



Social media discourse on meat consumption

Renegotiation and staging of human-animal relationships

Corinna Neuthard, Angela Häußler, Eleonore A. Heil

Abstract

The social renegotiation of the modalities of meat consumption and a social discomfort in the current treatment of ('farm') animals is evident in numerous discussions, which are also carried out in social media. As an example, a Facebook discussion – triggered by the renunciation of meat dishes at an annual Hessian environmental and cultural festival – was examined through discourse and content analysis in order to gain insight into the social acceptability of different meat consumption options through the self-presentation of the commentators. Factory farming, 'cheap meat' and large quantities of meat were viewed negatively and were not consumed in the commentators' self-presentation. Depending on the moral classification of animal use, more expensive meat from 'good' farming in small quantities or no meat as well as the respective type of consumption were rated positively. There was a questioning of the normality of so-called carnism, but the commentators did not automatically question meat consumption. It is not the fundamental requirement that is under discussion, but the necessary extent of the change.

Citation

Neuthard C, Häußler A, Heil EA: Social media discourses on meat consumption. *Ernährungs Umschau* 2024; 71(8): 92–102.

Open access

The English version of this article is available online: DOI: 10.4455/eu.2024.025

Peer reviewed

Manuscript (Original) received: 21 July 2023; Revision accepted 18 January 2024

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very different aspects such as the environment and climate, health, politics and ethics [1].

The festival is an exemplary occasion that has led to discussions about the modalities of meat consumption, i.e. the way in which meat is produced and consumed. The sometimes highly emotional discussions about eating meat point to the current need to renegotiate the (social) treatment of animals.

Many of today's discussions are carried out via social media. The meat-free Kassel environmental and cultural festival was also discussed in Facebook comments. The Facebook discussion about this festival was examined as an example in order to find out how meat consumption and the treatment of animals were staged on social media and to deduce which modalities of meat consumption are socially acceptable.

Theoretical basis and research question

After remaining constant at around 60 kg for years, the average per capita consumption of meat has been falling continuously since 2019 and was just under 52 kg in 2022 [2, 3]. At the same time, "alternatives to animal products", especially "meat and sausage products", have seen a significant increase in sales. Of those surveyed in the 2022 Ernährungsreport [Nutrition Report], 4% or 12% more than in the previous year bought these products at least once [4]. There are numerous reasons for consuming "alternative products". Curiosity is the most common at 75%, followed by animal welfare (71%), taste (64%), climate/environment (64%) and health (47%) [4]. In addition, animal welfare labels are an important indicator for 61% of respondents when choosing products [4]. With 44% flexitarians, 7% vegetarians and 1% vegans, around half of the population is pre-

Introduction

The Kassel Environmental and Cultural Festival, which has been held annually since the early 1990s, was organized without the sale of meat products for the first time in 2017. This decision by the organizers of the half-day regional festival attracted a great deal of national and, in some cases, international attention and led to a discussion about meat consumption with an emphasis on

pared to eat less or no meat. However, the large proportion of flexitarians also shows that they do not (want to) give up eating meat. In a study by Cordts et al. from 2013, the other half of the population was described and differentiated as "meat eaters willing to reduce their meat consumption" and "unconcerned meat eaters" [5]. The fact that there are still numerous "unconcerned meat eaters" who do not support the trend towards low meat consumption is shown by the repeated emergence of vocal resistance and counter-movements, for example online in 'anti-vegan forums' [6]. Many people see unquestioned meat consumption as "normality". This type of diet or lifestyle can be described as carnism [7].

Carnism

Carnism refers to a diet based on animal products that is embedded in a social system that supports animal husbandry and killing for meat production and that makes meat consumption appear "natural", "normal" and "necessary" [7].

Shaping one's own diet and thus also meat consumption is a highly complex and identity-forming task that touches on nutritional, but also ethical, social, or cultural dimensions and is often practiced in social media today. An explorative and interdisciplinary approach was therefore chosen to investigate the arguments and motives for personal meat consumption and the staging of the treatment of animals and which consumption modalities are socially acceptable.

