a number of consumption practices with a meat component, in order to

⁶ Collins (2004)

⁷ There is at least one person, Keith Brown (2010), who has made a first attempt. His approach will be discussed further in §3.3.

get a clear picture of what these look like and what potential triggers and barriers for a successful transition can be identified. Finally, in Chapter 6, we will draw our conclusions and answer the main and sub questions of the research.

2. History and Societal Impact of Meat Consumption

Worldwide meat consumption has increased tremendously over the past decades to an all-time high⁸. This increase is somewhat of a double-edged sword: it is a sign of increasing welfare on the one hand, but on the other hand it also leads to problems in many areas. From the time these problems became known in the Netherlands, there have been actors who have tried to counter these negative effects. In more recent years, it has become clear that there are serious attempts to bring about a transition towards a more sustainable form of meat production and consumption⁹. This chapter looks at that transition from a historical perspective.

First, in §2.1, a brief historic overview of meat consumption and production in the Netherlands will be given. Consequently, in §2.2, attention will be paid to the societal impact of meat consumption. In §2.3 we will examine the way different parties have tried to reduce the negative impacts on society and describe where we are now in the transition towards a more sustainable form of meat production and consumption. Finally, in §2.4, we will conclude the Chapter by positioning our research in that transitional spectrum.

2.1 History of Meat Consumption and Production in the Netherlands

For us to get a clear picture of the opportunities for a transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption, it is important to first look back at the route that has led Dutch society to the current level of meat consumption. It is impossible to analyse the present-day situation correctly without understanding the historical context that shaped it. Here, we will examine this historical context.

We will look at the drivers behind the increase in meat consumption as well as those initiatives that have tried to mitigate this increase. In order to paint a more complete picture, we will not only look at the cultural (consumption) side, but also include important developments on the technological (production) side. After all, these developments have also strongly influenced our specific culture with regards to meat consumption; the two are interwoven.

For the largest part of human history, meat has been a luxury item in our daily diet. In hunter-gatherer societies, a lot of time, effort and energy had to be put into the hunting down of animals for food. In the agricultural communities that arose later in time, animals were expensive to purchase and nourish, thus also making their meat a costly food-source. Furthermore, the animal was kept not merely as a meat source; their muscle power as well as the milk, eggs, wool, manure and other

⁸ FAO Website (2010)

⁹ Otterloo, van (2012:68)

products that could be derived from the live animal were an important reason to keep the animal alive for a long period of time. This meant that there was great benefit in postponing the moment of slaughter¹⁰.

Because meat was so costly, it also became a status symbol. As it was something that certainly not everyone could afford to have often, consuming meat on a frequent basis was a clear display of wealth and social status. This applied especially to fresh meat and game, because the right to hunt was a privilege that only the highest classes possessed¹¹. For those who were less affluent, meat was usually only put on the table for special and celebratory occasions, often as the centre piece of the meal. Within these celebrations, status and hierarchy regularly also played a role in the interaction with the meat, for instance in determining who was allowed to cut the meat and by deciding who got the choicest parts of the animal.

The industrial revolution brought about the means to manage livestock more efficiently and with lower costs. It also made their function as draught animals largely redundant, as machines took their place in for instance milling grain and ploughing the land. This development was a main driver behind the reduction of meat prices and thus meat becoming more available. New transportation and refrigeration technologies, combined with a rise in real incomes helped stimulate this even further¹². In 1850, the Dutch annually consumed 27 kg of meat per capita, this had increased to 50 kg in 1930¹³. These numbers refer to the total carcass weight; the actual amount that is eaten is roughly half of this, so 13.5 kg in 1850 and 25 kg in 1930 respectively.

The developments that lead to meat becoming cheaper and more readily available benefited mainly the higher and middle classes of society at first. The working class didn't really reap the benefits until the second half of the twentieth century. Their low incomes meant that for a long time they still consumed a considerably smaller amount of meat and also of much lower quality than those of higher socioeconomic status¹⁴.

There has however been active government policy to increase the availability of animal protein for the lower classes ever since the middle of the nineteenth century. The initial reason for this was that food riots had broken out, as the increasing population growth caused a lack of meat and other protein sources. Another main reason was the fact that meat was considered to be beneficial for public health as well as labour productivity. This all lead the government to actively stimulate the provision of (animal) proteins and to promote the notion that meat is important for a

¹⁰ Fiddes, (1991:21)

¹¹ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010:57)

¹² Perren (1978) in: Fiddes (1991)

¹³ Reijnders (2005:96)

¹⁴ Fiddes (1991:26)

healthy, active lifestyle¹⁵. This promotion of meat as a very healthy and nutritious, even vital, element of one's consumption pattern was continued for many years.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the first stirrings of a counterculture became visible with the foundation of the Dutch Vegetarian Society in 1894, following the example of the foundation of Vegetarian Societies in other countries. Before then, there most likely had been vegetarian individuals or even small groups in the Netherlands, but never before of this scale or this organised. Their joint opinion was that civilised human beings should not eat animals and that vegetarian food was more healthy and suitable¹⁶.

The Second World War marked a temporary decline in the intake of meat, but soon after, the upward trend was resumed until the nineteen eighties, when it stabilised at roughly 85 kg (carcass weight) per person. It has remained around that amount ever since¹⁷. From the 1950s onwards, meat became solidified as one of the components of the Dutch 'holy trinity' of a healthy meal: meat, potatoes and vegetables. At first, not all households were able to afford meat on a daily basis yet - up until the sixties most working class families had meat no more than twice a week - but soon it became a fixed part of the daily meal¹⁸.

The active government policy that promoted meat as a necessary commodity was a big driver behind the establishment of meat as a set meal component. The government no longer spreads this message nowadays. In fact the Voedingscentrum¹⁹ even explains that a diet without any meat can be perfectly healthy²⁰. However, quite a number of consumers nowadays still believe that a daily intake of meat is needed for health reasons²¹. The Dutch tend to have a strong preference for pork, followed at a distance by poultry and beef, as illustrated in the following table.

¹⁵ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010:48)

¹⁶ Verdonk (2009:23)

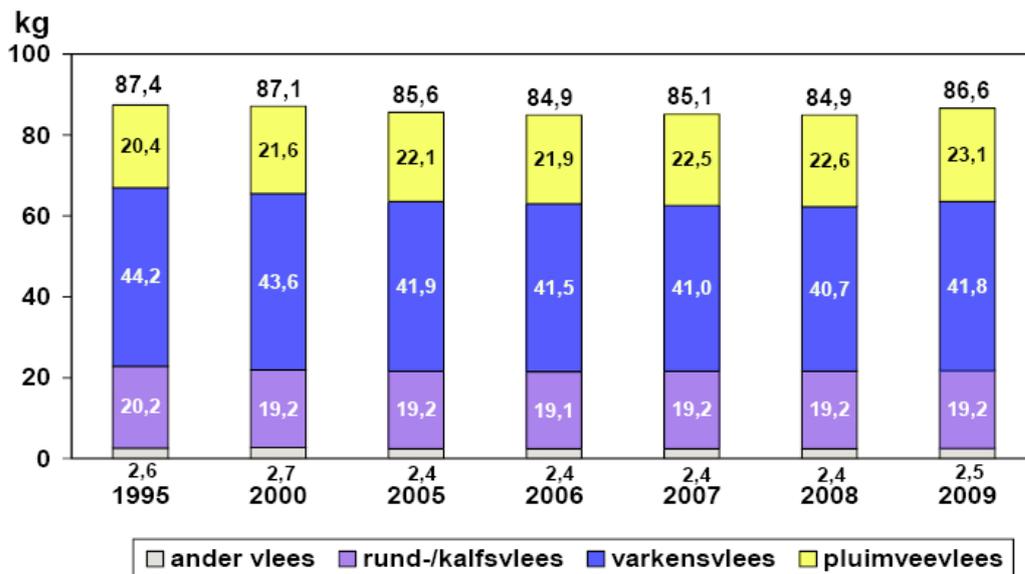
¹⁷ Stehfest et. al (2010)

¹⁸ Van Otterloo (2012)

¹⁹ Het Voedingscentrum (The Netherlands Nutrition Centre Foundation) is an organisation funded by the government to inform the public about healthy, safe and sustainable food choices.

²⁰ Het Voedingscentrum Website (n.d.)

²¹ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010:154)



Source: Productschap Vee, Vlees en Eieren, 2010

There are many variations in the consumption patterns between countries and even regions; the history of meat intake in the Netherlands follows roughly the same line as the history of most industrialised countries. With regards to the consumption numbers, the Dutch don't differ much from the world wide trends for other industrialised countries, as they followed the same historic line of industrialisation.

A number of the agricultural developments of the past decades have however had a quite specific influence on the Dutch's relationship to meat. For a long time, agriculture was one of the main Dutch economic activities, one in which a large part of the population was somehow involved, which meant that there was a very close connection between the food producer and the consumer. But processes such as industrialisation, urbanisation and increase in welfare made it more common to purchase food rather than producing it yourself²². This division between the urban areas and farm land is ever increasing. This fact, combined with the up-scaling of farms and the growing numbers of imported food stuffs, means that meat in its 'original form', i.e. the animal itself, is becoming more and more invisible to Dutch consumers nowadays.

The bio-industry in particular can be seen as one of the main achievements of the industrialisation with regards to meat production. Technological advancements made it possible to keep large amounts of animals on only a small piece of land. The development of feed concentrates meant that animals could be reared faster without having to graze outside. It also helped them bulk out more. The problem of the high concentration of manure that came from this was addressed by technological advances to process it and the ability to transport it to other areas in the world.

²² Van Otterloo (1998)

Technology such as conveyor belts and later on timer-driven machinery also hugely increased the efficiency with regards to feeding, watering and slaughtering animals.

Another trend that finds its origin in the combination of industrialisation and globalisation is the lengthening of the production chain. As the production of food scaled up further and further from the originally small (family) businesses and individual households to largely industrialised companies and factories, the production of individual ingredients became more and more specialised. This meant that it became increasingly difficult to determine the origins of an entire product, especially with a lack of labelling. Many of the meaty foodstuffs we eat today consist of other ingredients as well. One simple example is a sausage roll that also contains for instance flour, butter, eggs, salt and flavourings and colorants. But even products that seem to consist of nothing but meat can actually contain a plethora of ingredients, starting with the meat mixture itself. For instance, if we look at a meatball sold by one of the main players in the Dutch frozen snack market, Mora²³, we learn that it consists of two different types of meat (pork and horse) and for 37% of other ingredients, such as breadcrumbs, fats, colourings and E numbers.

All the industrial developments of the past decades triggered a response from the public, especially from those that were concerned with environmental matters. From the nineteen seventies onwards, groups and individuals have rallied together to promote more sustainable alternatives to the industrialisation of meat production, such as small scale mixed farming, organic farming and a vegetarian life style²⁴. The protests coincided with the general social criticism of that time and were initially an integral part of a larger counterculture. Their efforts have however led to the institutionalisation of a number of sustainable initiatives with a particular effect on meat production, such as the introduction of the EKO-label for organic food in 1986 and the foundation of animal rights groups, for instance Lekker Dier (now 'Wakker Dier' – 'Animal Alert' in English) in 1972.

The animal rights movement came into full swing after the Australian philosopher Peter Singer released his book *Animal Liberation* in 1975. They were inspired by his notion of speciesism²⁵ and that, since animals can experience pain and suffering, human beings should consider animals' interests just as well as their own²⁶. Since then, they have actively campaigned against the abuse of animals and for better living conditions of both production as well as companion animals.

The notion that there is a difference between production and companion animals was also new. This was a result of the fact that it became less common for people to be surrounded by farm

²³ Mora Website (n.d.)

²⁴ Van Otterloo (2012:67)

²⁵ The term speciesism refers to the discrimination of animals on the basis of belonging to a different species than the human race, even though they can experience suffering, just like human beings.

²⁶ Singer (1975)

animals, as well as the increased welfare, which allowed more people the luxury of keeping pets. This separation between the two types of animals has over time led to very different welfare standards for both. Whereas companion animals sometimes receive a level of care that is higher than that of most people in third world countries, the legal requirements for the care of production animals are very minimal. There is a dissonance between the Dutch's loving relationship with companion animals and the industrialised manner of producing those that are consumed. This is also reflected in the way meat looks in supermarket nowadays; for the largest part the meat products are pre-cut without any reminders of the original animal, such as bones, faces or fur²⁷. The poor living conditions of production animals also occur for the most part out of sight of the public, as the largest part of livestock in the Netherlands is kept indoors nowadays.

In the past two decades the country has been shaken by a number of animal diseases. BSE and Foot and Mouth disease in particular rattled the public and caused the topics of meat production and consumption to be put on the public agenda. The consequences of these diseases for public health will be discussed further in §2.2. In general there have as of yet been no significant long term changes in the people's consumption patterns and the production methods because of this, but the public debate still continues.

The public outcry that followed from these animal disease scares, combined with the increased interest in animal welfare, has even led to the foundation of the Partij voor de Dieren (Party for the animals), a political party for animal rights and animal protection. This party was founded in 2002 and received enough votes to maintain two seats in parliament from 2006 onwards²⁸.

For as far as very current trends, it is worth mentioning that the economic crisis has caused an increase in the average meat intake per capita. The reason for this seems to be that people eat in more to save money and portion sizes at home tend to be larger than those served in restaurants²⁹.

Looking back at the history of meat consumption and production in the Netherlands, we can conclude that production and consumption has increased steeply in the past 150 years or so. It has however not increased significantly since the nineteen eighties. Since the nineteen sixties there has also been a countermovement however, striving for a transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption. Those who work on this have become more organised and institutionalised over the years. In §2.3 we will examine more closely where we are currently within this transition, but first

²⁷ Van Koppen (2005:18)

²⁸ Van Otterloo (2012:78)

²⁹ PVE Website (2010)

we will examine what is so unsustainable about the way most meat is produced and consumed in this current day and age.

2.2 Societal impact of Meat

The high level of meat consumption has a number of effects on society at large that are both positive and negative. The scale of the impact also varies, from individual to worldwide. The overview of the societal impact that will be given here is the context in which this research takes place. It indicates both the persistent problems that make it necessary to speed up the transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption, as well as the technical and cultural mechanisms that affect the perpetuation of the current situation.

The societal areas that are affected by excessive meat consumption can be roughly divided into four categories: 'nature and the environment', 'animal welfare', 'health and safety' and 'equality and status'. These four will each be addressed separately. Per category attention will also be paid to what has been done so far to counter any of the problems linked to meat consumption.

Nature, Landscape and the Environment

The production of meat has a number of effects on our natural surroundings. First of all there is the mere fact of land use, as the animals need to be kept somewhere. When kept in conditions of extensive farming, the average land use per animal is quite high, thus rendering the land useless for other economic activities. This, and the pursuit for more efficiency, has led to farmers keeping animals indoors more. This has drastically changed the way the Dutch landscape looks. The characteristic 'polders' with farms surrounded by grazing animals have become less and less common, whilst huge sheds arose for animal housing.

The decline of the traditional polder landscape has also had an effect on the biodiversity in the Netherlands; species, such as grassland birds, that used to rely on the specific conditions surrounding these farm lands have dwindled. To counter this effect, the government has reserved funds for farmers that are willing to participate in the nature management of their lands³⁰.

When farm animals are kept intensively, i.e. indoors and with as many animals per square meter as possible, environmental issues of a more polluting nature occur. This is due to the large amounts of excrements, methane and other harmful gases that are produced in a very concentrated place. Livestock production causes 10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions directly through the emissions of nitrous oxide and methane from the manure and digestion of ruminants (cows, sheep and goats mainly). Besides this, there are also indirectly caused CO₂-emissions through the

³⁰ Rijksoverheid Website (n.d.)

deforestation that takes place for the livestock production. The FAO estimated the total contribution of animal husbandry to greenhouse gas emissions at 18 percent³¹. About 70 percent of all agricultural land is used for animals and fodder³².

These problems with land use and pollution don't occur just in the Netherlands, as much of the meat that is consumed is imported. Many of the direct effects of the production of the meat are not felt in the country in which it is consumed. For instance, purchasing a hamburger in your local supermarket could contribute in part to deforestation that occurs in Brazil, because they turn rainforest into cattle feeding grounds for the cows that become the burgers that end up in Dutch supermarkets.

Not only the rearing of the animals themselves creates environmental problems, but also the production of the feed for the animals. The land use for the fodder is even higher than the amount of land needed for the farming of the animals themselves. For every kilogram of meat, between 2-7 kilograms of vegetable input is needed, depending on the type of animal³³. Most of the animal fodder is grown in South America and Asia. A third of all arable lands worldwide is used for the production of animal feed³⁴. The international growth in meat consumption is therefore an important factor in the decrease of worldwide biodiversity. Chicken puts less pressure on the environment than pork and beef in terms of fodder, land use, water use and climate. Beef takes the largest toll. Beef from beef cattle, as opposed to dairy cattle, exerts the largest environmental pressure³⁵. Meat production from ruminants has the largest effect on land use, using up around 80 percent of all grass lands. The remaining grass lands are used for dairy production³⁶.

This long list of all the effects of meat production on nature, landscape and the environment has not gone unnoticed. There are already quite a number of developments that aim to reduce the impact of meat production on nature, landscape and the environment. For one, quite a lot of research is done with regards to reducing the emission of greenhouse gases from animal housing buildings. These developments happen largely 'behind the screens' however, and are not actively communicated towards consumers. In some countries they do have a system of carbon labelling for food, which informs consumers about the CO₂-emissions that are generated during the lifecycle of a product, but no such system exists in the Netherlands as of yet.

³¹ FAO (2006:xxi)

³² FAO (2006:xxi)

³³ FAO (2006:45)

³⁴ FAO (2006:xxi)

³⁵ Milieucentraal Website (n.d.)

³⁶ Stehfest et al. (2008)

Animal Welfare

Along with the developments that created increased production efficiency and a lowering of the costs of producing meat, came housing conditions that can be considered detrimental to animal welfare. Especially the bio-industry is often addressed by animal welfare groups who criticise animals being housed in small cages or with many animals in a relatively small space.

A problem with these housing issues is that animal welfare arguments can come into conflict with environmental arguments³⁷. Recent developments in e.g. carbon capture devices and manure processing mean that sometimes bio-industry farming can be done in a more environmentally friendly manner than extensive farming. However, this is often more detrimental to the animal welfare. This mismatch is something that is definitely taken into account by the industry, as animal welfare groups keep a close watch, but a win-win situation is yet to be found.

Besides the housing issues, transportation can also be very stressful and sometimes fatal for production animals. It is not uncommon for animals to be transported internationally over long distances, either by truck, train or ship in very cramped conditions without food or water³⁸. Poor living conditions of animals pop up in the media every so often and tend to always lead to shocked reactions by consumers. Also the treatment of the animals is often a point of dispute, varying from critique about the unsexed neutering of pigs to the clipping of chicken beaks³⁹.

Concerns about animal welfare are often used as arguments for considering a more sustainable form of meat consumption by consumers⁴⁰. This has not gone unnoticed by the government and industry; some improvements, both with regards to technological developments as well as to legislation, have been made over the past years. One attempt is the introduction of the 'Beter Leven sterren' (Better life stars), a labelling system that makes the living conditions of the animals they consume more insightful for the public.⁴¹ This is a joint initiative of animal welfare organisation 'Dierenbescherming' and the industry.

The trend however is still one of up-scaling⁴², i.e. keeping more animals on less land, which unfortunately still generates poor living conditions most of the time. The main reason for this is that the price of meat is so low, that farmers feel forced to work as efficiently as possible. Still, the profit margins are very slim and sometimes even nonexistent⁴³. This often means that animal welfare takes a backseat to economic considerations.

³⁷ Zeijts, van et al. (2010:12)

³⁸ Zeijts, van et al. (2010:23)

³⁹ WakkerDier Website (n.d.)