Material and methods

The meat-free Kassel Environmental and Cultural Festival 2017 was regarded as an exemplary discursive event within the overall discourse on the modalities of meat consumption, following Jäger [8]. The Facebook comments that arose around the festival are a strand of the overall discourse. These Facebook comments were collected and analysed [8]. Relevant posts were identified and exported using search terms. The search terms were: "2017, Bratwurst, Fest, Fleisch, fleischlos, Kassel, Tag der Erde, Umwelt- und Kulturfest, vegan, vegetarisch, Wolfsanger, Wurst" (2017, bratwurst, festival, meat, meatless, Kassel, Earth Day, environmental and cultural festival, vegan, vegetarian, Wolfsanger, sausage). Every possible combination of two terms was used. Multiple identified entries were documented, but only included in the analysis once.

Two qualitative research methods were combined to answer the research question. A structural analysis as part of a critical discourse analysis based on Jäger provided insights into the structure and topics of the discussion under investigation [8]. This method was used to analyse 383 posts or comment threads (all comments assigned to a post).

For a deeper insight into the content, the second analysis was a summarizing and structuring qualitative content analysis based

on Mayring [9]. An inductive and a deductive category formation were combined and applied to 8725 comments. The deductive categories were formed based on thematic research and the results of the structural analysis. The inductive categories were created during the evaluation of the material. The evaluation was carried out using MAXQDA 2018 software.

An evaluation unit was each individual comment, a coding unit was a single word, and the context unit was represented by a coherent section of text, which may contain one or more comments from one or more persons. Codes, code definitions, anchors (examples) and coding rules were defined in a coding guide [1]. The material was checked several times during the entire analysis.

The qualitative content analysis of the comments was summarized in four steps according to the procedure proposed by Mayring: paraphrasing (Z1), generalization to the level of abstraction (Z2), first reduction (Z3) and second reduction (Z4) [9].

In step Z4, sub-headings were created by sorting the content again, which emphasized the staging of the connection between animals and meat consumption and thus presented the answer to the research question more clearly [1].

To ensure the quality of the research results, several quality criteria were applied to both research methods. Among other things, the evaluation was rule-based [8, 9] and both an inter- and intracoder comparison as well as a calculation of the respective reliability were carried out [1].

Results

Structural analysis

In the structural analysis¹ 383 posts with a total of 8725 comments were recorded and displayed over a period of three months (February, March, and April 2017) using the criteria: 'Date', 'Anonymization abbreviation', 'Number of comments', 'Keywords by search results' and 'Post topic'.

¹ The detailed evaluation and results of the structural analysis and the content analysis as well as the complete coding guidelines are published in [1].



Code	Number of comment threads with this topic
event information	81
• photos only	27
opinion on the discourse	36
opinion on the organization of the festival	63
• stay away	7
• targeted visit/support	15
politics	25
animals	5
kiosk	5
health	1
note/forwarding discourse	90
actions	1
• demo district craftsmen's association	3
• petition	11
environment/ecology	7

Tab. 1: Main topics of the posts including their frequencies (main categories bold, subcategories in normal font) [1]

A main topic was determined for each post (♦ table 1) in order to record the intention of the commentators and to be able to categorize the related comments. This also provided an overview or insight into the relevant topics of the discourse thread and the intentions for writing comments.

The distribution of posts (♦ figure 1) shows that the debate was particularly intense surrounding the announcement and initial reporting on the meat-free nature of the festival (mid-February 2017) and the time of the festival taking place (on 23.04.2017). The interest between these two events never completely disappeared, but quickly declined significantly. This behaviour is typical of social media and shows the highly emotional and polarizing effect of the topic.

The structural analysis is an attempt to map the discourse or the discourse strand including the discursive event. The structural analysis thus makes it possible to situate the detailed con-

tent analysis within the discourse strand on the discussion on the social acceptability of the modalities of meat consumption. The interpretation of the results of the content analysis is therefore only meaningful against the background of the structural analysis for the interpretation of the discourse strand [1].

Content analysis

The result of the content analysis is 17 codes, some of which have subcodes that represent what was discussed in terms of content (♦ figure 2). These codes were created as subject areas to which the comments can be assigned, or which serve as an overarching concept for the content of the comments. The codes were used to structure and summarize the comments examined. Inductive codes are marked in italics.

The codes are briefly presented in ♦ table 2, each with an exemplary commentary. In order to understand the content, it is useful to situate it in the overall discourse or existing discourse strand. The discussion provides a more detailed presentation of the content, along with the findings from the structural analysis.

All quoted comments are reproduced verbatim, including typos, grammatical errors, and orthographic peculiarities such as frequent punctuation marks, missing punctuation marks or a lack of capitalization [1].

Results and discussion

The topics discussed within the codes were analysed according to the question "How is the connection between animals and meat

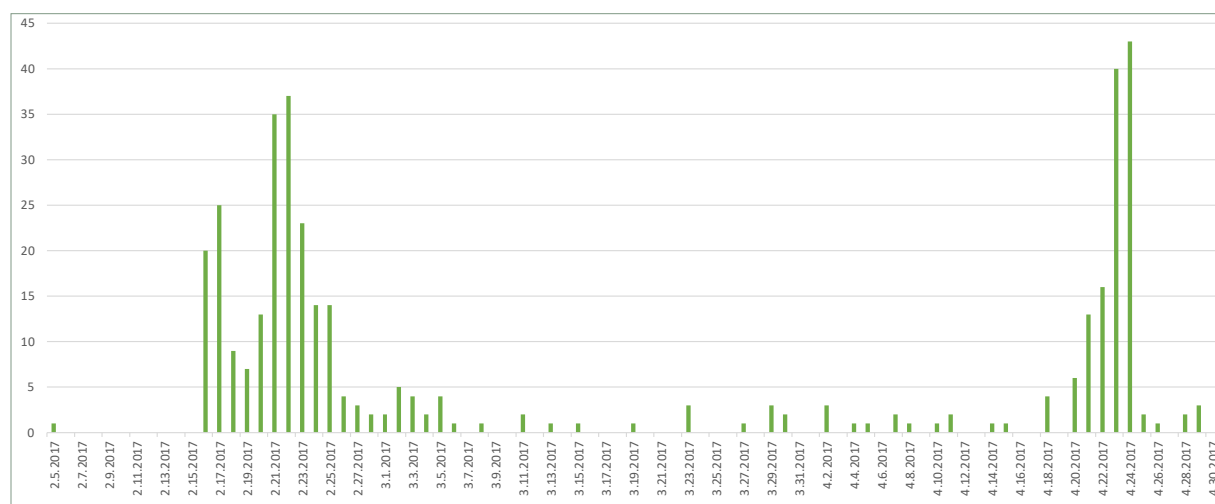


Fig. 1: Number of posts over time [1]



Fig. 2: **Thematic codes of the content analysis [1]**

Inductive codes are marked in italics.

The arrangement of the codes in the figure follows the order of the coding guide.

Speciesism

"refers to a prejudice or bias against beings based on their species" [10].

consumption staged in Facebook comments on the discussion about the meat-free Kassel Environmental and Cultural Festival 2017 in the months of February, March and April 2017?". To be able to deduce which consumption modalities are socially acceptable. The evaluation was carried out against different theoretical backgrounds, such as ethical or sociological, and interdisciplinary perspectives in order to classify the numerous facets within the discussion [1].

The following are examples of some of the topics discussed, which give an insight into the motives for discussion but also the staging behaviour (for an in-depth reading of all the topics discussed [1]).

Meat and alternative products as part of the eating environment

The discursive event of the environmental and cultural festival is about eating out for a special occasion. Although many commentators wrote about everyday eating situations and their general eating habits, this special situation was also used as an argument for different consumer behaviour.

Christmas, which may include the consumption of duck (in 21.02.17_F93, line 104), was mentioned as an example of other non-everyday eating behaviour. Due to the historically established position of meat as a luxury good and its continued symbolic character, it is still eaten on special occasions [11, 12]. In

addition, its anchoring in numerous cultural and religious practices contributes to the fact that the resulting social or cultural occasions are still associated with meat consumption today [13, 14].