⁴⁰ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010:63)

⁴¹ Zeijts, van et al. (2010:24)

⁴² De Bakker & Dagevos (2010:52)

⁴³ Zeijts, van et al. (2010:11)

Health and Safety

Over the years there have been several outbreaks of animal borne diseases that can transfer to humans, so-called zoonoses, such as BSE, Bird Flu and Q-fever, and a number of outbreaks of rapidly spreading animal plagues, like Foot and Mouth disease and Swine Fever. Of course each disease has its own peculiarities and differences in threat level and public effect; it would be beyond the scope of this research to cover all these individually in detail. There are however a number of joint aspects. For one, all these outbreaks have not only caused physical harm to the people that were affected, but have also had large economic repercussions for the affected farmers⁴⁴.

The rapid spread of the diseases was caused by a variety of factors, but the fact that animals are often transported between different places (nursery, rearing farm and slaughter house) and that some of the diseases were also airborne definitely increased the speed of the disease spreading. This meant that large parts of the country quickly became a potential threat of infection and therefore a serious danger to public health. This led to a certain degree of public unrest⁴⁵

In order to keep the risk of diseases as low as possible, antibiotics are often used. The systematic over-usage of antibiotics has however led to bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics, which means that antibiotics don't work properly anymore and thus poses a significant threat to public health⁴⁶. This is a problem especially in the Netherlands, as was exposed by the journalistic TV programme Zembla⁴⁷. The dosages of antibiotics used exceed by far the amounts recommended by healthcare specialists.

Besides the issues related to public health, there is also a number of issues related to individual health to be considered. As was mentioned in paragraph 1.1, meat has for a long time been seen as an essential, healthy part of a balanced diet. It is definitely true that meat contains beneficial values; it contains proteins, B vitamins and minerals such as iron. Eating meat in large quantities however can be disadvantageous to one's health and can possibly increase the risk of diseases such as cardio-vascular diseases, obesity and some forms of cancer. The reason for this is that meat and meat products often contain high levels of the unhealthy saturated fats and fatty acids⁴⁸. The level of animal protein consumed in the Netherlands currently exceeds the recommended daily intake and enough to be considered worrisome⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ Zeits, van et al. (2010:26)

⁴⁵ Otterloo, van (2012:76)

⁴⁶ Zeijts, van et al. (2010:10)

⁴⁷ Zembla Website (2011)

⁴⁸ Marinussen et al. (2010:31)

⁴⁹ PBL (2009)

Equality and Status

For a long time, meat was only readily available for the rich part of Dutch society. This situation has changed however, even to such a point that people from lower socioeconomic classes currently consume more meat on average than those that are more affluent in the Netherlands. It is seen as a positive achievement that everyone can now afford meat on a daily basis. Even though the original foundation for this status has now disappeared (meat nowadays is hardly a costly foodstuff anymore), this sense of achievement is still felt.

But if we look at society from a global perspective, it is still the case that only the rich can afford to eat meat on a regular basis, as is shown in the table below.

Region	Meat (kg per year)		
	1964 - 1966	1997 - 1999	2030
World	24.2	36.4	45.3
Developing countries	10.2	25.5	36.7
Near East and North Africa	11.9	21.2	35.0
Sub-Saharan Africa ^a	9.9	9.4	13.4
Latin America and the Caribbean	31.7	53.8	76.6
East Asia	8.7	37.7	58.5
South Asia	3.9	5.3	11.7
Industrialized countries	61.5	88.2	100.1
Transition countries	42.5	46.2	60.7

^a Excludes South Africa.

Source: WHO⁵⁰

This table illustrates another important point, namely the steep increased meat consumption of the developing countries and the expected further rise. The developing countries are catching up to the developed countries and are going through the same processes that lead to meat becoming more accessible. They are industrialising at a very high rate, especially the East Asian and Latin American countries. India, Brazil and China deserve a special mention here, as they pop up in most ranking lists as developing the fastest and increasing their meat intake the most.

⁵⁰ WHO Website (n.d.)

Recent meat consumption numbers⁵¹ show that the average worldwide consumption of meat has now increased to just a little over 42 kg per capita, meaning that the meat intake has nearly doubled over the past half century. When assuming a ‘business as usual’ scenario based on forecasts by the FAO⁵², the worldwide consumption of meat will double between 2000 and 2050. The amount consumed by the industrialised, or developed, countries has remained roughly the same since the eighties however, meaning that the ever rising numbers of consumption are almost solely on account of the developing countries. It is still very much seen as a symbol of economic prosperity to be able to afford meat on a regular basis, so it seems very unlikely that this trend will stagnate or reverse in the near future. Whether or not it is ‘fair’ for the developed countries to ask the developing countries for moderation is also a point that is heavily debated worldwide.

In the Netherlands, meat also still has strong symbolic connotations, albeit not necessarily the same ones as in other countries. Meat does still have the air of being the most luxurious part of a meal, but the strongest symbolic value for the Dutch lies in the fact that meat consumption is often (consciously or subconsciously) linked to masculinity, toughness and hedonism. Especially this hedonistic image is one that can clearly be seen in the way people eat. For instance, meat often plays a central role in restaurants’ menus and having a meal such as steak or a game dish is seen as a real treat. A lesser, but nonetheless significant, link is also found between meat consumption and social status; meat eaters are generally considered to be ‘ordinary’ and lower educated⁵³.

Nonetheless, a large group of ‘meat reducers’⁵⁴ can nowadays be identified in the Netherlands. These meat reducers or ‘flexitarians’ are people who eat meat less than 6 days a week (but are not vegetarians). They do not consider meat to be a vital part of the meal and make conscious decisions about whether or not to include meat in their meals. We will come back to this group further on in §2.3

2.3 Transition towards a More Sustainable Form of Meat Consumption

After all these descriptions of societal issues, it might seem as though there are no significant moves towards sustainable meat consumption and production, but this is not entirely true. The stirrings of a transition towards a more sustainable situation can be seen in Dutch society. In this paragraph we will look at what recent initiatives have been undertaken that help benefit the transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption and production, and give a general overview of how this transition is going.

⁵¹ FAO (June 2009)

⁵² FAO (2006:iii)

⁵³ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010:131)

⁵⁴ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010)

Some of the initiatives have already been mentioned in the description of the four themes, such as the developments to reduce emissions from cattle and the introduction of the 'Beter Leven' stars. However, all of the themes mentioned in §2.2 interlink with each other, as virtually all types of meat production have an effect on two or more of the societal issues. Because the problems are so interwoven, there aren't many initiatives to solve the problems in just one area. Most actors that strive for a more sustainable form of meat production attempt to address several themes at once.

This also means that there is not one clear definition of 'sustainable' meat consumption or production, as the degree to which certain themes are addressed, varies. The actors tend to strive for either a switch to environmentally or animal friendly meat, a switch away from meats with a high environmental impact (red meat) towards meats with a lower impact (white meat), a reduction of meat consumption altogether, or a combination of these.

The actors have tried to address and tackle the problems in several different ways. On the one hand there have been awareness campaigns that aim to convince people to eat less meat or meat of a more sustainable nature; these types of initiatives have a clear consumption-inspired focus on behavioural change. On the other hand there are also many technological advancements aimed at reducing the environmental impact of meat production and at the development of high quality meat substitutes.

Production based Initiatives

A niche market of sustainable meat and meat replacement products has been on a very slow, but steady rise. Recent numbers indicate that 3% of all meat sold in supermarkets carries a sustainability label⁵⁵. The Netherlands is by no means a sustainability front runner with these numbers – the UK, Germany and the Scandinavian countries for instance score much higher percentages – but things seem to accelerate. The main parties that are attempting to stimulate a more sustainable consumption of meat are NGOs and individual business, but also the national government. The latter has subsidised the development of meat replacements since the 1990s and has more recently made a start to actively promote sustainable food consumption and production.⁵⁶⁵⁷

The availability of high quality meat replacement products is very important for a successful transition, as the quality of these products is often an important factor in choosing between meat and an alternative. Especially sensory and familiarity aspects are considered very important, as well as the feeling of being satiated after eating. These aspects have been largely lacking in meat

⁵⁵ Ministerie van LNV (2010)

⁵⁶ Bakker, de & Dagevos (2010:52)

⁵⁷ House of Representatives (2008)

replacements until recently⁵⁸. This has not gone unnoticed and two parties have actively jumped in to fill this gap.

The first of these is the 'vegetarian butcher', which was created by a farmer, a business man and a chef in 2009. The vegetarian butcher sells products that are very similar in texture to meat and is an active promoter of the vegetarian alternative. The products are made from 'Beeter', a soy-based product that was developed in Wageningen and has a fibrous texture that is very similar to that of meat. In panel tests, people were often not able to taste the difference between Beeter and real meat. The Vegetarian Butcher sells most of his products online, but also has two real stores that have been designed to have the feel of a real butcher's shop⁵⁹.

Another party, Meatless, came out with a similarly meaty textured product around the same time as the Vegetarian Butcher. The main difference between the two is that Meatless is lupine-based and sells mainly to large food industry parties such as caterers. Furthermore, it's product is also integrated into hybrid forms of meat products such as hamburgers, mince rolls, sausages and stir fry mince. This means that their products is not only used as a vegetarian alternative, but is also used to reduce the amount of meat in meat products.

With regards to the sustainability of the production of actual meat, it is also noteworthy to come back to the 'Beter Leven' stars once more to mention a recent development in the industry. Albert Heijn, the biggest supermarket chain in the Netherlands has recently joined up with the animal protection organisation 'Dierenbescherming' and Vion, the largest meat-packing player in the Netherlands, and made an agreement to sell only pork with one or more 'Beter Leven' stars. This concerns one million pigs a year⁶⁰.

Consumption based Initiatives

Even though there hasn't been that much research concerning the culture behind meat consumption, there are quite a number of initiatives that try to address exactly this culture. These campaigns try to raise awareness of the problems linked to the consumption of meat and largely try to promote a reduction of meat consumption. The plethora of initiatives with regards to consumption is more varied than those on the production side. The ones we mention here are all relatively recent and have received a lot of media attention.

In 2007 the scientific bureau of the Party for the Animals released the movie 'Meat the Truth'⁶¹. This was a response to Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth' and served to highlight the impact of meat on the environment in general and the climate in particular. The movie was screened in

⁵⁸ Hoek, (2010)

⁵⁹ De Vegetarische Slager Website (n.d.)

⁶⁰ Beter Leven Website (n.d.)

⁶¹ Pierson Foundation (2010)

many different theatres and other venues and has since had many releases abroad as well. Before the release of the movie, the role of meat in climate change policy was largely underexposed in both the public as well as the political debate in the Netherlands.

Another initiative with a political appeal that received quite a lot of public attention, was the 'plea for sustainable livestock farming', initiated by Professor Roos Vonk in 2010. She got 135 Dutch professors to sign a plea, mostly directed at the Dutch government, but also at the public at large, to make livestock farming more sustainable by reducing livestock and eating less meat and dairy. This was the first time that part of the scientific community joined up for such a message⁶².

A large part of the initiatives aim to influence not so much the politicians, but rather the consumers. One of these is the promotion of 'Plantaardig Maandag' (a Dutch version of Sir Paul McCartney's Meatfree Monday) by an ad hoc coalition of the Vegetarian and Vegan Society, a number of animal welfare NGOs, vegetarian related businesses and two political parties. Their aim is to help people to replace some of their meat based meals by vegetarian meal for at least once a week. Their promotional activities take place largely online, for instance with a website with recipes and information, but their aim is to also get restaurants, municipalities and other actors to join, like has happened in Belgium with 'Donderdag Veggiedag', a similar project⁶³.

The Dutch Vegetarian Society (NVB) has also stepped up its promotional activities as of recent. Not only do they participate in 'Plantaardig Maandag', but in 2011 they also organised the 'Vegetarian Restaurantweek' for the first time. This initiative is a response to the yearly 'national restaurantweek', which aims to promote fine dining. With their initiative, the NVB aimed to promote vegetarian meals in restaurants⁶⁴. Besides this, they also had a side project which was aimed at the restaurants themselves as an appeal to serve more creative vegetarian meals. This was all kicked off with a vegetarian cooking competition between chefs that received ample coverage in the media⁶⁵.

A final recent example is the 'I am a flexitarian' campaign by Natuur&Milieu, which was launched in 2011. With this campaign they seek to promote a lifestyle with a reduced consumption of meat⁶⁶. They actively promote the usage of the word 'flexitarian' to describe the 3-7 million people that consume meat only six or less days a week in order to also help people identify with eating less meat in a positive manner. The launch of their campaign received a lot of attention and continues to actively seek out media attention with light-hearted campaigns such as a world record attempt for the largest vegetarian kebab sandwich. The promotion of the word and identity of 'the flexitarian' is driven by the aim to create a culture in which it is accepted and easy to eat less meat.

⁶² Duurzame Veeteelt Website (n.d.)

⁶³ Plantaardig Maandag Website (n.d.)

⁶⁴ De Vegetarische Restaurantweek Website (n.d.)

⁶⁵ Variatie op de Kaart Website (n.d.)

⁶⁶ Natuur en Milieu Website (n.d.)

In terms of the transition theory, we can state that quite a number of niche innovations can be identified, but that a regime change⁶⁷ is yet to occur. In other words, the current number and quality of the initiatives seem to hint at an acceleration towards a more sustainable form of meat production and consumption, but there is no real cultural change as of yet. The presence of the 3-7 million flexitarians in the Netherlands does however seem to make a regime change a viable option for the future.

2.4 Conclusion

The key in all the problems caused by the consumption of meat is the amount. Over time, the amount that the Dutch consume has reached a level that is far beyond the carrying capacity of the Netherlands itself; land and resources in other countries are used in order to fulfil the Dutch demand for meat. In individuals the consumption of too much meat also crosses a carrying capacity; that of the human body, with health risks as a consequence.

Because the demand for meat is so high, the cattle industry has come up with ways to keep large amounts of animals on just a small piece of land. This in turn can lead to high risks for public health when diseases break out. Animal welfare is also threatened as the industry is stimulated to produce more and more meat at low prices.

Although the level of meat consumption per capita has stabilised in the Netherlands, it is still at an unsustainably high level. Furthermore, the worldwide amount consumed is still increasing, making the need for change more poignant than ever. However, when we look at the increase in initiatives that try to address the problems that are linked to meat, it seems that there are clear signs of an impending sustainable transition. A great unknown factor in this is the cultural side of meat consumption; how do consumers experience their meat consumption practices? And what motivates them to partake in these practices? This information is vital in determining an effective pathway towards an effective transition. It is clear that an analytical framework is needed. For this reason we will introduce Collins' IR-theory in the next chapter.

⁶⁷ We use the terms 'niche innovations' and 'regime change' based on the Strategic Niche Management Theory as defined by Schot & Geels (2010). Niches are protected spaces in which new technologies are developed in a joint effort between technology, user practices and regulatory structures. Regime change is what happens when a dominant socio-technical undergoes a drastic change due to the fact that practices, norms and standards developed in a niche become main stream.

3. Theoretical Framework

For a successful transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption and production, a cultural shift is needed⁶⁸. The technological developments that are happening right now are most definitely promising, but will never catch on if they won't be accepted by consumers. Considering the fact that there is such a large number of flexitarians already, it seems that an important precondition for transition is already in place. But in order to get a clear picture of where the limitations and opportunities lie for this transition, we need to know what drives this group in their consumption behaviour.

In other words: if we want to be able to judge the opportunities and limitations for the macro-level transition, we need to get a clear picture of what happens at the micro-level. At this micro-level all sorts of practices take place that together shape and influence the macro-transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption. Examples of such practices are the everyday meal moments of breakfast, lunch and dinner, going grocery shopping and cooking, but also more festive social 'rituals', such as going out for dinner, barbecuing or the organisation of the Christmas dinner.

In this chapter we propose that Collins' Interaction Ritual Theory can be a very useful tool in the analysis of the drivers behind the consumption behaviour of flexitarians within all these consumption practices or 'rituals'. This justification of the theory will be given in §3.1. Consequently, in §3.2, we will describe the IR theory as Collins designed it. Finally, in §3.3 we will illustrate how the theory can be used for meat consumption rituals specifically and also discuss its limitations.

3.1 Justification of the Theory

According to Spaargaren⁶⁹, there have been two paradigms dominating the governance of environmental change over the past decennia: the individualist and the systemic or structural paradigm. This has resulted in policies and campaigns that focus either on the individual's behaviour or on the institutional actors such as organisations, companies and NGOs. Neither approach has been a very successful so far. Brown⁷⁰ points out a similar problem in the markets for socially responsible products specifically, regarding the two predominant marketing theories - the 'consumer culture' and the 'mass consumption' perspective. The consumer culture perspective adheres to the belief that a consumer's identity, values and attitudes are leading in their consumption decisions, whereas the mass consumption perspective argues that consumers are mainly influenced by the coercive forces of marketing. However, neither of the theories can adequately explain why some consumers

⁶⁸ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010:178)

⁶⁹ Spaargaren (2011:3)

⁷⁰ Brown (2010:122)

show consumption behaviour that is in line with their value system and others show consumption behaviour that is much more contradictory to their value system.

The problem with these types of research is that they generally view the consumer as an independently acting individual, without paying attention to the context in which this individual operates. However, a person's social and cultural context can provide invaluable information about the reasons behind his or her consumption behaviour, but this research field is largely uncharted territory⁷¹. We believe that it is precisely this contextual information that is needed to fully understand the character and viability of a transition towards sustainability and propose using Collins' Interaction Ritual Theory (IR theory) to analyse the social and cultural context of the consumption behaviour of flexitarians.

The IR theory offers a third option for analysis, one that says that not the individual, nor the structural input is leading in consumption behaviour, but that the situational context – in the form of interaction rituals – often is. Focusing on the importance of interaction rituals means that a new way of governance and/or marketing is called for, one that is based on the IR theory. Of course attention for both the individual as well as for the structure in which the consumers operate should not be dismissed, but without any attention for the situational elements of consumption behaviour, most efforts to fully understand the transition, will be not nearly effective as they could be.

The IR theory will be used as a starting point, as a means to analyse current consumption 'rituals' that contain a strong meat component. The IR theory as designed by Collins is functional mainly for identifying the character of interaction rituals and their consequences by looking at the past, and thus reconstruct why present day consumption behaviour is the way it is. Collins does not however provide many suggestions about how to use these insights to actively influence the interaction rituals themselves. Therefore, after explaining the IR theory, some additions to the theory will be introduced in Chapter 4. These additions build on the IR theory in such a way as to make it more applicable for finding opportunities and barriers in currently occurring consumption rituals. This information is currently mostly lacking, but essential for those who try to fully grasp, and possibly influence, the transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption and production.

3.2 Ritual Interaction Theory

The IR theory was first introduced by Randall Collins in 2004 as a theory to help identify microsociological interaction rituals between people. Identifying these could provide a means of

⁷¹ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010:98)

“unlocking some secrets of large-scale macrosociological changes”⁷². His *microsociological* focus on situations rather than on individuals was meant to provide more useful information that could be used to explain the how and why of *macrosociological* trends, as it provides us with information about the context within which individuals operate. The situation is the analytical starting point, as the situation is what produces and reproduces the emotions and symbolism that make individuals want to participate in these situations in a particular manner⁷³.