Among meat eaters in particular, 'substitute products' were a topic worthy of discussion. Meat eaters with a habitus within carnism assumed that they would have to eat a substitute as soon as meat was no longer consumed. Meat as part of the diet is so deeply embedded that the need for a substitute is automatically assumed [7, 15].

Substitute products were generally understood to be highly processed products made from soy, which imitate meat products in terms of appearance and taste. However, these are said to be worse than the "original" (in 21.02.17_F92, line 49) and have the reputation of being of inferior quality, not very natural, harmful to health and not tasty.

Living conditions of meat-producing animals

Some aspects of the living conditions of animals in general, but of 'farm' animals in particular, were discussed. Animal transportation and factory farming, as examples of husbandry conditions, stood out as topics that were frequently addressed and consistently rejected.



Code	Beispiel-Kommentar
meat paradox and speciesism	"[...] Now he's deleted the the dog picture because none of us cried and became a vegetarian over lunch after all... well, no balls" (in 22.02.17_F118, line 334)
no animals for slaughter	"And the few meat eaters who come and are dissatisfied will also articulate this - will the dogs then also be tortured vegan?" (in 18.02.17_F47, line 4)
meat-animal relationship	"Yes, animals are part of ecology. But animal puree in a poop tube from factory farming is not!" (in 21.02.17_F108, line 22)
animal suffering	"[...] Do we eat too much sausage? In any case, we produce far too much and many animals die senselessly as a result. [...]" (in 20.02.17_F68, line 65)
living conditions	
• transport	"[...] I hope there is a booth, reporting how far and under what circumstances the animals are sometimes transported. [...]" (in 19.02.17_F56, line 61)
• husbandry	"Climate killer number one: factory farming! Toss it!" (16.02.17_F9, line 1123)
• 'organic'	"There is also environmentally friendly animal husbandry on organic farms!" (in 16.02.17_F9, line 307)
• hunting	"[...] Hunting is cowardly murder environmentally harmful and ecologically senseless. Hunting is cowardly terrorism [...]" (in 22.02.17_F138, line 61)
• killing	"Only that animals are not "cultivated", but killed." (21.02.17_F93, line 38)
murder and corpses	
• murder	"Anyone who is not too young, too old or too uneducated to understand, feel and act on the consequences of consuming animal products is a murderer for hire in my eyes." (26.02.17_F200, line 1)
• corpses	"no one is asking you to eat an animal carcass. [...]" (in 21.02.17_F94, line 7)
3 N's of carnism	"man has been a "carnivore" since time immemorial. if you had paid attention at school, you would know that. He hunted, killed and ate animals. [...]" (in 21.02.17_F92, line 8)
meat consumption by animals	"Animals and humans have lived on this earth for a long time, and they have eaten each other, and that has happened and is happening on this earth." (in 16.02.17_F9, line 287)
ethics	"Those who eat less meat for ethical reasons will hardly be bothered by the fact that there is no meat there." (21.02.17_F93, line 62)
valuation of meat	"Do you seriously believe that the creature used to make a 1.99 sausage had a great life?" (21.02.17_F92, line 51)
valuation of animals	"what does a life cost anyway? animals are not commodities" (21.02.17_F92, line 452)
sustainability	"Organic meat is sometimes even worse in terms of its eco-balance. [...]" (in 16.02.17_F9, line 250)
diets	"Vegans are food hypocrites! They eat the animals' food. Vegans seriously think they can save the world" (in 13.03.17_M23, line 81)
festivals	"I'll celebrate Christmas and eat duck" (in 21.02.17_F93, line 104)
religious reference	"For years, ducks were declared to be fish by the Catholic Church. No meat may be eaten during Lent, so a clever man said: "Ducks swim in water, so they are fish" That this logic still exists today is fascinating and sad at the same time" (in 20.04.17_A18, line 9)
politics	"I expect more responsibility from a politician, at least for environmental and climate protection, if there is no empathy for animals and starving people [...]" (in 20.02.17_F65, line 16)
plants	"But if you eat animals, more plants die, because to consume the same amount of energy through meat as through plants directly, you need many times the amount of plants for animal feed" (in 20.02.17_F68, line 23)

Tab. 2: **Excerpt from the coding guide with sample results** (Translation of the original german quotes). Main categories in bold, inductive categories in italics [1]

* For 3 Ns only arguments FOR the human consumption of meat or for carnism were included. While in the category meat consumption by animals arguments related to the consumption of non-human animals were included, which do not necessarily constitute an argument for a certain consumption.

The commentators were of the opinion that transportation should be avoided as far as possible from an animal ethics, environmental and climate perspective. Regional origin (without defining it) was discussed as a possible solution for reducing animal transportation [16]. However, a reduction in meat consumption was

not mentioned as a solution to reduce animal transportation. It is a characteristic of carnism not to question the normality of meat consumption despite the perception of negative aspects and also not to consider the possibility

of reduced consumption [7, 15]. Aspects of production and procurement were questioned. For example, "meat factories" (in 16.02.17_F8, line 107) were associated with factory farming and 'cruelty to animals' and were consistently rated negatively, and meat from this type of farming was rejected [17]. The purchase of 'cheap meat' was also frowned upon (for example in 16.02.17_F8, line 107).

In contrast, organic animal husbandry was linked to improved husbandry conditions compared to factory farming and conventional husbandry. "Happy" animals were attributed to this form of husbandry (in 16.02.17_F9, line 538) animals were attributed to this form of husbandry. A direct link was established between husbandry conditions and animal welfare.

'Organic' was not viewed positively across the board, but there was also scepticism about the label and the controls, and it was seen as greenwashing. From an animal husbandry perspective, regionality was seen as 'better' than organic or conventional animal husbandry alone. In addition, the term „*Metzgers des Vertrauens*“ [trusted butcher]² was coined as a source of 'good' meat (for example in 16.02.17_F9, line 865).

Not only were individual husbandry conditions assessed, but the question of whether there are any acceptable conditions for animal husbandry at all was also addressed. The answers differed among the comments. This was another topic of discussion, as answering the question in the negative led to the consideration of what this would mean for the consumption of animal products.

Transformation process of animals into meat

The discussion revealed a thematic gap between the treatment of (live) animals and (dead) meat. The transformation from one to

the other was addressed rather superficially. The alienation from meat production and the abstraction of the animal body in order to prevent possible similarities to the human body became clear [14, 19]. The abstract forms of meat products were criticized because they allow few conclusions to be drawn about the animal. This would make it more difficult to differentiate between the different diets and their identity-forming character [11, 20]. The use of the same abstract forms for meat substitutes would also undermine the symbolic character of meat, which could lead to insecurities about one's own eating behaviour and explain the emotional and negative behaviour towards these products [13, 21].

Some chose terms such as „*Tierleichenengeruch*“ [animal corpse smell] (in 16.02.17_F9, line 348) to make the connection to animals particularly clear. Others used terms such as „*Schweinsbratwürstl*“ [pork sausages] (in 17.02.17_F27, line 35), which name a specific animal without reflecting on its consumption, which can be explained by the theory of carnism [7]. Nevertheless, for some, the consequence of dealing with the connection between meat and animals and their living conditions (for example in 16.02.17_F10, line 258) was a reduction or cessation of meat consumption, which is why meat production was demanded to be made more visible. This topic would be ignored by meat eaters out of "fear" (in 16.02.17_F9, line 774).

The alienation from meat production and the abstraction of the animal body leads to an invisibilisation of the meat-animal relationship. This promotes the reification and de-individualization of animals and their division into the categories of edible and non-edible. All four aspects contribute to maintaining unquestioned meat consumption and carnism.

The three Ns (*natural, normal and necessary*) of carnism were used in the data studied to justify the maintenance of meat consumption [7]. For example, the development of the human brain was used as an argument for the necessity and naturalness of meat consumption by attributing a positive effect on human brain development to the consumption of animal protein.

The value of animals

It was not only the attribution of value to humans that influenced the discussion on diet and meat consumption, but also the status of different animal species in relation to each other and the comparison with humans [22, 23].

The biological similarity between humans and other animals and their "Moral Rights" [24] was recognized in principle; pets in particular were ascribed „*Seele und Empfinden*“ [soul and sentience] (in 21.02.17_F93, line 361) and an intrinsic value, but the weighing of these rights was discussed. There were differing views as to which was more important: the right of humans to freedom of choice in their diet or the right of animals to life.