Interaction Rituals

In order to analyse the influence of the interactions between individuals, he focuses on the importance of so-called ‘interaction rituals’. An interaction ritual within this theory is defined as “a mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership.”⁷⁴ These rituals generally occur when two or more people join in an activity in a shared setting. Something as small as two colleagues having lunch together can be considered an interaction ritual, but also something as large as tens of thousands of football supporters watching the match in a stadium together. An interaction ritual can be visualised as follows:

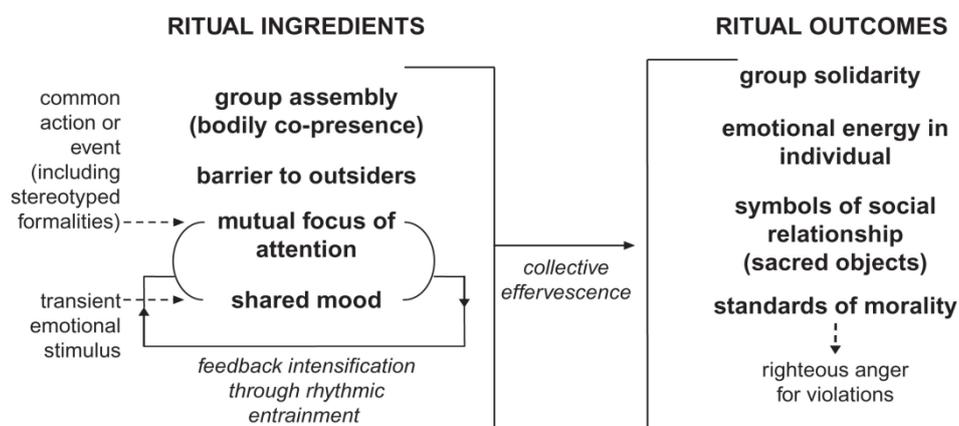


Figure 3.1 Interaction Ritual⁷⁵

⁷² Collins (2004:3)

⁷³ Collins (2004:44)

⁷⁴ Collins (2004:7)

⁷⁵ Collins (2004:48)

As can be seen in the figure, there are four main ingredients that an interaction consists of, these are defined by Collins⁷⁶ in the following way:

- 1) Group assembly: "Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not."
- 2) Barrier to outsiders: "There are boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a sense of who is taking part and who is excluded."
- 3) Mutual focus of attention: "People focus their attention upon a common object or activity, and by communicating this focus to each other become mutually aware of each other's focus of attention."
- 4) Shared mood: "They share a common mood or emotional experience."

Although the listing of four different 'ingredients' gives the impression of totally separated elements, this is not the case. The ingredients flow into and feed off one another, thus reinforcing each other and the ritual as a whole and will jointly result in a state of 'collective effervescence'. This is a heightened state of shared emotion, intensified collective movements and sense of intersubjectivity which can be of a temporary nature, but if it becomes solidified in 'ritual outcomes', it can lead to prolonged effects and the repetition of the ritual⁷⁷. Collins defines these ritual outcomes as follows:

- 1) Group solidarity: "group solidarity, a feeling of membership."
- 2) Emotional energy (EE): "EE in the individual, a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action."
- 3) Symbols of social relationship: "Symbols that represent the group: emblems or other representations (visual icons, words, gestures) that members feel are associated with themselves (...). Persons pumped up with feelings of group solidarity treat symbols with great respect and defend them against the disrespect of outsiders, and even more, of renegade insiders."
- 4) Standards of morality: "Feelings of morality: the sense of rightness in adhering to the group, respecting its symbols, and defending both against transgressors. Along with this goes the sense of moral evil or impropriety in violating the group's solidarity and its symbolic representations."

⁷⁶ Collins (2004:48)

⁷⁷ Collins (2004:35)

This whole process of ritual ingredients that lead to ritual outcomes is best summarised by Collins himself⁷⁸:

“The central mechanism of IR theory is that occasions that combine a high degree of mutual focus of attention, that is, a high degree of intersubjectivity, together with a high degree of emotional entrainment – through bodily synchronisation, mutual stimulation/arousal of participants’ nervous systems – result in feelings of membership that are attached to cognitive symbols; and result also in the emotional energy of individual participants, giving them feelings of confidence, enthusiasm, and desire for action in what they consider a morally proper path. “

The more successful the interaction ritual is, the stronger the outcomes will be and the more likely it is that the participants will partake in the ritual again. The intensity and impact of interaction rituals vary greatly; from the very mundane, like lighting up a cigarette together, to something as monumental as the outbreak of the French Revolution. The first example of smoking a cigarette may not seem of any macrosociological significance at all, until one realises that all the individual acts of smoking taken together amount to an entire subculture of smokers. The societal impact is also huge, ranging from higher insurance premiums to heated national debates about smoking bans. This same collective impact of individual acts is also visible for consumption rituals involving meat, as all the individual acts of consuming meat, as well as the decision to consume for instance organic meat or not, jointly lead to our current, unsustainable situation of meat consumption and production. Collins therefore chooses to focus on the situations, the rituals, rather than on the individuals that take part in the ritual.

For the full grasp of the theory, it is important to elaborate some more on the definition of ‘rituals’ within the context of the IR theory. In this theory, rituals are behavioural expressions that take place along the lines of a, mostly practically executed, pattern. How elaborate these expressions are varies greatly, from something as small as nodding to an acquaintance on the street, to something as elaborate as all the customs surrounding a Christmas dinner.

Collins has used his IR theory to analyse large-scale macrosociological changes, such as the changes in sexual behaviour and smoking. In order to fully understand why these changes occurred, he focused on the microsociological level of the interaction ritual, describing which minor shifts in the behaviour of individuals occurred at what point in time and why these shifts took place. One example of such an analysis is that smoking behaviour shifted from being a male-only activity to a

⁷⁸ Collins (2004:42)

gender-neutral activity under the influence of the emancipation of women. Smoking was one of the ways that the 'feminists' in that period of time emphasised their equality to men and thus gave a new added ritual meaning to the activity of smoking⁷⁹.

The feelings of the individual, the so-called EE, are a big driver behind his or her participation in interaction rituals. A successful ritual gives a surge of positive EE and strengthens participants in their feelings of self-worth and belonging. A ritual has all sorts of connotations and with it reasons to execute it in a particular manner. Collins⁸⁰ describes for instance that the smoking of cigarettes has had many different ritual meanings throughout history; such as conveying social status, sexual intrigue and negotiation and the social ties of reciprocal gifts. In this manner, smoking has conveyed messages of hierarchy at times, but also messages of, for instance, camaraderie.

Formal and Natural Rituals

Within the spectrum of rituals, a sliding scale can be discerned from formal to natural. Most IRs can be placed somewhere between these two extremities, but for the comprehension of the theory it is most useful to describe what characterises the far ends of this scale. A formal ritual is one that follows the lines of a pre-scripted set of ceremonial procedures; the participants know what to expect with regards to e.g. the order of events, role division of the participants and even general atmosphere. Examples of highly formalised rituals are events like traditional dances of the higher classes, but also more commonly experienced gatherings like weddings can follow a very formalised pattern. Within meat consumption rituals, it's often the more festive situations, such as Christmas dinners, that have taken on a formalised pattern over time.

Natural rituals on the other hand, do not follow any formally stereotyped procedures; they tend to occur spontaneously, but do build up mutual focus and emotional entrainment. Examples of natural rituals can be small, like whether or not you call someone by their first name in a conversation, but they can also be large scale, such as a political rally. A clear example of a natural meat consumption ritual is having lunch with a friend. Natural rituals can turn into formal rituals over time; if a natural ritual was so successful that participants want to repeat it over and over, there is a chance that the procedures will be formalised over time.

Formal and natural rituals are largely the same with regards to the core ingredients, processes and outcomes that make it work, as it's the formalisation of these that makes the difference between a formal and a natural ritual. There can however be differences with regards to membership. In formal rituals the membership boundaries tend to be more rigid and exclusive, whereas in natural rituals these tend to be more fluid and inclusive. Also, in formal rituals, the EE

⁷⁹ Collins (2004:329)

⁸⁰ Collins (2004:323)

that is generated by the symbol(s) tends to be stronger, as the symbols that arise in natural rituals often won't have had time to fully solidify yet⁸¹. Meat can become a powerful symbol that generates a lot of EE. A very powerful example of this can be seen in the Thanksgiving dinner ritual in the USA, in which the mere image of a stuffed turkey generates the EE that goes along with the whole experience of Thanksgiving.

Power Rituals and Status Rituals

Within IRs, different participants can have different roles. Some have the power to use the IR setting to control others, who in turn can be submissive or resistant to this control. This power balance can be seen in so-called power rituals, in which there are order-givers and order-takers. This type of ritual is very common in the army and prisons, but also in offices between bosses and employees⁸². Power rituals can also play a role in meat IRs, albeit at a more subtle and less formalised level than in for instance work-related settings. The division of power is often a result of a task division; for instance the person who does the grocery shopping and/or food preparation in a household will be in a better position to also be the order-giver with regards to what is put on the table.

Besides power rituals, status rituals also generate a role division amongst its participants. Status rituals are rituals in which there is a variation in the degree to which participants are involved in the ritual. This involvement consists of two dimensions, the micro- and the meso-level. On the micro-level there is a sliding scale from participants on the fringes who are barely group members and hardly participate, up to the 'sociometric star' who experiences the strongest effects of ritual membership and is deeply involved in the IR⁸³. If we look at the iconic family Christmas dinner, those on the fringes are often the relations by marriage, whereas the sociometric star is most likely the one who organises the dinner or possibly the oldest living family member that helped shape the ritual.

On the meso-level there are variations in social density, which indicates the degree to which individuals spend their time in other people's presence. For someone with low social density, i.e. a high degree of privacy or solitude, IRs are very different from ordinary consciousness and therefore of a higher intensity than for someone with high social density. This means that their response to IRs is often also more extreme, either being something they long for as a welcome change, or something they dread and feel to be an intrusion of privacy⁸⁴. This could be an explanation for why some family members long for their birthday dinner with relatives and others dread, or even try to avoid it.

⁸¹ Collins (2004:49)

⁸² Collins (2004:112)

⁸³ Collins (2004:112)

⁸⁴ Collins (2004:112)

Successful, Failed and Forced Rituals

If we want to be able to judge the (potential) success and strength of a ritual, it is important to look at those factors that potentially threaten this success and might lead a ritual to fail, or feel empty or forced. Whether or not an IR is successful depends for a large part on the intensity of EE it generates; the degree in which the ritual ingredients successfully lead to a genuine collective effervescence that flows over in satisfactory ritual outcomes. A failed ritual is one in which this is not effectively accomplished. These are those situations that feel like they 'fell flat' and are energy draining rather than energising, as the expectations of the organisers and the participants are not met.

Forced rituals are different from failed rituals in the sense that the participants experience pressure to (appear to) participate wholeheartedly in the IR. This pressure can be experienced because the participants themselves desperately want the IR to succeed, but also because they feel pressure from others to act more engrossed than they really are. Forced rituals can be especially energy draining, as the mutual focus and emotional entrainment don't occur spontaneously, and thus have to actively be 'faked' or play-acted, which will feel unnatural and overly self-conscious. Having to go through many forced rituals can make participants feel an adversity towards the rituals.

Successful rituals then, are the ones in which the flow from ritual ingredients, via collective effervescence, to ritual outcomes occurs easily and naturally. It's those rituals in which the participants actually want to take part and in which their expectations of an energy enhancing experience are met⁸⁵. A successful ritual is likely to be repeated if the feeling of emotional energy and solidarity is successfully stored in one or more symbols, which help carry over short term elation into long term emotions⁸⁶.

For a (meat) consumption related example, we can return to the Christmas dinner. This is an IR that often generates strong emotions, negative for some, positive for others. It's also often a very much scripted event that follows roughly the same pattern every year; everyone knows the chain of events during the day, which role they play, which atmosphere is expected and what types of food will be served. It's also an event that is hard to avoid, because the group in which it is celebrated, expects the group members to show up and participate. All these elements taken together form the expected IR; one that people can strongly look forward to or dread, but is difficult to withdraw from and thus can result in a group of people with very different expectations and reasons for being there. This combination of factors creates a fairly high risk for the ritual to turn out to fail or feel forced. For our research it is interesting to see to what degree the meat component of the meal plays an important, symbolic, role in generating enough EE for the ritual to succeed.

⁸⁵ Collins (2004:50)

⁸⁶ Collins (2004:81)

3.3 Application and Restrictions of the IR Theory

Collins himself has written two chapters in which he applies the IR theory the cases of sexual interaction and to smoking, in order to paint a detailed analysis of how these IRs evolved over time. Throughout the book he also mentions smaller cases, such as the 9/11 aftermath, to show how IR theory can be used in analysing the ritual elements of these events. This is something we can do as well, using the terminology and explanations from §3.2. It will not however provide us with enough handles to apply it directly to the meat consumption practices we wish to examine, as we want to not only analyse the way these rituals look and how they came to be the way they are, but also where the entry points for change are. Collins does not explain how his theory could be used to signal the potential changes within a ritual, he merely uses his theory to look back at history to identify in hindsight where shifts took place.

This does not mean that the IR theory cannot be used for this; it simply means that Collins himself has not explained how to do it. As the IR theory is a relatively young theory, it hasn't been applied or adapted much by others, but there is one insightful article by Keith Brown⁸⁷ in which he applies the IR theory to his empirical research of the mobilisation of conscientious customers. He states that the IR theory provides a new way of analysing consumption behaviour and thus a potentially new insight into governing the transition to more sustainable consumption behaviour. By focusing on the importance of rituals, a new way of trying to establish change is called for, one that is based on the IR theory. Without any attention for the ritual elements of consumption behaviour, most efforts to create behavioural change will not nearly be as effective as they could be.

Brown first uses the IR theory to explain how ethical consumers are mobilised in a similar manner to which Collins applies his own theory. He emphasises the importance of the ritual elements (ingredients, collective effervescence and outcomes) for a sustained feeling of solidarity which leads to ethical consumption choices. He especially points towards the strength of symbols in generating EE; according to him EE is the main driver behind the repetition of the ritual – i.e. purchasing ethical products.

Besides analysing what drives consumers to keep partaking in the ritual, he goes one step further than Collins and outlines a predictive model for the purchasing patterns of consumers. He describes this outline as follows:

“Analyzing the rituals in which consumers participate provides important indications of the values that the consumers put into practice during each and every shopping experience.

Scholars would need to look at: the types of rituals in which consumers participate, the EE

⁸⁷ Brown (2010)

*derived by individual participants, the dominant symbols representing group members, and the strength of the collective ethos and sense of moral responsibility shared by the group.*⁸⁸

This notion will be integrated into our adaptation of the IR theory. In chapter 4, we propose to build on the IR theory and adapt it in such a way that it can be applied to not only analyse existing consumption practices involving a meat component , but also to look at the entry points for change in these current rituals. With this knowledge, we aim to get a picture of where the barriers and opportunities for a successful transition lie. In this adaptation we will first of all use Collins' own concepts of the different elements with IRs (meaning the ingredients and outcomes, but also the description of natural and formal rituals, power rituals and that which makes a ritual successful) and see what can be done to apply these in a predictive manner. We will also use the lessons learned from Brown's attempt to build a more predictive model based on IR theory and further specify it. From this, a more specified list or research questions will flow.

⁸⁸ Brown (2010: 126)

4. Conceptual Model and Methodology

In this chapter we will first work Collins' IR theory into our own conceptual model. This model will be used as an instrument for analysing existing consumption rituals with a meat component and their opportunities and barriers for a sustainable transition. Information about these existing consumption IRs has been gathered through in-depth interviews. We will explain the methodology behind the gathering of this empirical data in the second paragraph of this chapter. The results will be presented in Chapter 5.

4.1 Conceptual Model

In the previous chapter, the IR theory and its analytical potential was explained. This theory forms the starting point for our own analytical model. Our objective with this model is threefold, based on the last three sub questions posed in Chapter 1. First of all we want to describe and interpret the current consumption IRs as fully as possible. Secondly, we want to identify the role meat plays in these rituals. Thirdly and finally, we want to identify elements within the consumption rituals that might form barriers or opportunities for the transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption.

The model provides a means to look at situated meat consumption specifically, i.e. we look at the entire context in which the consumption of meat takes place. This way we hope to determine how central or crucial the role of meat is within the entirety of the ritual. Practically this means that our model will analyse consumption IRs in general, but only those that contain a distinct meat component. The meat component will thus be one of many aspects under scrutiny. By looking at all the aspects of an IR, we aim to also get the most complete description of its' transitional potential.

With regards to this transitional potential, we first looked at the IR theory for clues about which elements of an IR will most likely be predictors of its changeability. We then looked at the specific character of *consumption* IRs, for a more precise focus of our model. This has lead us to form four 'guiding notions' about what causes a ritual to become either more rigid or more fluid. These guiding notions are listed and explained below. In the explanation of these notions, we start shaping our conceptual model by explaining the different variables that are relevant for that particular notion.

By 'variables', we mean the different elements that together form the entire image of a ritual. For the most inclusive description and interpretation of consumption rituals, it is important to first of all get a clear description of their IR-based variables – the ritual ingredients and outcomes. To this we will add a few other, non-IR-based, variables that are not mentioned as main ritual elements by Collins, but are needed to provide valuable practice information about the specific

character of a consumption ritual. All the variables are operationalised on p35, after we have introduced the guiding notions.

The guiding notions and their respective variables will provide the focus for the further description and analysis of the IRs that will flow from the interviews. The variables will all be addressed in the interviews, so that later on, in Chapter 5, we can come back to the guiding notions based on empiricism.

Notion 1) Natural rituals are more open to transition than formal rituals.

This notion is based on Collins⁸⁹ explanation that natural rituals are more fluid than formal ones. Natural rituals are not (yet) as established and strictly organised as formal rituals. This means that EE is not so much derived from the exact execution and the specific components of the ritual, but more from the mere gathering of bodies with a shared mood and a mutual focus. We therefore pose that it is easier for a natural ritual to undergo change, as it is easier to alter or remove elements from a natural ritual than from a formal ritual in which every action, participant and item has its own established, EE-generating place.

This notion is relevant for our research, as it could shed light on which types of rituals (formal or natural) will hold the best opportunities for a transition. In order for us to determine whether an IR is more natural or more formal, we will need to know what the ritual ingredients and outcomes look like, but especially how formalised these are. Furthermore, we will need to learn the same about the following variables: Contents, Frequency, Setting, Time available for Consumption and Time available for Preparation. These variables are operationalised on p35.

Notion 2) The elements that are most difficult to alter within an IR, are those that generate the strongest positive EE.

Both Collins⁹⁰ and Brown⁹¹ emphasise the vital importance of EE for the continuation of an IR. If an IR fails to generate high EE in its participants time and time again, it is less likely to be repeated. The different elements within a ritual generate different levels of EE. Collins explains that it is often the presence of symbols within an IR that generates and captures the highest level of EE. Ritual elements that hold a symbolic value to the group are therefore often the strongest EE-generators.

However, it is not necessarily always a symbol that is the most EE-generating element. Like we just explained in notion 1, natural rituals rely less on specific actions, participants and items. Symbols are often less firmly embedded in these types of rituals. It is therefore also possible that

⁸⁹ Collins (2004:49)

⁹⁰ Collins (2004)

⁹¹ Brown (2010)

another element, for instance the bodily co-presence or the shared mood, is the element that generates the highest level of EE.

This notion is relevant for our research, because if it turns out that within some IRs meat is a strong symbol that generates a lot of EE, it will most likely be difficult to either alter the type of meat or replace the meat element. However, if other elements turn out to be the strongest EE-generators, a transition that affects merely the meat component of an IR, might not be seen as a negative development. In order for us to determine which element generates the highest EE, we will have to learn how much EE is generated by the different ritual elements and ingredients. Furthermore, we will need to learn the same about the variables Contents and Setting. These variables are operationalised on p35.

Notion 3) Festive events have a higher risk of failing or feeling forced than ordinary events.

This is based on the idea that a distinction can be made between festive and ordinary food consumption IRs, which first requires some explanation. The difference lies in the fact that festive events (such as going out for dinner, barbeques, Christmas dinner, etc.) occur less frequently, are linked to special or celebratory occasions and are often shared with people one doesn't see every day. Ordinary events (such as lunch, breakfast and dinner) on the other hand, tend to have a less remarkable character, as they occur frequently, have a more practical nature and are often shared with people one sees on a very regular basis.

We state that the more special nature of festive events generates higher EE-expectations, as they stand out from one's daily routine. These can be expectations of a positive (looking forward to) or negative (dreading) nature, but will most likely be more intense than the EE-expectations with regards to ordinary, commonplace events. From this flows the notion that festive events have a higher risk of failing or feeling forced than ordinary events. This is based on Collins'⁹² explanation that whether or not an IR succeeds, depends largely on how high the expectations are that need to be met. We believe that, because the expectations for a festive event will be higher, the risk of it feeling forced or failing is also higher.

This is relevant for our research, as it could mean that transition is more difficult when it comes to festive events, as changing a festive IR poses a larger risk than changing an ordinary ritual. In order for us to determine whether or not a ritual is festive and what its likeliness to succeed is, we will first have to gather information about the way the ritual ingredients and outcomes are given shape. But in particular we will also need to look at the variables Celebration, Frequency, Setting,

⁹² Collins (2004:50)

Time available for Consumption and Time available for Preparation. These variables are operationalised on p35.

Notion 4: Decisions about changing a ritual are influenced by power and status.

This notion is based on Collins'⁹³ description of the difference between order-givers and order-takers within a power ritual and, within a status ritual, between people that reside more on the fringes of an IR and those that are closer to the central position of the sociometric star. He explains that, depending on the type of ritual (power or status), order-givers or sociometric stars are the ones who ultimately decide what the IR looks like and how it takes place, as they derive the most EE from it; the order-takers or fringe participants follow their lead.

This leads us to the notion that, if any change were to occur, this would most likely be due to a decision made by an order-giver or sociometric star, rather than an order-taker or fringe participant. Of course in real life, a distinct separation between these two extremes is not very likely, it is more plausible that within an IR people reside somewhere on a sliding scale between the two and thus might have the option to still request or advice some changes, even if they are more on the order-taker or fringe side of the scale.

This notion is relevant for our research, as power and/or status differences can be identified in most consumption IRs, especially in the purchasing and the preparation side of a ritual. This means that it is important to determine who plays what role in a ritual, as order-givers and sociometric stars can pose the strongest barriers or opportunities for a change in the ritual, depending on their opinion about this change. In order for us to determine the roles of the participants in the IRs, we will first of all need to learn if the ritual is a power or status ritual, for this we need a clear description of all the ritual ingredients and outcomes, but in particular of the variable Bodily Co-presence. Furthermore we will need to learn more about the variable Captivity. These variables, as well as the ones mentioned in notion 1-3, are operationalised on p35.

It is important to observe that the different notions can also have a reinforcing or weakening effect on one another. For instance, if a festive ritual is not very formalised, it is less likely that altering one or more elements will affect the EE strong enough to cause the ritual to fail. Another example is that, even though order-givers might have the strongest position to alter elements in a ritual, this will be harder for them to achieve in a highly formalised ritual than in a natural ritual. This is because a formalised ritual is more coagulated and therefore changing elements is more likely to negatively affect the EE within its participants.

⁹³ Collins (2004:112)

If we combine all the information from Collins’ own description of the IR theory, Browns’ hints for a predictive model and our own elaboration on the guiding notions for change, we come to the conclusion that a consumption ritual consists of the following elements:

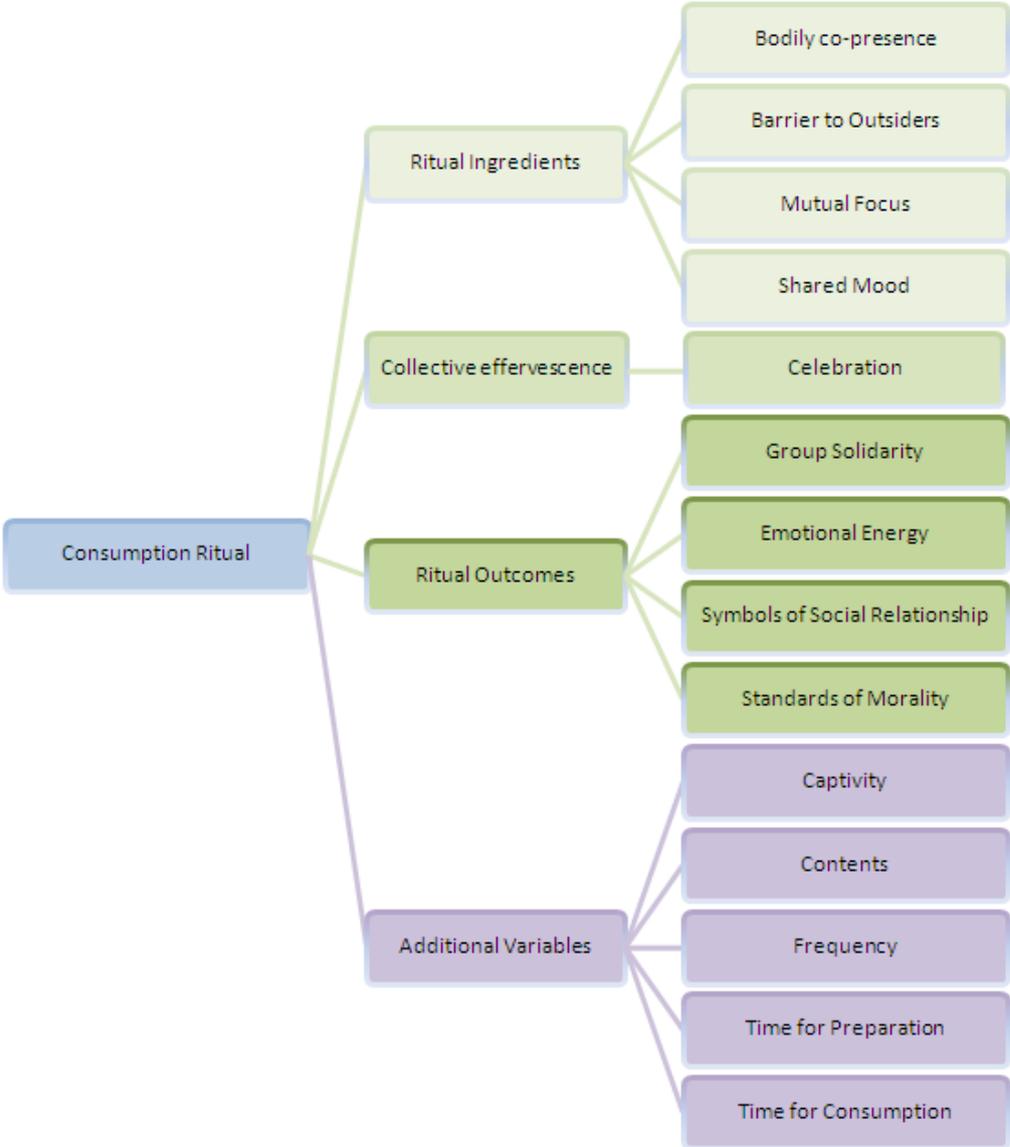


Figure 4.1: Consumption ritual

If we collect the descriptions of all the different variables, we have enough information to answer the last three sub questions from Chapter 1, in other words, to: 1) give a full description of the consumption IRs, 2) describe the role of meat within the consumption ritual and 3) identify those elements within the IRs that might pose a barrier or an opportunity for a transition.

Thus, this analytical model is the starting point for our analysis. The variables will form an instrument that can be used to describe and group different ritual consumption practices, according to the way the variables take shape and the way they mutually interact. They will form the basis for

an interview guide that will be used to research what people's perceptions are of specific consumption practices. The information from the interviews will give an insight into the presence of these variables, the way they take shape in daily life and the meaning that is given to them by the participants. This knowledge can then be used to answer the research questions that were posed in Chapter 1.

4.2 Variables

The variables are listed in the following order: first an operationalisation of Collins' ritual ingredients (Bodily co-presence, Barrier to outsiders, Mutual focus of attention and Shared mood) is given, followed by a variable that is derived from his notion of collective effervescence (Celebration) and his ritual outcomes (Group solidarity, Emotional energy, Symbols of social relationship and Standards of morality). Then the seven additional, non IR-based, practical variables (Captivity, Contents, Frequency, Setting, Time available for consumption and Time available for preparation) are operationalised.

Bodily co-presence

Collins describes 'group assembly' or 'bodily co-presence' as: "Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not." We will use this as a variable to describe the amount of people that take part in a consumption practice together, as well as a description of who these people are, with a particular focus on the nature of the relationships amongst the participants.

Barrier to outsiders

Collins describes 'barrier to outsiders' as: "There are boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a sense of who is taking part and who is excluded. A barrier can be physical, e.g. when an activity takes place in someone's house within actual walls, or more psychological, e.g. when a group gives off an air of exclusivity by standing close together in a circle. This variable will be used to indicate the degree of exclusivity of a practice. This means that we need to determine whether or not there is a barrier, either physical or psychological. Also, a description of the barrier is needed. As there is a slight overlap between this variable and the variable 'setting', only a factual description of the type of barrier (physical or psychological), how strictly it is guarded and the form it takes are needed.

Mutual focus of attention

Collins describes 'mutual focus of attention' as follows: "People focus their attention upon a common object or activity, and by communicating this focus to each other become mutually aware of each other's focus of attention." This variable will be used to measure to what degree the consumption practice provides a mutual focal point within the whole of the activity. First of all we will establish whether or not there is a clear focal point present in the practice. If there is, we will give a description of what the focal point is exactly, but also how central it is.

Shared mood

Collins describes 'shared mood' as: "They share a common mood or emotional experience". This variable will be used to indicate to what degree there is a shared mood. We will first establish whether or not (most of) the participants experience this shared mood and, if they do, embellish on the type of emotion, to what degree the participants experience it as an actual *shared* mood and also how strongly it is experienced.

Celebration

Collins describes Collective Effervescence as "a condition of heightened intersubjectivity"; it is a heightened state of shared emotion, intensified collective movements and sense of intersubjectivity which can be of a temporary nature, but if it becomes solidified in 'ritual outcomes', it can lead to prolonged effects and the repetition of the ritual. Here, we highlight in particular the celebratory element of collective effervescence, as celebration and food are so often interlinked. This is why we have labelled the variable 'celebration' rather than 'collective effervescence'. This variable refers to the degree to which a practice is considered special or festive. A practice is considered 'ordinary' if it occurs without much thought. A practice is considered 'festive' if it is considered to be something to really pay attention to, either in time, money or emotional energy. Oftentimes 'festive' practices will also be looked forward to in anticipation; they feel special, out of the ordinary. Doing the weekly shopping is an example of a practice that is 'ordinary' for many people, Christmas dinner would be considered 'festive' by most.

Group solidarity

Collins describes group solidarity as: "group solidarity, a feeling of membership". This variable will be used to indicate to what degree the practice results in a feeling of group solidarity. If participants indeed indicate that they experience some sense of group solidarity, more specific information will be given about the type of group (e.g. family/friends/conservatives/Dutch/etc.), whether or not this

feeling of solidarity extends to all members of the group, and how strongly the solidarity is experienced.

Emotional energy (EE)

Collins describes emotional energy as: “EE in the individual, a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action.” This variable will be used to indicate to what extent the practice leads to a feeling of EE within the participants. This is perhaps the most difficult, but yet the most important variable to determine. First we will try to establish whether or not there is some kind of strong feeling generated within the participants, and continue to ask for all the elements in Collins’ description (elation, strength, enthusiasm and initiative in taking action) to see how intensely these are experienced by the participants. Furthermore, we will also ask about any negative emotions that might be associated with the IR. Consequently we will try to determine what the main driver behind the EE is.

Symbols of social relationship

Collins describes ‘symbols of social relationship’ as: “Symbols that represent the group: emblems or other representations (visual icons, words, gestures) that members feel are associated with themselves (...). Persons pumped up with feelings of group solidarity treat symbols with great respect and defend them against the disrespect of outsiders, and even more, of renegade insiders.” First, we will determine whether or not there are identifiable symbols that are linked to the practice and. If there are a detailed description of the symbol or symbols is needed, as well as the degree to which it is considered a strong symbol.

Standards of morality

Collins describes ‘standards of morality’ as: “Feelings of morality: the sense of rightness in adhering to the group, respecting its symbols, and defending both against transgressors. Along with this goes the sense of moral evil or impropriety in violating the group’s solidarity and its symbolic representations.” This variable will be used to indicate to what degree participants in the practice experience a feeling of morality that is linked to a particular execution of the practice by group members. First, the presence of any standards of morality will have to be established by finding out if there are things participants would consider to be a violation against the practice. Consequently a clear description is needed of what is considered appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, how strongly inappropriate behaviour is frowned upon or punished and also why this behaviour is considered inappropriate. Particular attention will be paid to the Standards of Morality surrounding vegetarianism.

Captivity

The variable 'captivity' indicates to which degree a consumer can exert control over the meal he or she consumes. The term 'captivity' is used here to indicate the level of freedom the individual is given in making his or her own choices about what exactly to consume. If a person can choose the specific ingredients, the combination of the ingredients and the manner preparation of the meal, the measure of captivity is low. If the consumer is very restricted in his or her choices and has little to no say over the ingredients and the preparation of the meal, the measure of captivity is high. An example of a practice that has a very low measure of captivity would be cooking one's own dinner, as the consumer can choose all the individual ingredients by him or herself and is free to decide how to combine these into a meal. Going to a dinner party is often a practice with a relatively high measure of captivity, as the party often takes place in a closed off venue and the available meals will have been chosen and been prepared prior to arrival.

Contents

The variable 'contents' refers to the items that are part of the meal. For our research it is particularly important to get a detailed description of all the different types of food stuffs and drinks available, as well as the way they are prepared. The presence of meat in these will be researched the most, as well as explicitly present meat-replacing dishes.

Frequency

The variable 'frequency' refers to how often a particular consumption practice takes place. A practice is considered to be very frequent if it occurs on a daily basis and very rare if it happens once a year or less. Cooking dinner is an example of a meat consumption practice that is frequent for many people, whereas something like a birthday dinner is a rare practice for most.

Setting

The variable 'setting' refers to the location in which a practice takes place. A clear description of the type of location is needed, but also information about how relevant that exact location is for executing the ritual correctly. Also a description of the atmosphere and ambiance is required.

Time available for consumption

The variable 'time available for consumption' speaks mostly for itself. It is an indicator of how much time is spent on executing this ritual. In order to draw conclusions from that, it is also necessary to establish how important the participants find it that there is ample time for the consumption.

Time available for preparation

The variable 'time available for preparation' also speaks for itself largely. It provides us with an indicator of how much time is spent on preparing this ritual. In order to draw conclusions from that, it is also necessary to establish how important the participants find it that there is ample time for the preparation.

4.3 Methodology

We have chosen an explorative, descriptive approach in our research. This approach is in line with our aim to both analyse existing practices within the macro-perspective of a sustainable transition, as well as our attempt to test the usability of our conceptual model for this analysis. We felt that in-depth interviews would be the best instrument for both purposes. In this methodological paragraph, we will first explain which consumption practices were chosen for analysis and why. Consequently we will clarify why we chose in-depth interviews as a means of gathering data and what the setup of the interviews is. Furthermore, we will describe how and why we chose the respondents. Finally, we will explain the set-up of the analysis.

Selection of consumption practices

Eating is one of the most frequently occurring activities people partake in. Everybody eats several times a day. Besides the fact that everybody eats, many people also eat in a similar manner as the rest of their society; they for instance have the same set intervals between daily meals, consider the same types of food appropriate for certain times of the day and celebrate special occasions with specific food items. Especially these repetitive consumption practices can quickly turn into interaction rituals and are therefore of particular interest to this research. In figure 4.2 the most commonly occurring consumption practices are listed in alphabetical order.

Some of the listed practices can have a clear distinction between the moment the food is bought, the moment it is prepared and the moment it is consumed. Since the variables are likely to be very different at these different moments, the three moments can be seen as separate rituals, but, as they are interconnected (what will be bought, will be prepared, will be eaten), still belonging to one and the same practice. For this reason, they have been listed as separate elements of their consumption practices.

<u>Common Consumption Practices</u>	
Barbeque	
Breakfast	
	Buying and/or
	Preparing and/or
	Eating
Christmas dinner	
	Buying and/or
	Preparing and/or
	Eating
Dieting	
Dinner at home with friends	
	Buying and/or
	Preparing and/or
	Eating
Dinner at home with the family	
	Buying and/or
	Preparing and/or
	Eating
Dinner at a restaurant	
Doing the grocery shopping	
Eating fast food after going out partying	
Grazing	
Lunch	
	Buying and/or
	Preparing and/or
	Eating
Party catering	
Picnic	
Set weekly meal (such as 'woensdag gehaktdag')	
Snacking	
Snacks at a party	

Figure 4.2. List of Common Consumption Practices.

From this list of practices, four have been selected to be examined in more detail during our qualitative research. We narrowed the list down to four so that there would be enough time during the one-hour interviews to get a clear, elaborate description of each practice. The four practices that have been selected for further examination are lunch, dinner, going out for dinner and Christmas dinner. These particular practices have been selected for a number of reasons.

First of all we selected practices that are very likely to 'check' all the ingredient and outcome boxes. In particular bodily co-presence can be problematic in consumption practices, as some of these practices often occur when people are alone. Therefore we chose four that are amongst the

most 'social' on the list of practices, meaning that they are most likely to be executed in the presence of others (bodily co-presence).

Secondly, we chose four practices that are very likely to have at least one meat component that plays a prominent role. The reason for this is of course that the focus of this research is on consumption practices in relation to meat in particular.

Finally, we wanted to examine practices that vary in level of celebration (lunch and dinner being ordinary events, going out for dinner and Christmas dinner being more festive), level of captivity and level of formality in order to get the required information with regards to our hypotheses.

Interviews

Ten in-depth, individual interviews of one hour each have been done. Due to the explorative nature of our research, the purpose of these interviews was to get a first impression of the way consumption practices can be analysed with the use of the IR theory. Ten interviews are not enough to be able to draw solid conclusions about the results, but it does provide us with enough information to get a good first impression about both the way the IRs are experienced, as well as the usability of our conceptual model.

We chose to do in-depth interviews, because this qualitative research method provides the best opportunity to generate detailed information about the underlying drivers for participating in a ritual, as well as a thorough description of the way the ritual is organised. It allows the interviewer to keep asking questions until all the required information has become clear enough and also allows for deviating from the interview guide, if this proves to provide better information.

The setup of the questionnaire, which is included in annex I, is as follows: the first half of the interviews is reserved for questions about common consumption practices, the second half for festive ones. First we asked broad questions about the respondents' general life and everyday consumption habits, so as to get an impression of their lifestyle context. This was then followed by more detailed, in-depth questions about either their lunch or their dinner habits, depending on which one was shared with others most often.

For the second, festive, half of the interview, we start by asking broad questions about their which festive consumption practices they participate in and what these look like. Subsequently, we zoom in on preferably Christmas, but if they don't participate in this, on the practice of going out for dinner. We preferred to zoom in on Christmas, because this is a practice that many people partake in and often generates a high level of EE, which makes it the exemplary festive consumption ritual and therefore of particular interest to our research.

The order of the questions was adjusted to people's general order of consumption (i.e. we first asked about breakfast, then lunch, then dinner), because this provided the most natural flow of the conversation. This means that the variables from the conceptual model were dispersed throughout the questionnaire. We did take particular care to ensure that all the variables were discussed per IR.

The interview locations were chosen by the respondents themselves, in order to ensure a safe and comfortable surrounding in which they felt at ease to speak freely. Most were executed at the respondent's house, three were done in their workplace.

Respondents

We chose to interview flexitarians specifically. This choice is based largely on the recommendations made by De Bakker & Dagevos⁹⁴; they highlighted the transitional potential of this large group⁹⁵ of people that don't view meat as an inseparable part of a meal. They also explain that this group has not been researched as of yet with regards to specific drivers and motivations behind their consumption pattern, even though they hold the potential to speed up the transition and make sustainable meat consumption more commonplace.

The collection of respondents was done largely with the use of social media. A call for participants was spread via twitter and Facebook. This generated enough response to make a balanced selection based on gender, age, occupation, living situation, occupation, family income and educational level. The characteristics of the individual participants can be found in Annex II

The interviews were all recorded and later transcribed for further analysis. During the interviews themselves only minor notes and remarks were made that were useful for the flow of the conversation.

Analysis

For the analysis of the interview results, we started off with an inductive, exploring approach, in order to capture as much relevant information as possible. This meant that we looked for possible recurring themes without focussing merely on those IR theory related elements. We looked for the presence of all recurring incidents, opinions, emotions and types of behaviour in the different interviews. After casting this wide net, we zoomed in by applying our conceptual model to the data, specifically for the analysis of the ritual elements.

The reason for choosing this approach is that we wanted to get the full scope of the respondents' consumption practices. By looking at the data with a less theoretical view, we aimed to

⁹⁴ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010)

⁹⁵ According to De Bakker & Dagevos (2010), this group consists of anywhere between 3 and 7 million people.

also capture those elements that might fall outside the analytical framework of the IR theory. Consequently linking it back to our conceptual model gave us the opportunity to judge its strong and weak points.

5. Results

In this chapter we will discuss the results from the interviews about consumption IRs amongst flexitarians. Like we just explained in §4.2, the methodology section, we start our analysis with an inductive, explorative approach. Thus, in §5.1 we will first identify all the relevant recurring themes that could be found in the material. Consequently, in §5.2, we will return to the conceptual model that was presented in §4.1 for the further analysis of the interview results.

5.1 Interview Results

After studying the results from the interviews, thirteen recurring themes could be discerned that all have an effect on how the respondents experience and organise their consumption practices. These were identified by studying frequently mentioned incidents, opinions, emotions and types of behaviour in the different interviews. Whilst analysing, we specifically also looked for elements that might be beyond the scope of the IR theory. The analysis was done in a more inductive, explorative manner, in order to capture as many themes as possible. In the next paragraph we will link these empirically observed themes to the theoretical elements, to see how the theory and the observed themes combine.

As some of the themes show a clear relation to some of the others, the thirteen separate themes have been grouped into five main categories. The first category covers those lifestyle specific themes whose effect can be witnessed in somebody's consumption pattern. The second category covers the themes that relate to the social experience of eating together. The themes in the third category all relate to the amount of influence one has over what he or she consumes. The fourth category covers the themes related to preferences for specific food stuffs. The themes in the fifth and final category relate to the drivers behind the way a meal is prepared. The five categories and their corresponding themes are the following:

1. General lifestyle

- 1a. Routinised lifestyle
- 1b. Strong difference between weekend/week days.
- 1c. Anti-establishment

2. The social side

- 2a. Eating as a social activity
- 2b. Setting
- 2c. Valuing traditions

3. Personal influence

- 3a. Individual influence
- 3b. Influence of partner and/or other household members
- 3c. Adjusting to others

4. Food preferences

- 4a. Strong individual food preferences
- 4b. Appreciation for the basics

5. Meal preparation

- 5a. Cooking for fun
- 5b. Quick and easy

Theme operationalisation

First, the general operationalisation for each category will be given, followed by the description of the separate themes and, if this is the case, the way they relate to any other themes. Excerpts from the interviews are used to highlight striking aspects of the respondents' lifestyles with regards to food.

1) General lifestyle

There are a few lifestyle elements that clearly resonate in consumption behaviour. The term 'general lifestyle' refers to the way people organise their lives and the principles they live by. Of course this is a very broad category and many elements within it can potentially have an impact on one's consumption behaviour. However, from the interviews only a few elements could be identified to have a very strong link to the way people organise the way they consume their food. It appeared most clearly in those elements that relate to the level of routinisation or structuration of the daily or weekly activities; a same level of routinisation can often also be identified in daily or weekly consumption patterns. This was particularly clear for the times at which meals are consumed, but also for the food choices during the meals. Furthermore, it appeared that an anti-establishment mindset often was joined by not only a dislike of 'imposed' routines, but also a dislike of 'imposed' set moments of getting together for a meal, especially in a set manner.

1a) Routinised lifestyle

The theme 'routinised lifestyle' refers to the degree in which routine occurs with regards to having a fixed daily and or weekly schedule of set activities such as work, sports etc. A more routinised lifestyle appears to coincide with a more set routine in eating moments and which foodstuffs are consumed. This appears to apply to breakfast, lunch and dinner with regards to the times of the eating moments. A clear example of this is respondent 9, a 36-year old male with a steady day job as a furniture remover. His working hours are the same every weekday and so are his eating moments. He explains:

"I have breakfast in the morning at seven thirty. I have four slices of bread with both sweet and savoury spreads. In the afternoon, between twelve and one, we always try to take twenty to thirty minutes for a break. I have four slices of bread then, all with sweet spreads. Well, that's in general, nine out of ten times that's how it goes, it might be different on occasion. Then, between three and four I have two more slices of bread, usually with prepared meat products. And then in the evening, when I'm home, I have a warm dinner, which is usually between six and seven."

With regards to the foodstuffs it appears that a routinisation applies strongest to breakfast and lunch, dinner seems to be the meal that is varied with most. Respondent 4, a male of 23 who also has a steady full time day job, describes that for breakfast and lunch he does vary with different types of sandwich fillings, but that these both meals always consist of the same amount of bread slices and is always accompanied by a piece of fruit. This routinisation however is a lot less present in the types of meals he has for dinner. When asked to describe meals that he and his girlfriend often cook, a whole range of different types of meals were described, from Asian to Italian to Dutch inspired and also using different cooking methods. He explains:

"When I look at the selection of meals we make on a regular basis, I think it consists of about 25-30 different meals we circulate through."

When a clear routinised lifestyle appears to be less present, this can often also be witnessed in there being less of a routine in when people eat and what it is they consume. A good example of this is respondent 5, a 54-year old female ticket inspector for the Dutch Railways. Because she works irregular shifts and also works during the weekends, there is little to no regularity in when and what she eats. She explained that during workdays she often eats five or six small meals per day, but that the variation is large. On her days off however, she does come back to more of a breakfast-lunch-dinner pattern.

1b) Strong difference between week/weekend days

This theme refers to the phenomenon that having a routinised lifestyle does not necessarily mean that this routine is the same throughout the whole week. The weekend can have either an entirely different routine, or be almost without routine at all. Respondent 6 is a very clear example of the first case. She is a 41-year old female who works four days a week. Her working days follow a distinct routine of getting up early, coming home late and having quick and easy meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner, often on her own. Her weekend – which in her case includes Friday, Saturday and Sunday – is subject to a completely different routine in which she gets up late and spends a lot of time on the preparation of the meals she has at home and also goes out a lot for meals with her boyfriend and friends. She explains:

“With regards to eating moments I look forward to the Sunday we spend with friends. But of course I also associate that with a sociable day. Other days are nice as well, but this is really the closure of the weekend, the beginning of the week, yes, it’s an association with sociability. That goes for the whole Sunday, not just for the dinner.”

A clear example of a weekend that is almost without routine is given by respondent 2, a 27-year old male with a full time job and a very set routine during the working week with regards to both day activities as well as eating moments. During the weekend however there is no routine whatsoever with regards to his activities, the people he spends time with and the times at which he eats. He explains that where and when he eats varies a lot from weekend to weekend:

“(…) it really depends on where I am or who I’m with. I try to make sure that I do eat somewhat healthy then, but sometimes that attempt gets lost. For instance when I’m with friends, we might just grab some chips or something. (...) Also it really varies when me and my girlfriend have breakfast, this is effected for instance by if we’ve been to a party the night before.”

The common denominator with regards to food seems to be that the weekends are often the times during which the meals - especially dinners – have a more elaborate character, either because more time is spent on the preparation or because people go out for their meals. The just mentioned respondent 2 for instance also explained that when he wakes up before his girlfriend does during the weekends, he usually makes her breakfast. Other respondents told stories about going out for meals

more often during the weekend and also about using the weekends for trying out more elaborate recipes and having people over for dinner.

1c) Anti-establishment

This theme refers to a general dislike of conforming to 'the common way' of doing things. With regards to food practices, this refers more in particular to disliking the fact that celebrations are often linked to a specific pre-set date or feeling that there is an obligatory way of executing the food practice. A clear example of this is Christmas. Respondent 5, a 54-year old female verbalised it clearly when asked about festive moments she dislikes:

"Well, Christmas. It is a sort of obligation, I dislike the obligation that goes with it. (...) You know what it is? In general I really enjoy doing something with the children, but as far as I'm concerned that can also be on an ordinary Monday or Tuesday. For me it doesn't have to be with Christmas, in that sense I see Christmas as a bit of an unpleasant celebration."

Also other more ritualised celebrations, such as religious festivities and national holidays, but also birthdays and barbecues, can evoke strong negative emotions. It goes for any get-together that is linked to a specific date or occasion and/or comes with a set of expected behaviours and activities. One respondent for instance explained that, although she did still have a good relationship with her brothers and sisters, she had stopped going to their birthdays. Because she felt so strongly that these occasions were an obligation, she didn't enjoy them and would then rather skip them altogether. The most extreme case of an anti-establishment attitude could be found in respondent 8, a 50-year old musician and meditation teacher, who was not only very much against the idea of having to celebrate at set dates and times, but also disliked the generally occurring habit of having three meals a day. He explained that his ideas about having an eating routine were the following:

"I eat when the body says it needs it. Or when my mind tells me my body might need it. It has nothing to do with the clock or with social meetings (...) there is no regularity in this. The warmer it is, the less I eat, the colder it is, the more I eat. But that is just common sense. In that regard, the body obeys common sense."

The dislike of people of these ways of 'having' to do things, often results in either dreading the approaching festivities or abstaining from joining in. Some respondents have also found a sort of middle ground, where they for instance still use the days off between Christmas and new years' to meet up with family and friends for dinner, but not on a specific date and not according to any

traditional set of practices. This theme can in a sense be seen as the opposite of theme 2b (valuing traditions)

2) The social side

This second category covers the themes that relate mostly to the social experience of eating together and the facilitations of a desired ambience. The social element of eating together is generally valued quite highly. Dinner especially is used as a time to connect with family and friends, but lunch is often also used for social interaction, mostly with colleagues.

The setting in which a meal takes place can play an important role in achieving the desired atmosphere for people to interact with each other in a pleasant manner and is therefore seen as an important part of a meal by some. This goes for highly dressed up meals such as the Christmas dinner, but also for more everyday meals are influenced by setting. A joint meal in front of the television for instance is seen to generate a completely different atmosphere than a shared, candle-lit meal at the dinner table.

The way that joint meals take place often follows some sort of set pattern. For a large part this is strongly related to the 'routinised lifestyle' theme, but especially for those meals that have a more festive character, maintaining traditions can also play a part in sticking to that particular set pattern. For some, the adherence to traditions is part of the social code.

2a) Eating as a social activity

The theme 'eating as a social activity' refers to the degree in which the social element of eating is valued. If a high value is placed on eating as a social activity, the contact with others during the meal is considered as important as or even more important than the meal itself. From the interviews it became clear that the social element is a very strong driver for people to eat together. Respondent 1, an 80 year old pensioner, explained this very clearly when describing the value he places on the dinners him and his wife share together:

"Dinner is usually the time during which we can talk and eat more calmly. It's more a moment of contact than breakfast for instance. (...) I find it important that we have dinner this way. It's when you talk together more easily and discuss matters, also the practical matters."

Reasons for valuing the social element highly often relate to affirming or strengthening one's relationship with his or her partner, friends, family or colleagues. Respondent 4 formulated this most strikingly when asked about the role food plays when he has people over for dinner:

“I think that eating plays a very strong facilitating part. You’re looking for a sociable activity with these people. You want it to be enjoyable and that you’re able to talk easily. The nice conversation won’t occur because of the food, but if the food is not in order, it does make it more difficult. And by having really good food, people will be in a better mood of course and talking becomes pleasant really easily. So the food plays a facilitating part for an enjoyable, social group process.”

Overall, for those times that people share their meal with others, the social element of (re)connecting, catching up and sharing a pleasant atmosphere is valued almost as highly or even more highly than the food itself. Shared meals also tend to take longer than those consumed alone.

2b) Setting

The theme ‘setting’ refers to the degree in which setting is seen as an important element in facilitating a pleasant social atmosphere. Setting refers to practical details, such as where the meal is consumed, whether or not there are atmosphere-enhancing items such as candles, if the TV is on and the effort that is put into decorating the table and its surroundings. Respondent 8 for instance described how an effort is made to always put on the right type of classical music during dinner. These types of efforts are instrumental in creating a desired atmosphere, such as relaxed, sociable or festive. Respondent 1, a 56-year old female who has dinner with her husband and son most days, explains this link between the right setting and the desired atmosphere:

“For the connection with your husband or your child you tend to use dinner time for catching up. (...) that’s also the reason I want to have dinner at the dinner table. If you sit in front of the television you don’t taste your meal so to speak and you don’t have that social connection.”

The amount of time and effort that is put into creating the right setting does vary. Sometimes this is only done for special or festive occasions, but when the social element of a meal becomes more important, more attention tends to be spent on creating the right setting as well.

2c) Valuing traditions

The theme ‘valuing traditions’ refers to the degree in which upholding traditions is considered important. This relates to those elements of the meal that have a strong historical and/or emotional component for the participants and is repeated with each meal (partly) in order to keep the tradition going. People that have a strong appreciation for these types of traditions appear to also value the

continuity of these more highly. Respondent 2, when asked about his family's Christmas tradition, describes it as follows:

"I value the way we celebrate Christmas. If we wouldn't do it like this anymore, that would bother me. Or well, not bother me, but feel awkward. It makes me wonder what it would be like then. If my parents wouldn't be there anymore, I'd be alone with my brother and sister. That's how it goes, it always moves up a little. I do value highly that that's the way it goes."

The high appreciation for traditions does not always necessarily come from the fact that it resonates strongly within themselves, but can also be because they know that one or more of the participants value it highly. Respondent 6 is a striking example of this. She strongly dislikes the way that she and her boyfriend's family celebrate Christmas, due to the fact that she feels it is very obligatory to have to celebrate it at a set date and with a certain type of dinner, but nevertheless she feels it is important that they do go there for Christmas every year. She explains:

"We always go the cemetery for a visit. His father passed away and was buried on Boxing Day, so we go to the cemetery. That is really part of the day. That's also the reason we go to his mother's house for that day. (...) if we wouldn't go to the cemetery, the day would just not be right."

Oftentimes there can be some tension between those people that place a high value on traditions and those people that have more of an anti-establishment mind set. If these people are expected to come together for a specific, more ritualised, occasion, the atmosphere can depend greatly depend on people's willingness to adjust to others.

3) Personal influence

The themes in the third category all relate to the amount of influence one has over what he or she consumes. This category combines three different themes that all deal with whether or not someone is in a position to personally decide exactly what it is they consume, but also whether or not somebody is willing to accept that others make food choices for them.

At first glance it might seem obvious that people with a high individual influence over their food purchases are most likely to also eat according to their personal food preferences the most. This is not necessarily the case however; the choice for specific food items or meals can be influence by other people. In the case of a shared household, the preferences of a partner, children or other household members can often have some kind of influence. When eating with others, it is also

possible that one might not eat what they most prefer, either because the choice is limited or because people prefer to conform to their table partner's food choices.

3a) Individual influence

The theme 'individual influence' refers to the degree in which someone can make their own decisions about the food they consume. An important aspect in this is whether or not somebody does their own grocery shopping and if they prepare their own meals or not. Individual influence can be limited by a number of matters; of course if someone else prepares your meals or does the grocery shopping, your individual influence will most likely be limited somewhat. However, other circumstances can also limit your individual influence, especially for those meals that are consumed outside of the home. Lunch in a cafeteria is an obvious example of this, as the assortment of products they have is restricted. Respondent 2 for instance tells of the hamburger he likes to have for lunch, which is only available on Wednesdays. A similar limitation of individual influence occurs when eating out in a restaurant, where you have a pre-decided menu to choose from. The limitations that occur from taking other people's preferences into account are covered in 3b and 3c.

3b) Influence of partner and/or other household members

The theme 'influence of partner and/or other household members' refers to the degree in which the choice of foodstuffs somebody consumes is dependent on somebody's partner and/or other household members, such as children or flatmates. This can manifest itself in several ways; it is possible for instance that the composition of the meals is an active joint decision, where all those involved discuss what will be put on the table or where more people are responsible for the preparation of meals. It is however also possible that one person prepares the meals with the other peoples' preferences in mind. Respondent 1 for instance almost always does the grocery shopping and the meal preparation on her own, so has a very high level of individual influence, but does take her husband and son's preferences into account:

"Friends tell me that they always have soup and bread for dinner on Saturdays, but I've never been able to enthuse my husband for that. He always wants a warm dinner, so we have a warm dinner. (...) soup for just me and my son is fine, it's quick to prepare and if you're in a hurry, it's a really convenient meal."

Then of course there are those that don't do the grocery shopping or any of the cooking and are thus somewhat subject to what the household 'cook' prepares for them. Like we just explained, their preferences could possibly have been taken into account beforehand, but there are also households

in which this isn't the case, like in the household of respondent 10 for instance. He does on occasion go to the grocery store, but only with a shopping list that his girlfriend has drawn up for him. With regards to dinner, he fully leaves the meal choices and preparations up to his girlfriend. This is how he explains it:

"My girlfriend does the cooking. I've often offered to help, but she won't let me into the kitchen. (...) Lately we've been eating vegetarian meals frequently. I've no idea how long this has been going on for, because if there's no meat in the meal, I don't notice it."

Respondent 10 is also a clear example of somebody who doesn't mind that his partner makes this decision for him. People that do mind are often those with strong individual food preferences (theme 4a) and tend to make sure that they either have some sort of beforehand influence or do more of the shopping and cooking themselves.

3c) Adjusting to others

The theme 'adjusting to others' refers to the degree in which people consciously or subconsciously conform to the food choices made by their table partners. People that show strong adjusting behaviour either order similar foodstuffs as their table partners and/or don't mind having little input in the choice of meals that are prepared for them. Respondent 3 is a nice example. When asked about her lunch, her answers reveals pretty strong adjusting behaviour with regards to her food choices, but especially with regards to where the meal is purchased and where it takes place:

"I buy my lunch in the cafeteria, everybody does, so I do too. (...) I think the food items me and my colleagues buy are largely the same. Everyone tends to have milk or buttermilk, some people have some fruit, most have a sandwich and some have a salad. But there are a few basic items that everyone has. (...) we always have lunch inside, but it would be nice if we would go for a walk or something (...) I have suggested it before, but it was inconvenient or something, I don't remember what the reason was, but it didn't happen."

The reasons for adjusting can vary greatly; examples are wanting to fit in, not wanting to offend or simply not having any particular preference. The reverse also goes; if someone for instance has very strong individual food preferences or a strong anti-establishment attitude, adjusting to others is often something they find difficult or even refuse to do.

4) Food preferences

The fourth category covers the themes related to preferences for specific food stuffs. Most people tend to have a particular taste in food; they might have preferred flavours, a preference for meals from a particular region or certain types of food they don't like. Not everyone is very outspoken in this however. This category covers two themes that did come up from the interviews as being matters that can evoke strong emotions. Theme 4a covers the general subject of strong individual food preferences and the effect of this on shared meals. Theme 4b highlights a specific preference that popped up quite prominently, namely that for more basic or, as one respondent phrased it, 'boring' type of food.

4a) Strong individual food preferences

The theme 'individual food preferences' refers to the degree in which strong food preferences affect flexibility when eating with others. Strong food preferences manifest themselves in particular in people that highly value the health or ethical aspect of their food choices. Respondent 6 is an example of someone who has a strong individual food preference for eating less meat. Her reasons are, as she explains, both monetary and ethical:

"I want to eat organic meat, but find it quite expensive, I think it's a waste to have to spend that much money on food every day and also because of the bio-industry and those things. So I made a conscious choice to eat less meat. For dinner that means that, when my boyfriend does the cooking, I tell him to leave out the meat for me sometimes. On the days that I do the cooking, I prepare it the way I like it, which is without meat for at least two thirds of the times."

It appears that people with strong food preferences are less likely to conform to the food choices that are made by their table partners and will either make sure that they have a strong individual influence on what they eat or influence the meals that are prepared for them. This is not necessarily seen as a problem by the ones who are being influenced. A number of the flexitarians that were interviewed indicated that the reason they are flexitarians, is the fact that they live together with a vegetarian. As it is easier to cook one meal for dinner instead of two or more separate ones, this often results in meals that are fully vegetarian shared meals. Respondent 2 phrased the effect of his vegetarian girlfriend on his eating habits quite strikingly:

"I always cook for the both of us. That's virtually always a vegetarian dish. I think that, since we've been living together (for six years), I might have prepared meat separately maybe four

or five times. And that usually was because it was left-over from a dinner with friends or a barbecue, because it would be a waste to throw it away.”

People with strong food preferences can have a strong impact of the consumption behaviour of others. Besides the example of joint vegetarian dinners, it also happens for instance that because of one person certain dishes are added to or removed from a meal (especially in the case of allergies) or that their food preferences influence which restaurant is visited.

4b) Appreciation for the basics

The theme ‘appreciation for the basics’ refers to the degree in which the so-called ‘staples’ of one’s diet are considered to be very satisfactory or tasty and therefore valued highly. Respondent 7 is a prime example of someone with a strong appreciation for the taste and healthiness of his wife’s cooking and describes her meals as very varied. When asked about this in more detail, he explains that ‘varied’ means that they usually eat the traditional Dutch combination of potatoes, vegetables and meat. The variation occurs from varying the types of vegetables about four times a week and sometimes having a vegetarian burger instead of meat. On occasion the potatoes are swapped for rice or pasta.

People with a strong appreciation for the basics appear to have less appreciation for more fancy meals and often even prefer a well prepared ‘basic’ meal over an elaborate meal with exotic ingredients. Respondent 9 for instance, a single 56-year old female, explains that she eats quite basic meals, but that this is a conscious choice, as she does really enjoy them:

“I don’t really feel the desire to vary much in the things I eat. I sometimes think about it, for instance ‘why do I eat such a boring breakfast?’, but I kind of like it. When I used to eat with others more frequently, I would for instance buy bread rolls on the weekend, but for me that’s not really a treat actually. I kind of like that boring breakfast. “

Appreciation for the basics seems to also mean having a *preference* for the basics. That does not necessarily mean that more exotic meals are rejected or disliked, but that, when given the choice, the basic meals are preferred.

5) Meal preparation

The themes in the fifth and final category relate to the drivers behind the way a meal is prepared. This category covers the two main drivers that presented themselves from the interviews. Within the group of people that prepare their own meals, there seem to be two main drivers; the first is having

something acceptable to eat quickly, the other also includes the process of cooking as an important reason to prepare a meal.

It is not necessarily the case that these two themes are complementary, in other words the two themes can be valued highly by one and the same person. It is however true that in general, circumstances dictate which one prevails at a certain time. Somebody who for instance really enjoys cooking elaborate meals on the weekend might specifically choose quick and easy meals during the busy working week.

5a) Cooking for fun

The theme 'cooking for fun' refers to the degree in which the process of preparing a meal is seen as an enjoyable activity. When cooking for fun, the process of cooking itself is also a major reason to prepare a meal, besides achieving the final result of simply having something to eat. It can really be an activity to look forward to, as respondent 4 explains:

"I can really look forward to those times when I know we're making something elaborate for dinner. I do really like cooking. If you quickly whip up a meal in fifteen minutes, then that's not really all that special, but when you spend two or three hours elaborately cooking, it's just something really fun to do"

When cooking for fun, people seem to spend more time and consideration on the preparation of the meal and appear to experiment more with different ingredients and take pride in creating something out of the ordinary. Respondent 2, who displayed a lot of enthusiasm when talking about the different types of meals he likes to prepare, verbalised this very clearly:

"Nine times out of ten I'm the one who does the cooking. (...) I also really enjoy doing it, it's a bit like 'Here, look what I made, surprise!'"

People that value cooking for fun highly, often also really enjoy cooking for others and using their meals to generate a pleasant get-together with others. In this regard cooking for fun has a strong link with eating as a social activity.

5b) Quick and easy

The theme 'quick and easy' refers to the degree in which it is considered important that the preparation of a meal doesn't take too much time and effort. The preparation of a meal is not

necessarily seen as an enjoyable activity, but mainly as a necessary means to an end. Respondent 3 explains how this affects the way she prepares her dinners:

“When I come home from work, I find it difficult to then still have to cook if I’m already hungry from work. Having to prepare dinner before I can eat is something I find difficult. (...) I try to always cook for two days, so that I only have to prepare a meal every other day. That this means I have to eat the same thing two days in a row, is something I don’t mind.”

The main end result is clearly having something to eat; the process of cooking is something that is seen as particularly enjoyable at the times when ‘quick and easy’ prevails. Other factors, such as the meal being healthy and/or tasty can also be important, but it being quick and easy is most important.

5.2 Theoretical Analysis

After analysing the interview results with a broad, explorative perspective, we now return to the conceptual model that was introduced in §4.1. In this theoretical analysis we will follow the lines of our conceptual model. We will first go into what the researched IRs look like by describing the ritual ingredients, outcomes and other variables. Consequently, we will discuss the role of meat within the consumption rituals. We will then return to our guiding notions about the changeability of IRs and examine what can be said about these, based on the interviews.

The Rituals

When we look at the material from the interviews, we notice that most of the consumption rituals have quite a lot in common with regards to how the ingredients, outcomes and other variables take shape. There are most definitely some noteworthy differences between the main examined practices (lunch, dinner and Christmas dinner), but we will approach our analysis from their shared character and highlight the different practices if there are significant differences.

First, we will turn to the ‘ingredients’ of the consumption rituals. On this side of Collins’ model find the variables Bodily co-presence, Barriers to outsiders, Mutual focus and Shared mood. Consequently we will discuss the ritual ‘outcomes’: Group solidarity, Emotional energy, Symbols of social relationship and Standards of morality. Finally we will elaborate on the remaining variables: Captivity, Celebration, Contents, Frequency, Time for preparation and Time for consumption.

We start with **Bodily Co-presence**. We looked specifically for consumption practices that are shared with others, but of course this does not mean that everyone eats all their meals with others. In fact,

quite a number of people eat on their own often. Weekday breakfasts in particular are often consumed alone, but for those who live by themselves, dinner is regularly also a solitary ritual. The same goes for lunch for those people who are at home during working hours. Festive meals are rarely consumed alone, although this is in part due to the fact that people might skip those occasions altogether.

Now, with regards to the shared meals we examined, there are three main groups that people often share their meals with: family, friends and colleagues. Colleagues are often in the picture only for weekday lunches. Lunches at work are regularly shared with colleagues, although work circumstances might force people to eat alone quickly or combine their lunch with work in a lunch meeting. The strength of the connection between colleagues varies, but in our interviews we found mainly amicable relationships and only mild forms of hierarchical relationships. These mostly manifested in the fact that newer colleagues tend to adjust to the way the 'older' colleagues have already organised the lunch ritual.

One's household family, in the form of a partner and possibly children, is the group of people that most meals are shared with, especially dinners. During the weekend it also occurs more frequently that breakfast and lunch (or both combined in a so-called brunch) is shared with the family. When it comes to the extended family (i.e. parents, siblings, adult children, uncles, aunts, etc.), it is more common that meals with them are of a more festive or formal nature. By this we mean that those meals tend to occur less frequently, require a bit more planning and therefore feel a bit special. Especially Christmas dinner is a festive event that is oftentimes celebrated together with family, even for those respondents who don't see their family that often. In the one occasion we found in which this wasn't the case, the absence of family during Christmas was thoroughly missed.

There is often some type of role division in families with regards to who does the shopping and who does the cooking, also for festive meals, but the way this is organised varies greatly. The bond between family members can be quite complex and varying in strength. There is however almost always a certain degree of status differences within (especially extended) families, where it's often the elders that come closest to the position of the sociometric star and the in-laws closest to the fringes.

Eating together with friends is frequently combined with occasions of a more festive or special nature. There is even a number of examples of respondents celebrating at least one Christmas day with friends. It appears that meals with friends have the most 'natural' (and thus least 'formal') character out of all of them. For these occasions we often heard respondents explain that they decide on the day itself to meet up for a meal and that those types of get-togethers are of a more spontaneous, less pre-determined nature. A clear example of this are the spontaneous barbeques respondent 2 and his friends sometimes have, which follow from one person phoning

around to gather everyone up. Of course there are also more formalised ways in which friends get together – such as respondent 6 who always has Sunday dinner with friends – but it appeared that within friend groups there was more often deviation from the ‘standard way of doing things’ than within the colleague and family groups.

When we look at **Barriers to outsiders**, it is often the case that there are actual physical barriers, as many meals take place in someone’s house, which has barriers in the form of walls. If we look at the more subtle nature of barriers, i.e. who is and is not welcome as a part of the group, it is interesting to turn our attention to the work lunch ritual first. Oftentimes the lunch location is a larger cafeteria with tables at which more than one group are seated. This means that the barriers between the groups are formed only by the direction of the conversation, eye contact and physical placement of the groups that lunch together. From those respondents that have lunch in such cafeterias, we learned that it seldom occurs that they strike up a conversation with someone other than the direct colleagues they are meeting for lunch, even if they might be sharing a table with others as well.

When it comes to barriers in meals with family or friends, we learned that it is often the same groups that meals are shared with and that most of the times it is at least briefly discussed if a new person, for instance a new partner or a friend of a friend, is introduced into a ritual. Most of the times this is not considered to be a big issue, but is probably just a consequence of the Dutch culture in which people mostly plan their meetings instead of just dropping by. It seemed that the introduction of new people was more carefully organised for festive events such as Christmas, due to the fact that a lot more planning is involved for those occasions.

With regards to the variable **Mutual focus**, we learned that the main focus during a meal is often shared between the eating itself and the conversation. The meal itself is considered a main aspect in the sense that it provides nourishment and that people analyse and enjoy the taste of it. The conversational element is also a main focus when people share a meal, as this is often the time of the day during which people catch up and relax with those whose company is enjoyed. For the more ordinary meals, such as weekday dinners, it is often used as a good moment to discuss the day and potential plans for the rest of the week. For more festive occasions with people that one does not see very frequently, the meal is also seen as a pleasant activity to undertake together whilst catching up and having interesting discussions.

During the weekday dinners especially, the television can also be an element of mutual focus. One respondent even mentioned that he really enjoyed watching cooking shows during dinner, as this was appetite enhancing to him. The television programmes often provide input for a

conversation between the ritual participants, so the presence of the television does not automatically mean that the conversation stops being a point of mutual focus as well.

The last of the *ingredient* variables is **Shared mood**. In general for the daily consumption rituals the desired shared mood consists of a mix of relaxation and enjoyment (of the meal and the company). Of course day to day circumstances might cause this to fail, due to things like having to rush to a next appointment, an argument with a partner or a burnt part of the meal. In general though, the participants look forward to their daily consumption rituals, because they anticipate a moment of unwinding and enjoyment. When we look at the more festive IRs, an element of elation or celebration often joins the expected shared mood, but along with this we also see more expected elements of stress and pre-emptive dreading.

These more negative emotions do not necessarily transfer over into the ritual itself, but are often connected to the time and effort that are linked to the preparation of the ritual, such as having to do the shopping for the Christmas dinner. When the negative emotions do actually affect the shared mood during the ritual, this can have a strong enough effect to make the ritual feel forced or cause it to fail. The most poignant example we saw of this was probably in respondent 7; from his explanation we gathered that relations between him and some of his children had become so strained, that the children had stopped coming over for Christmas, because of the uneasy atmosphere.

With regards to the collective effervescence variable **Celebration**, we found that Christmas was by far mentioned the most as a 'special' or 'festive' consumption ritual. This was not always necessarily seen as something positive though, as several of the respondents added that they mentioned this as something that most people might see as festive, but that they did not consider it that way. Most people do participate in a Christmas dinner though; even if it is not something they look forward to themselves they often join in because others like them to be a part of it. Other occasions that were mentioned frequently were birthday dinners, dinner with friends, barbeques and going out for dinner.

What makes all these occasions special or festive, is mainly the atmosphere and the fact that it is not something that occurs frequently. More time and effort tends to be put into creating the desired atmosphere for these rituals and the quality and contents of the meal tend to become more important than for an average weekday meal. For people who live alone, festive IRs are often the main times for them to share a meal with others, which can lead to more anticipation and higher EE.

We asked quite elaborately about the variable **Contents**, with a particular focus on the meat component. This meat component will be discussed a bit further on, but with regards to the general make-up of the meals we still found some noteworthy results.

For breakfast and lunch, we learned that sandwiches are very popular, although fruit and yoghurt were also mentioned. These meals are often accompanied by tea, coffee, water or juice. Like we just mentioned under 'Symbols of social relationship', the idea that a complete evening meal should consist of 'meat, potatoes and vegetables' is one that most people still adhere to, albeit in a slightly altered version. This results in meals that contain at least a protein source, one or more types of vegetables and a starchy element such as potatoes, rice or pasta.

During the week, people often have quick and easy meals, which frequently are 'mixed' dishes, such as a stir-fry or a pasta dish or the more classic Dutch meal with three separate components on the plate: meat (or a vegetarian burger), potatoes and a vegetable. The more elaborate meals, like ones that are cooked from cookbooks or ones that take a lot of time, tend to be made mostly on the weekends or for special occasions. Most people also have something to drink with dinner, often juice or water; for the more special occasions wine was also mentioned several times.

The first of the ritual *outcomes*, **Group solidarity**, is one that was most noticeable for those IRs in which family or friends share a meal together. The lunches shared with colleagues do also have sense of group solidarity, but this is often of a more shallow nature than the deep connection that can be felt amongst friends or family. Within groups of family or friends however, there are also varying degrees of solidarity felt, which relate strongly to the status of a person within a ritual. Very central members, the sociometric stars, experience this feeling much more strongly than participants that reside more on the fringes.

We heard several examples of respondents who went through a change in position over time, which led them to experience a stronger feeling of group solidarity. One striking example is respondent 6, who moved to Eindhoven to live with her boyfriend. As she did not have any friends there herself, she had to integrate into his, already tightly-knit, group of friends. At first she felt like they were mainly *his* friends, but now, some years later, she feels like she is really part of the group and they are also *her* friends. A similar process was also observed with partners that slowly become a part of the group solidarity of their in-law family.

The next ritual outcome, **Emotional energy**, was one that definitely plays a role in all the consumption rituals, but it was oftentimes difficult to pinpoint which elements generated the highest level of EE. When we look at the 'ordinary' day-to-day events of lunch and dinner, these are generally

anticipated to some degree. This does not mean that people anxiously wait for it all day long, but a much heard phrase was that about one hour before lunch people do start to think "It will be nice to have lunch in a little bit". The same goes for dinner, which people often start looking forward to on the way home from work.

Festive occasions tend to have a longer period of time during which people start to anticipate, for Christmas for instance this can start weeks beforehand, but also 'smaller' festive events, such as one respondent's weekly Sunday pancake breakfast, tend to also be looked forward to relatively long beforehand. On the flipside of this is the fact that, when someone dreads certain occasions, this can start to generate negative EE quite far in advance. Respondent 5 for instance started to get stressed just thinking about having to do the grocery shopping for Christmas dinner during our interview, which took place in July.

The value that people attribute to the way they organise their consumption rituals, is generally quite high. For everyday IRs, the phrase most heard was that it "suits them well" and that it "fits in with their general lifestyle". This did not generate many outwardly noticeable emotions, so the description of a 'high level of contentment' might be in better order. For the more festive occasions, people became more noticeably enthused and often started to volunteer little details they enjoy about that particular ritual. Most people also took longer to describe the way these festive events normally took place than they did for the description of their ordinary IRs. Not only were more details mentioned, but also more of the atmosphere and oftentimes also small anecdotes that are exemplary of the general goings-on during the ritual.

In spite of this, it was still relatively difficult to find out what generates the highest EE during these events. When asked about it, most people explained that it was the total package that makes it important to them. Asking about what makes a specific ritual 'complete' for them seemed to provide the best insight and turned out to overlap partly with the results for 'Mutual focus'. Good quality food, pleasant company and good conversation appeared to generate the highest EE. With regards to the quality of the food, the main important factor seemed to be that it is well prepared and that a fair amount of attention and effort and was put into it.

When looking for **Symbols of social relationship**, we were of course most interested to see if meat would be one of these. This turned out to not so much be the case, especially not for the ordinary interaction rituals. It is however noteworthy that for many people the Dutch 'trinity' of meat-potatoes-vegetables still seems to hold quite strong symbolic value, but more as a frame of reference for what is needed for a complete meal. This means that people at least want one element of 'meat' in their meal, but that this can just as well be a meat-replacement in the form of either fish, a vegetarian alternative, or even, in the case of one respondent, "a protein source like legumes". The

same goes for 'potatoes', when asked about this, people explained that they often use rice or pasta as a 'potato-replacement'.

There were only two instances during which respondents explicitly mentioned one particular meat product as having strong symbolic value, both of them as a part of the family Christmas dinner. One of these was respondent 2 who explained that a roast beef is always one of the dishes that comes to the table and is a part of the tradition that his grandparents passed on to his mother. The other example is even more elaborate and was explained by respondent 4. His family also has a meat dish, called jugged hare, which has been a part of Christmas dinner for generations. It is prepared with spices that are brought in from England especially and takes a very long time to marinate and cook. It is such an integral part of the celebration that it was by far the most symbolic item, according to the respondent.

But like we already mentioned, meat was more often *not* mentioned as something of vital importance. In fact, we could not find many symbolic items at all, at least not in the way that Collins describes them. A few noteworthy ones were an antique set of silverware that only comes out for Christmas, the Christmas tree and candles during weekday dinners in winter, but that is about the gist of it.

Rather, it seemed to occur more frequently that one particular *person* captured the essence of a ritual and thus became a symbol of social relationship. This was particularly the case for people's parents or grandparents, whose presence is considered to be important not just because they are liked, but also because they are an important element of the ritual itself. These people have often helped shape the ritual and helped instill the importance of it into its participants. It might seem that there is a blurry overlap here with the description of a sociometric star, but from the interviews it became clear that a person can also have symbolic value to other participants.

The final ritual *outcome* variable is **Standards of Morality**. For this we focused in particular on those standards regarding out of the ordinary diets, such as vegetarianism, food allergies or religious regulations like kosher and halal. Vegetarianism was something that was encountered by far the most, but generally this was not seen as something that is frowned upon in the groups that the respondents share their meals with. It is often a discussion topic at the table, especially in the form of people asking the vegetarian about their motivations and on occasion it is also joked about a little, but not in an offensive manner. But mostly it is something that is just accommodated for by either serving a vegetarian dish or taking it into account when choosing where to eat. We certainly heard no stories of outright rejection or disapproval, but most of the respondents have either partners, family members or close friends that are vegetarians. For some, living with a vegetarian is even the

reason that they themselves are flexitarians. This could very well be the reason that no real negative experiences came up.

The first of the remaining variables is **Captivity**. The level of captivity varies per ritual of course, but it is often an influential factor in the meal choices. For those who lunch at work for instance, price and variety of choice often play a role in whether or not they bring their own pre-prepared lunch. The level of captivity that is created in a cafeteria can also lead people to make choices they might otherwise not make.

A more subtle, but probably more influential, type of captivity is generated by the fact that when people eat together, the decision about what to eat is a joint effort. Oftentimes only one person does the meal preparation, which puts him or her in the position to decide what everyone at the table eats. In practice however, there is oftentimes discussion beforehand about what will come to the table, or the one who does the cooking might take the others' preferences into account.

Nonetheless, there is always some type of captivity in play, often for all those involved in the meal. But this is not necessarily seen as a negative thing. Especially those that are explicitly only 'consumers' and not so much 'producers' of a meal tend to be mostly positive about the quality and contents of what is prepared for them. If anything, it is more the ones who do the cooking that find it a challenge to prepare a meal that is enjoyable and preferably healthy as well for everyone.

The variable **Frequency** was mainly introduced as a practical one, so there is not much to be said about it that exceeds the obvious. In general people adhere to three meals a day (breakfast, lunch and dinner), although circumstances like irregular working hours can cause a deviation from this.

With regards to festive events, there are some that have a pre-set frequency, because they are linked to (national) events such as birthdays, Christmas or Easter. For the more spontaneous festive events, such as going out for dinner, having dinner with friends or barbeques, the frequency can vary greatly, depending on individual preferences, financial circumstances or the size of one's social network.

Part of the description of the variable **Setting** has already been discussed in the variable Barriers to outsiders, but especially the ambience aspect requires some further elaboration. We learned that atmosphere enhancing elements are often used to affirm the fact that a certain event has a festive or special character. For big events, such as Christmas dinner, this means that often the 'good china' is brought out and that the table as well as the room are decorated with ornaments, candles and other special elements.

But an effort is also made for smaller rituals that people still want consider being special. Respondent 4 explained for instance that for the weekend breakfasts he shares with his girlfriend, the table is always set, whereas he doesn't make this effort for the weekday breakfasts he eats on his own. Another example is respondent 1 who explained that she always lights the candles on the dinner table during the winter months, because she feels it enhances the atmosphere. In general the weekday dinners are the only meals she shares with other people during the week, which means they are of a more special nature to her than other ordinary consumption practices.

The variables **Time for preparation** and **Time for consumption** can be discussed together, as they largely interconnect. In general it can be said that during the week, the least time is spent on both preparation and consumption, this goes for all meals. For those people that enjoy cooking more elaborately, this often is often done during the weekends. The weekends are also used more for extensive dining, where people might have more than one course for dinner and stay at the table longer to talk. More elaborate breakfasts, lunches or a merger of the two in a brunch, also tend to happen mostly during the weekend.

Another reason for people to spend more time on preparing or consuming the meal is when it is for a festive event. Christmas dinner is one of the most elaborate events, as for some the whole day is one long sequence of meals. But other events might also revolve heavily around long preparation and consumption times. Respondent 6 for instance told us about her annual family meeting, where everyone brings their most successful dishes. The family consists mainly of people that were born in the Dutch Antilles, so mainly traditional Antillean dishes are made. The whole day requires a lot of planning and preparation and during the day itself, eating and talking are the main activities. This leads to people spending a lot of time on both the meal preparation and the consumption of the meals.

The Role of Meat

In the interviews, we did not highlight meat specifically. Rather, we asked for all the elements of the consumption ritual, including all the different food parts of the meal, in order to see how quickly and enthusiastically the respondents mentioned meat of their own accord. The reason for taking this approach was to avoid overemphasising the topic and thus wrongly interpreting the importance of meat for the respondent. Once the topic of meat was raised by a respondent, we did of course go more deeply into the matter to investigate the centrality of meat to the ritual.

This approach was somewhat compromised by the fact that most respondents had answered to a call for flexitarian participants specifically, which caused some of them to spontaneously focus

on (the lack of) meat in their diet more than they might otherwise have. Nonetheless, we do believe we got quite a decent picture of how vital the role of meat is in the consumption rituals the respondents partake in.

None of the respondents clearly named meat as a vital element for any of the IRs. Considering the fact that all of them are flexitarians and are thus used to meatless meals, this is not highly surprising. We could however detect that there are some rituals in which meat is a more self-evident component than in others. For these occasions, most of the respondents did not so much mention meat as a special or important element, but rather listed it as an 'obvious' ingredient for that particular IR. In other words, they seemed to not really question whether or not it should be part of that particular ritual, it just simply *is*. This is best made tangible by explaining some examples.

For some of the respondents, prepared meat-products are one of the usual types of sandwich fillings they eat for breakfast and/or lunch. In many of these cases the respondents listed their sandwich fillings in a very routinised manner and indicated that they 'always' had roughly the same combinations of spreads and fillings. A clear example of this is respondent 7, who has the same types of sandwiches for both breakfast and lunch, every day, and has done so for many years:

"I usually eat four slices of brown bread. One with prepared meat-products, baloney or ham, and the other three with jam or chocolate sprinkles."

When asked why they chose these sandwich toppings, the answer was mostly because they 'liked it' and because 'they always have this'.

If we try to analyse this with the IR theory, it would be tempting to say that the breakfast and lunch rituals are more formalised and therefore the meat component is more firmly embedded in the IR. 'Formalised' however seems to be too strong a word for these types of rituals, 'routinised' seems to ring more true. The reason for this is that in Collins' description of formal rituals, the elaborate nature plays a large role, whereas these breakfast and lunch rituals are more of a plain and practical nature. But, like with a formal ritual, the respondents do all derive a relatively high level of EE from the ritual. This does not so much show in exuberance or elation, but rather in a high level of contentment and looking forward to the moment of respite provided by the meal. It was difficult to extract just how essential or symbolic the value of meat is for this, as the respondents viewed it more as an integral part whose presence was not considered much.

Besides these types of highly routinised rituals in which meat sometimes plays a self-evident role, we found the same effect of meat 'just being a part of it' for some of the more festive rituals in which meat can take a symbolic place. A very obvious example of this is the barbeque, which was

mentioned by some respondents as a festive activity they enjoy partaking in. By all of them meat was mentioned casually as an obvious main part of the meal and of the ritual as a whole.

A similar effect goes for the Christmas dinner, although most respondents did also explicitly mention the presence of vegetarian alternatives to the main meat dish. These alternatives however seem to always be clearly prepared for only the vegetarians at the table. Often, most of the side dishes are shared with all the table partners, but the vegetarians get served a separate dish or plate with a vegetarian alternative for the meat that is available for the rest of the table. This is mostly not something that is problematic, but might have caused some getting used to in the beginning, as respondent 2 illustrates:

“For Christmas dinner we always have at least a roast beef, potato wedges and cranberry sauce. (...) I remember that, when I first started dating my (vegetarian) girlfriend, my mum said: “Oh, but what should I cook for her then?!” (...) But (now) she usually cooks in a way so that everyone can get the potatoes and vegetables and such separately. Besides that, there are the roast beef and chicken and all and for her she then prepares vegetarian meat or a different type of vegetable dish that she makes a special effort for. She always does that really well.”

Probably the meal in which meat is most consciously put in or left out, i.e. is up for debate, is weekday dinners. In the listing of what people actually eat, an explicit vegetarian or organic alternative was most frequently mentioned for dinner meals. During the discussion of the whole dinner ritual was also the part of the interview during which people most frequently started volunteering information about why they chose to be a flexitarian.

It was striking that people sometimes ‘caught’ themselves being less conscious of the meat elements in other meals later on during the interviews. A very good example of this is respondent 6. She recently decided to become a flexitarian and has consciously been cutting back on her meat consumption since. She talked elaborately about her reasoning behind this and how it affects the cooking routine between her and her partner (if he does the cooking, she has to phone him if she doesn’t want meat that day). Then, a bit further on during the interview she was explaining what she usually has for breakfast and suddenly realised that she often has processed meat products without really thinking about it:

“I just have slices of bread. Usually with cheese, I like cheese. And I do eat processed meat products, but geez, yeah, I don’t really pay much attention to that.”

All and all we can say that, even though for flexitarians meat is not a 'must', there are still some rituals in which it has an unquestioned position. This is part due to the fact that it might have a symbolic value in some rituals, but it seems that routinisation or formalisation of some practices might play an even larger part in the fact that meat is a recurring element in some rituals.

The Changeability of Consumption IRs

In Chapter 4, we introduced four guiding notions about what causes a ritual to become either more rigid or more fluid. Now that we have analysed and described all the ritual variables and the role of meat in the IRs, we will return to these notions to see to what degree they were recognisable in the interviews.

The first notion we introduced, was that natural rituals are more open to transition than formal ones. This was recognisable to a certain degree in the interviews. As we didn't encounter any rituals that were very rigidly formalised, we mostly learned about the fluidity of natural rituals. Christmas dinner comes closest to a formal ritual, but even this is often quite open to some degree of change. It is true that people do often value the way this ritual is performed highly, but this seemed to hinge more on the general atmosphere and the presence of certain people than on specific items and dishes. The introduction of new participants such as new partners, different meals such as added vegetarian dishes or rotating locations seem to not really affect the EE that is generated by the ritual.

If we look at the more natural rituals, such as the spontaneous meals that friends decide to have, we indeed found that more of the different elements are up for debate, such as where they are going to eat, what type of meal will be consumed etc. In practice most of the consumption rituals people participate in reside somewhere between formal and natural. They never fully become formal, because there are constantly varying circumstances, participants and opinions that influence the way the ritual takes shape, but there are also things that the participants come to find pleasant elements that become more institutionalised. Meat does not seem to be one of those things for the interviewed flexitarians, as it is not seen as a necessary element for the success of a ritual.

This brings us to the second notion, that the elements that are most difficult to alter in an IR are those that generate the strongest positive EE. We found it difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is that generates the most EE in the consumption rituals, but came to the conclusion that it is more the general atmosphere, the shared mood, as well as the company – including especially some people as symbols – that are the main EE generators. Good quality food does play an important role in accommodating that desired atmosphere and some items can play a symbolic role in the ritual, but the food does not seem to be the strongest EE-generator and therefore might not be impossible to alter.

For the third notion, we posed that festive events have a higher risk of feeling forced or failing than ordinary events. This notion was clearly illustrated by the stories we heard in the interviews. The events that generated the strongest negative EE were those that were considered festive by others, but not so much so by the respondents. We heard numerous examples of people dreading or even skipping festive rituals like birthday dinners and Christmas dinner, because they didn't like all the expectations and the forced atmosphere. This was something that was not heard about the more ordinary events like lunch and dinner. These ordinary events were generally seen as something to mildly look forward to and as generating a high level of contentment rather than elation. The emotions surrounding festive events tend to be more extreme, thus leading to higher expectations and thus posing a bigger risk of failing or feeling forced.

The fourth and final notion stated that decisions about changing a ritual are influenced by power and status. This power element became visible in the fact that there is often a role division with regards to who buys the groceries and who does the cooking. In reality though, this power difference is more complex than it is in for instance the army situation Collins describes. In consumption rituals, the one who does the shopping and/or the cooking does have the most power in theory, but in reality the preferences of the other people that also eat the meal are also influential. This influence is exerted by actually asking for certain types of meals – such as respondent 6 who phones her partner if she doesn't want meat that night – but also through the fact that their preferences are often known and taken into consideration by the one who prepares the meal.

The status element is one that comes into play mainly in festive events, as the ones with the highest status are also the ones that have helped shape the ritual to how it is now. The people that are closest to being a sociometric star in these events can also have a symbolic value, meaning that their presence is an EE-enhancing element of the ritual. This does not however mean that they still actively influence or shape the ritual. Especially when this person is for instance a grandparent, they might have become more of a passive participant, rather than an active, shaping one.

6. Conclusions

In this final Chapter we return to the research questions we presented in Chapter 1 and elaborate on the answers we found. The main goal of this research was to provide some clues about the cultural embedding of meat consumption in the Netherlands, in order to help further the debate about the transition towards a more sustainable organisation of meat production and consumption. For this, the following main question was posed:

'In what way are everyday life routine practices of meat consumption embedded in wider cultural frames and traditions in the Netherlands and what are the implications for the transition to a more sustainable meat consumption?'

The answer to this main question is composed of the combined answers to four sub questions. These were:

- *What does the transition towards a more sustainable meat consumption look like?*
- *What do everyday food consumption rituals look like?*
- *What can be said about the role of meat in food interaction rituals?*
- *What elements of meat-based interaction rituals are important for the transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption in society?*

We will go over the answers one by one below. Our research approach was of an explorative, descriptive nature, as this is a first-time situational analysis of the consumption behaviour of flexitarians. The choice to focus specifically on flexitarians was prompted by the recommendations made by De Bakker & Dagevos⁹⁶; who emphasise the transitional potential of this large group of people⁹⁷ that don't view meat as an inseparable part of a meal. For our analysis Collins' Interaction Ritual theory was chosen, as this theory provides the means to examine people's behaviour from a *microsociological* perspective which puts the focus on situations rather than on individuals or structure. In our research we looked at the general consumption behaviour of flexitarians, but focused in particular on the 'ordinary' practices of lunch and dinner and the 'festive' practice of Christmas dinner.

The first sub question was: *'What does the transition towards a more sustainable meat consumption look like?'* We learned that, although the level of meat consumption per capita has stabilised in the

⁹⁶ De Bakker & Dagevos (2010)

⁹⁷ According to de Bakker & Dagevos (2010), this group consists of anywhere between 3 and 7 million people.

Netherlands since the nineteen eighties, it is still at an unsustainably high level and seems to be firmly embedded in Dutch culture. The main meat consumption trend thus seems to be an unsustainable one. However, when we look more closely at all the developments that facilitate and stimulate a high level of meat production and consumption, an emerging counter movement can also be discerned.

This counter movement consists of a colourful mix of actors, ranging from government bodies to NGOs to entrepreneurs, all of whom try to address the problems that are linked to meat consumption. These combined initiatives seem to form the outline of an impending sustainable transition. But a great unknown factor in this transition turns out to be the cultural side of meat consumption; how do consumers experience their meat consumption practices? And what motivates them to partake in these practices? These yet to be answered questions all link to the remaining three sub questions.

The second sub question was: *'What do everyday food consumption rituals look like?'* From the interviews we had with flexitarians it became clear that, in general, food consumption rituals are highly routinised practices in which social interaction and celebration often play an important role. These three elements – routinisation, social interaction and celebration – are the key determinants in the way interaction rituals take shape and why people participate in them.

The level of routinisation of a practice is an important factor in why people perform interaction rituals the way they do and, more importantly, keep doing it this way. This routinisation often takes the form of what is called 'formalisation' in Interaction Ritual terminology, but there is a slight difference. Routinisation is of a more mundane and practical character than formalisation and lacks the embellished nature that tends to be typical of formalised rituals. But like formalised rituals, routinised practices have a set order of actions and a repetitive set of ritual ingredients, outcomes and other variables. Practices often become routinised due to the fact that it suits someone's lifestyle and therefore costs very little effort and thought to keep repeating the ritual in the same manner.

Besides routinisation, social interaction also plays a big role in the shaping and repetition of consumption interaction rituals. More so than the contents of a meal, the company is a main generator of emotional energy (EE) for a ritual's participants and therefore a main reason to participate. The mutual relationships can take all sorts of complex shapes, often involving power and status rituals as well. These relationships always affect the way a ritual is shaped, because the EE that is generated depends heavily on whether or not people enjoy each other's company. This goes in particular for participants that also have symbolic value within an IR. For instance, during Christmas

dinners it is oftentimes the (grand) parents that are seen as such an integral part of the ritual, that their presence exceeds the mere personal and also takes on a symbolic dimension.

Furthermore, especially in situations where the meal preparation is a part of the ritual (i.e. is not catered for by an external party such as a restaurant or cafeteria), the consideration of others also comes into play. Even though it might seem that whoever does the cooking is the one who decides what comes to the table, in practice this person often takes the preferences of others into consideration, for instance by leaving out meat components. They can also convey messages with the food that is prepared, such as wanting to show their care for them by the effort and consideration that has gone into the meal.

Celebration, finally, also plays an important role in the way interaction rituals take shape and why people participate in them. A clear difference could be discerned between consumption practices based on the level of celebration of a ritual. This can be seen as a sliding scale. On the one end are everyday, ordinary practices such as breakfast, lunch and dinner; at the other, festive end are rare, embellished practices such as Christmas dinner and birthday meals. Festive consumption rituals tend to take more time to prepare and execute and are generally more formalised and elaborate. Most importantly, they often generate more outspoken levels of EE. This does not necessarily mean that they generate *more* EE than ordinary rituals, but rather that the feelings with regards to the ritual are more extremely positive or negative.

The third sub question was: *'What can be said about the role of meat in food interaction rituals?'*

Based on the analysis of the current meat consumption level and cultural embedding of meat within Dutch culture, it would seem that the meat component is a hard one to replace in a meal. Especially if we take into consideration that meat has been seen as a status symbol throughout history and therefore as a component with high EE-generating qualities. Our results however indicate that this is not so much the case for flexitarians.

Within their consumption rituals, the level of EE generated by meat is nowhere near as high as the level of EE that is generated by other elements. In general, elements like interpersonal interaction, the pleasant atmosphere or the joy of cooking are much more important for whether or not they consider the interaction ritual successful or not. One respondent phrased this in a manner that really captures the essence:

"I think that eating plays a very strong facilitating part. You're looking for a sociable activity with (...) people. You want it to be enjoyable and that you're able to talk easily. The nice conversation won't occur because of the food, but if the food is not in order, it does make it more difficult. And by having really good food, people will be in a better mood of course and

talking becomes pleasant really easily. So the food plays a facilitating part for an enjoyable, social group process.”

This does not necessarily mean that meat can always easily be replaced without having an effect on the EE and thus on the success of the ritual; especially if the meat also has symbolic meaning (like in some festive events) it can be so central to an IR that replacing it would have a strong negative effect on the ritual experience.

We also noticed that there are some practices in which meat is often not an element that is considered much by the flexitarians; if it currently is a part of it, it will likely stay part of it. This goes in particular for breakfast and lunch rituals, which are ordinary practices that are highly routinised. The reason for this seems to be that its presence is not one that is questioned much, just like all the other elements of a routinised ritual aren't questioned much.

The fourth and final sub question focussed on the degree of changeability within a ritual and read: *'What elements of meat-based interaction rituals are important for the transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption in society?'* For this, we first looked at where there are opportunities and barriers for *any* change within consumption interaction rituals, before translating this to the changeability of the meat components.

First of all, those elements that are most difficult to alter are those that generate high levels of EE, often those elements with a strong symbolic meaning. From the interviews with the flexitarians we found that it is more the general atmosphere, the shared mood, as well as the company that are the main EE generators for them. The food itself did not seem to be one of the strongest EE-generators. This does not however mean that it the meat element can always easily be replaced without having an effect on the EE and thus on the success of the ritual, as non-flexitarians are often also part of the company. Especially if the meat also has symbolic meaning (like in some festive events), removing it might have a detrimental effect on the EE and the ritual as a whole. It is however important to note that, for the flexitarians we interviewed, the quality of the company is often the most important precondition for a successful ritual. This indicates that there is potential for altering other ritual elements, such as the meat component.

Secondly, it seems that the level of routinisation and formalisation has a strong effect on whether or not people stick with a certain way of doing things. Many of people's everyday consumption rituals have routinised character. Rituals that have a more 'natural' character, i.e. those that occur more spontaneously and in a less pre-determined manner, provide the most opportunity for changing elements, so also the meat component, as their final shape has not coagulated yet. An example of a more natural consumption ritual is for instance a spontaneous meal with friends.

A final striking observation is that in that there are some consumption rituals in which 'cooking for fun' is a part of the ritual, i.e. rituals in which the cooking itself is an extra motivation to participate for some. This is often the case for those days when there is more time reserved for the cooking process, for instance during weekend days. It seems that these are the situations in which people are more open for variation and experimentation with different ingredients and cooking styles, which provides opportunities for the introduction of sustainable meat or meat alternatives.

Now that we have answered our four sub questions, we return to our main research question one final time. Our answer to it can be summarised as follows: when we look at meat consumption in the Netherlands from a historical perspective, we can see that we have reached an unsustainably high level of meat consumption and production and that meat consumption is still embedded in Dutch culture. There are however signs of a transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption, especially seeing as there are now 3 to 7 million flexitarians in the country; people for whom meat is not an integral part of every meal. This explorative study suggests that there are some consumption rituals in which meat is still often an undebatable element, this goes mostly for highly routinised practices and practices in which meat holds a strong symbolic value.

But for all those other practices, we think that there is definitely potential for a move towards more sustainable forms of meat consumption. The group of flexitarians seems to be open for the sustainable alternatives, as long as the interpersonal interaction and other elements that might generate high EE in that particular IR are not negatively affected. The individuals that make up the group of flexitarians are however all situated in groups – friends, family, colleagues, etc. – with whom they all share different interaction rituals. It is therefore important to be aware of the rippling effect that the changes in the ritual might have on the whole ritual and the EE of the other participants in it. Any lasting transitional change will have to resonate within the ritual participants and fit in with their drives for participating in a ritual. We think that it, if the situational context of consumption rituals is taken into account adequately, there is a definite potential for motivating the large group of flexitarians to play a catalytic role in the transition towards a more sustainable form of meat consumption.

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Annex X Interview guide

Codering:

- (BC) Bodily co-presence (Collins, ingredient)
- (BO) Barrier to outsiders (Collins, ingredient)
- (Ca) Captivity
- (Ce) Celebration
- (Co) Contents
- (EE) Emotional energy (Collins, outcome)
- (Fr) Frequency
- (GS) Group solidarity (Collins, outcome)
- (MF) Mutual focus of attention (Collins, ingredient)
- (SM) Shared mood (Collins, ingredient)
- (Se) Setting
- (SoM) Standards of morality (Collins, outcome)
- (SS) Symbols of social relationship (Collins, outcome)
- (TC) Time available for consumption
- (TP) Time available for preparation

Interview guide

Introductie

Koffie/thee/kletspraatje

Intro:

Alvast bedanken voor deelname

Uitleg doel onderzoek:

- Onderzoek naar eetgedrag
- verschillende soorten mensen doen mee
- Indien geïnteresseerd: langere uitleg over scriptie kan na het interview

Zal ongeveer een uur duren.

Komen verschillende onderwerpen aan bod.

Bezwaar tegen opname? In het onderzoek wordt u geanonimiseerd.

Zelf nog vragen/opmerkingen? Noem gerust tussendoor.

Eigen alledaagse eetpatroon

Ik wil het eerst graag hebben over uw/jouw alledaagse eetgewoonten, zodat ik een beeld kan krijgen van hoe een doorsnee week er ongeveer uitziet voor u/je.

1. Zou u zeggen dat u een bepaald ritme heeft in uw eetmomenten? (bv dagelijks ontbijt, lunch, avondeten. Inclusief maaltijdopbouw (bv brood – brood - AVG) (Fr)
2. Zo ja, kunt u aangeven hoe dat ritme er ongeveer uitziet?
 - a. Ontbijt (wat, waar, wanneer, met wie, hoe lang?) (Co, Ca, Se, (BO), Fr, BC, TC, TP)
 - b. Lunch (wat, waar, wanneer, met wie, hoe lang?) (Co, Ca, Se, (BO), Fr, BC, TC, TP)
 - c. Avondeten (wat, waar, wanneer, met wie, hoe lang?) (Co, Ca, Se, (BO), Fr, BC, TC, TP)
 - d. Tussendoor (wat, waar, wanneer, met wie, hoe lang?) (Co, Ca, Se, (BO), Fr, BC, TC, TP)
3. Hoe vast is dit ritme? En hoe lang is dit al hetzelfde? (Fr)
4. Is dit ritme doordeweeks hetzelfde als in het weekend? (Fr)
5. Hoeveel waarde hecht u aan dit ritme? En waarom? (EE)
6. Hoe vaak doet u/je (zelf) boodschappen? (Ca)
7. Hoe vaak bereid(t) u/je zelf uw/je maaltijd? (Ca)
8. Heeft u vaste dagen waarop u altijd dezelfde maaltijd eet? (bv woensdag gehaktdag, of friet op vrijdag) (Fr)
9. Zijn er bepaalde eetmomenten waar u echt naar uit kunt kijken? Zo ja, welke? En waarom juist die momenten? En hoe zien deze er ongeveer uit (wat, waar, wanneer, met wie, hoe lang)? (Ce, EE, Co, Ca, Se, (BO), Fr, BC, TC, TP)

LUNCH (Zie: Box 'lunch) (alleen met mensen die lunchen met eten uit kantine/bedrijfsrestaurant)

AVONDETEN (Zie: Box 'avondeten')

Bijzondere/feestelijke eetmomenten (algemeen)

Naast de dagelijkse gang van zaken zoals in een 'doorsnee week' waar we het tot nu toe over hebben gehad, zijn er natuurlijk ook wat feestelijker of bijzonderder momenten waar eten een belangrijke rol in speelt. Ik zou het nu graag met u/je willen hebben over die momenten. *(Ik wil het nu dus graag weer even hebben over eten in het algemeen, het is dus niet belangrijk of vlees een belangrijke rol speelt bij deze momenten of niet.)*

1. Ik ben allereerst wel benieuwd naar wat u/je het eerste te binnen schiet als u/je denkt aan feestelijke of bijzondere momenten waar eten bij hoort. Kunt u/je er een paar noemen?
2. Indien 't niet op gang komt: u kunt bijvoorbeeld denken aan momenten die alleen plaatsvinden in een bepaald seizoen, of bij het vieren van feestdagen of andere bijzondere momenten in iemands leven. Maar het kan natuurlijk ook dat u iets als een barbecue of een keer uit eten gaan als iets feestelijks ziet. Naar dat soort momenten ben ik benieuwd
3. Waarom denkt u juist aan deze momenten? (eventueel één voor één op ingaan)
 - a. Waarom is deze gebeurtenis feestelijk of bijzonder? (Ce)
 - b. Kunt u de gebeurtenis wat gedetailleerder omschrijven?
 - c. Hoe ziet deze er meestal uit?
 - d. Waar vindt 't plaats? (Se, Ca)
 - e. Wie is erbij? (BC)
 - f. Wat wordt er gegeten?
 - g. Wie maakt het klaar? (Ca, TP)
 - h. Hoe lang duurt het meestal? (TC, TP)
 - i. Hoe vaak komt het voor? (Fr)
 - j. Wat voor rol speelt eten bij deze gebeurtenis? (SS)
4. Welke momenten zou u echt niet kunnen missen? Waarom? (EE)
5. Welke momenten vindt u vervelend? Waarom? (EE)
6. (Nog vragen naar standaard 'feest' momenten waar diegene bewust niet aan meedoet? Bv vanwege een hekel aan eters over de vloer/verplicht gezellig doen met kerst, etc.)

UIT ETEN (Zie: Box 'uit eten')

KERSTDINER (Zie: Box 'kerstdiner')

Afsluiting:

Nog vragen of aanvullingen?

Behoeft u uitleg onderzoeksopzet?

Wilt u het onderzoek nagestuurd krijgen?

Als bedankje voor uw medewerking heb ik een kruidenplantje meegenomen, u mag kiezen welke.

Bedankt voor het interview!

Lunchen

Dan wil ik nu graag hebben over de doordeweekse lunch. Ik zou het daarover graag wat gedetailleerder met u willen hebben.

1. Hoe vaak luncht u doordeweeks in de kantine/ het restaurant? (Se, Ca, Fr)
2. Hoe vaak maakt u dan gebruik van het aanbod daar? (Fr)
3. Kunt u globaal beschrijven wat er zoal aan aanbod is? (Co)
4. Wat vindt u van het aanbod dat er daar is? (EE)
5. Wat kiest u daar dan zoal voor de lunch? (Co)
6. Hoe vaak neemt u lunch mee van huis? (Fr)
7. Wat neemt u dan zoal mee? (Co)
8. Wat zijn de redenen dat u (soms) uw eigen lunch meeneemt? (EE)
9. Hoeveel tijd heeft u meestal om te lunchen? (TC)
10. Hoe vaak eet u samen met anderen in de kantine/ het restaurant? (BC, MF)
11. Met wie eet u dan samen? (BC, BO, GS)
12. Hoe zou u uw relatie tot deze personen omschrijven? (BC, BO, GS, SM)
13. In hoeverre eet u altijd met dezelfde mensen?
14. Hoe hecht is deze groep?
15. Kunt u omschrijven hoe de opstelling van de tafels in de kantine is? (hoe veel zitplaatsen per tafel)
16. Zit u altijd op een vaste plaats?
17. In hoeverre zit uw groep apart van de rest van de mensen?
18. Wat is de hoofdactiviteit tijdens de lunch? (eten/gesprek/werk/rust/etc)
19. Kunt u voor mij het standaardverloop van de lunch schetsen?
20. Is er iets wat nooit ontbreekt tijdens de lunch? (product, onderwerp, etc)
21. Wat zou er gebeuren als dat zou ontbreken?
22. Wat maakt voor u een goede doordeweekse lunch compleet? (SS, EE, Ce)
23. Hoeveel waarde hecht u aan de manier waarop u de lunch gebruikt?
24. In hoeverre kijkt u uit naar de lunch?
25. Waarom?
26. Hoeveel waarde denkt u dat uw tafelgenoten er aan hechten?
27. In hoeverre komt uw lunch qua gekozen producten overeen met die van uw tafelgenoten? (GS, MF, SM, SoM, SS)
28. Komt het wel eens voor dat u daar samen eet met mensen die een ander eetpatroon hebben dan u? Bv omdat ze allergisch zijn, vegetariër, of uit religieuze overweging bepaalde producten niet eten? (SoM, BC, BO, GS)
29. Wat vindt u daarvan? (SoM, SS, SM, EE, GS)
30. Wat voor reacties hebben tafelgenoten hierop? (SoM, SS, SM, EE)

Uit eten

Dan wil ik nu graag hebben over de keren dat u 's avonds buiten de deur eet. Daarmee doel ik niet op het eten bij vrienden of familie en ook niet op het afhalen van maaltijden. Ik wil het graag met u hebben over die keren waarop u 's avonds daadwerkelijk naar een restaurant of andere eetgelegenheid gaat om daar ook te eten.

1. Hoe vaak komt het voor dat 's avonds buiten de deur eet? (Se, Ca)
2. Waar eet u dan zoal? (Se, Ca)
3. Is er een bepaald restaurant waar u regelmatig naar toe gaat?
4. Waarom specifiek dat restaurant?
5. Eet u dan samen met anderen? (BC)
6. Wie zijn dit? (BC)
7. Hoe zou u uw relatie tot deze personen omschrijven?
8. In hoeverre is het altijd met dezelfde mensen?
9. Hoe hecht is deze groep?
10. Wat voor maaltijd eet u het liefst buiten de deur? (EE)
11. Waarom specifiek die gerechten?
12. Wat is de hoofdactiviteit tijdens het uit eten gaan? Is dat het eten zelf of iets anders?
13. Kunt u voor mij het standaardverloop van de maaltijd schetsen? (BC, EE, GS, SM, SoM, TC)
14. Is er iets wat nooit ontbreekt tijdens het uit eten gaan? (bv een product)
15. Wat zou er gebeuren als dat zou ontbreken?
16. Wat maakt voor u een goede avond uit eten compleet? (SS)
17. Hoeveel waarde hecht u aan de manier waarop u meestal de uit eten gaat? (het eten zelf, het gezelschap, de setting, tradities, wie wat bereidt, etc.) (EE, GS, MF, SM)
18. In hoeverre kijkt u uit naar het uit eten gaan?
19. Waarom?
20. Hoeveel waarde denkt u dat uw tafelgenoten hechten aan de manier waarop u samen uit eten gaat? (EE, MF, SM, SoM)
21. Komt het wel eens voor dat u samen eet met mensen die een ander eetpatroon hebben dan u? Bv omdat ze allergisch zijn, vegetariër, of uit religieuze overweging bepaalde producten niet eten? (SoM)
22. Wat vindt u daarvan? (SoM, SS, SM, EE)
23. Wat voor reacties hebben tafelgenoten hierop? (SoM, SS, SM, EE)

Uitlichten: Avondeten

Dan wil ik nu graag wat dieper ingaan op uw dagelijkse avondmaaltijd. Ik wil daarvoor graag wat gedetailleerder met u door de week heen lopen en specifiek ingaan op de avondmaaltijd thuis.

1. Hoeveel dagen per week eet u thuis? (Fr, Se, Ca)
2. Wie doet meestal de inkopen voor de avondmaaltijd? (Ca, Fr)
3. Wie bereidt de maaltijd meestal? (Ca, Fr)
4. *Hoeveel tijd besteedt u aan de bereiding?* (TP)
5. Hoe vaak eet u samen met anderen? (BC, Fr)
6. Wie zijn dit? (BC)
7. Hoe zou u uw relatie tot deze personen omschrijven? (BC, BO, GS, SM)
8. In hoeverre eet u altijd met dezelfde mensen?
9. Hoe hecht is deze groep?
10. Kunt u voorbeelden geven van maaltijden die u vaak eet? (Co, Fr)
11. Waarom juist die maaltijden?
12. Wat voor maaltijd eet u het liefst? (EE, Co)
13. Als u thuis eet, eet u dan altijd op een vaste plaats? (Tafel/tv/pc/etc.) (Se, Fr)
14. Wat is de hoofdactiviteit tijdens het avondeten? Is dat de maaltijd zelf of wellicht iets anders (gesprek/tv/rustmoment/etc.)
15. Kunt u voor mij het standaardverloop van de avondmaaltijd schetsen? (BC, EE, GS, SM, SoM, TC)
16. Is er iets wat nooit ontbreekt tijdens de avondmaaltijd? (Bv een product)
17. Wat zou er gebeuren als dat zou ontbreken?
18. Wat maakt voor u een goede avondmaaltijd compleet? (SS, EE, Ce)
19. Hoeveel waarde hecht u aan de manier waarop u meestal de avondmaaltijd geniet? (het eten zelf, het gezelschap, de setting, wel of geen tv, wel of niet praten, etc.) (EE, GS, MF, SM)
20. In hoeverre kijkt u uit naar de avondmaaltijd?
21. Waarom?
22. Hoeveel waarde denkt u dat uw tafelgenoten hechten aan de manier waarop u samen eet? (EE, MF, SM)
23. Komt het wel eens voor dat u samen eet met mensen die een ander eetpatroon hebben dan u? Bv omdat ze allergisch zijn, vegetariër, of uit religieuze overweging bepaalde producten niet eten? (SoM)
24. Wat vindt u daarvan? (SoM, SS, SM, EE)
25. Wat voor reacties hebben tafelgenoten hierop? (SoM, SS, SM, EE)

Uitlichten: kerstdiner

Dan wil ik nu graag wat dieper ingaan op het kerstdiner.

1. In hoeverre viert u kerst?
2. Hoort daar een kerstdiner bij?

Niet?

1. Waarom viert u geen kerst? (EE?)
2. Deed u dat in het verleden wel?
3. Hoorde daar een diner bij? (SS)
4. In hoeverre speelt het kerstdiner een rol in het niet meer vieren van kerst? (SS, EE)
5. Verliep het diner meestal op dezelfde manier?
6. Kunt u aangeven hoe? (=doorgaan met 'wel'vragenlijst)

Wel?

1. Wie doet meestal de inkopen voor het diner? (Ca)
2. Wie bereidt de maaltijd meestal? (Ca, TP)
3. *Hoeveel tijd besteedt u aan de bereiding?*
4. Eet u tijdens het kerstdiner samen met anderen? (BC)
5. Wie zijn dit? (BC)
6. Hoe zou u uw relatie tot deze personen omschrijven?
7. In hoeverre is het altijd met dezelfde mensen?
8. Hoe hecht is deze groep?
9. Kunt u voorbeelden geven van wat er meestal op het menu staat?
10. Waarom specifiek die gerechten?
11. Wat voor kerstmaaltijd eet u het liefst? (EE)
12. Vindt het diner altijd plaats op een vaste locatie? (Tafel/tv/pc/etc.) (Se)
13. Wat is de hoofdactiviteit tijdens het kerstdiner? Is dat het eten zelf of iets anders?
14. Kunt u voor mij het standaardverloop van de kerstmaaltijd schetsen? (BC, EE, GS, SM, SoM, TC)
15. Is er iets wat nooit ontbreekt tijdens de kerstmaaltijd? (bv een product)
16. Wat zou er gebeuren als dat zou ontbreken?
17. Wat maakt voor u een kerstmaaltijd compleet? (SS)
18. Hoeveel waarde hecht u aan de manier waarop u meestal de kerstmaaltijd geniet? (het eten zelf, het gezelschap, de setting, tradities, wie wat bereidt, etc.) (EE, GS, MF, SM)
19. In hoeverre kijkt u uit naar de kerstmaaltijd?
20. Waarom?
21. Hoeveel waarde denkt u dat uw tafelgenoten hechten aan de manier waarop u samen eet? (EE, MF, SM, SoM)
22. Komt het wel eens voor dat u het kerstdiner samen eet met mensen die een ander eetpatroon hebben dan u? Bv omdat ze allergisch zijn, vegetariër, of uit religieuze overweging bepaalde producten niet eten? (SoM)
23. Wat vindt u daarvan? (SoM, SS, SM, EE)
24. Hoe wordt er meestal op deze mensen gereageerd? (SoM, SS, SM, EE)

Annex Y List of interview respondents

Respondent	1
Gender	Female
Age	56
Town	De Bilt
Country of origin	The Netherlands
Occupation	Housewife
Education	MBO
Family income	Above average family income
Living situation	With husband and adult son

Respondent	2
Gender	Male
Age	26
Town	Utrecht
Country of origin	The Netherlands
Occupation	Administrative clerk
Education	MAVO
Family income	Below average family income
Living situation	With girlfriend

Respondent	3
Gender	Female
Age	29
Town	Nijmegen
Country of origin	The Netherlands
Occupation	Project employee consultancy
Education	University
Family income	Below average family income
Living situation	Alone

Respondent	4
Gender	Male
Age	23
Town	Nijmegen
Country of origin	The Netherlands
Occupation	ICT employee at (middle management)
Education	University
Family income	Above average family income
Living situation	With girlfriend

Respondent	5
Gender	Female
Age	54
Town	Nijmegen
Country of origin	The Netherlands
Occupation	Ticket collector for the Dutch Railways
Education	HBO
Family income	Average family income
Living situation	With husband

Respondent	6
Gender	Female
Age	41
Town	Eindhoven
Country of origin	Curacao
Occupation	Web coordinator and journalist
Education	HBO
Family income	Above average family income
Living situation	With boyfriend

Respondent	7
Gender	Male
Age	80
Town	Rhenen
Country of origin	The Netherlands
Occupation	Pensioner
Education	Nautical college
Family income	Average family income
Living situation	With Wife

Respondent	8
Gender	Male
Age	50
Town	Zuid-Beijerland
Country of origin	Belgium
Occupation	Musician and yoga instructor
Education	HBO
Family income	Average family income
Living situation	Alone

Respondent	9
Gender	Female
Age	55
Town	Sambeek
Country of origin	The Netherlands
Occupation	Independent dance instructor/ gardener/ house painter
Education	HBO
Family income	Below average family income
Living situation	Alone, in apartment within communal housing project

Respondent	10
Gender	Male
Age	36
Town	Mook
Country of origin	The Netherlands
Occupation	Logistics employee
Education	HBO
Family income	Below average family income
Living situation	With girlfriend