In addition, a categorization was made according to the benefits of animals for humans and the dichotomization into edible and

Greenwashing

According to the Duden dictionary, greenwashing refers to the "attempt (by companies, institutions) to present themselves as particularly environmentally conscious and environmentally friendly by donating money to ecological projects, PR measures or similar" [18].

² The persona of the 'butcher' was not expressed gender-appropriate in the German comments.



non-edible. Both make it possible to maintain the Meat Paradox and make it easier to consume meat without moral objections [6, 10, 23]. Both categorization and dichotomization were reflected upon because of their arbitrariness: „Vielleicht meint er die menschliche Willkür beim Töten von Tieren . . .“ [Perhaps he means human arbitrariness in killing animals . . .] (in 20.04.17_A18, line 6). The moral understanding of which animals may be killed follows the categorization. The arbitrariness becomes clear from differences in various cultures and animal species that are not clearly assigned to a category, such as hares or rabbits [26, 27]. In the data, the value of animals was measured purely anthropocentrically by comparison with humans [24, 28, 29]. Even in places where the anthropological difference was resolved, no intrinsic value was attributed, but value was measured on the basis of similarity to humans [29, 30]. There were statements in which animals were assessed as less valuable (in 23.04.17_A65, lines 28, 33 and 34) and as equal to humans (in 16.02.17_F9, line 425).

Meat Paradox

The Meat Paradox refers to the cognitive dissonance in dealing with animals and meat consumption, which makes it possible to care about animals and still eat meat at the same time [22, 25].

Ethical aspects of dealing with animals as meat suppliers

From an ethical point of view, two perspectives can be distinguished here: the welfare approach and the abolition approach. The welfare approach classifies the use of animals as morally justifiable in principle, provided that this takes place under "species-appropriate" or "good" conditions for the animals [29]. The design of the conditions is subject to an individual assessment of what is "species-appropriate" or "good". Compliance with these conditions when purchasing meat products makes it possible to resolve the cognitive dissonance of the Meat Paradox, as one's own demands regarding the care of animals are met [22]. This makes it possible to continue consuming meat and to maintain the system of carnism [7, 29].

The abolition approach does not classify any conditions for the use of animals as "species-appropriate" and does not consider their use to be morally justifiable. Consequently, the aim is to abolish the use of animals [29]. In terms of food, this would mean no longer using animal products.

The concept of reformism represents a hybrid of the welfare and abolition approaches and is an application-oriented (practical) animal ethics position or implementation strategy that postulates the abolition of animal use, including a period of adaptation for humans. As immediate abolition is not possible, this should be achieved gradually [31].

The legal perspective on the treatment of animals in Germany is regulated by the German Animal Welfare Act. Accordingly, killing or inflicting "pain, suffering or harm" (*TierSchG*, 2006, § 1, para. 1, p. 2) "without reasonable cause" (*TierSchG*, 2006, § 1, para. 1, p. 2)

is prohibited (*TierSchG*, 2006, § 1, para. 1, p. 2). What is considered "reasonable cause" (*TierSchG*, 2006, § 1, para. 1, p. 2) is not defined in more detail and was not discussed in the discourse.

The moral justifiability of meat consumption was discussed in the comments primarily based on the different weighting of human (consumer) freedom compared to the value of animals (the value of animal life).

The maintenance of anthropological difference was often accompanied by a lower value of the needs of animals compared to those of humans. The dissolution of difference was used to illustrate the moral reprehensibility of consumption [24, 29, 31]. At this point, for example, it was argued that animals are "Lebewesen" [living beings] (in 22.02.17_F118, line 184) that are capable of suffering and sentience and should not be used as a "Ressource" [resource] or "Ware" [commodity] (for example in 21.02.17_F92, lines 356 & 452). The possibility of a needs-covering diet without meat was also used as an argument [32].

Animal welfare and husbandry were linked to the cost of animal-based products. Animal suffering was associated with cheap products and expensive products with improved husbandry conditions, or it was assumed that improved husbandry conditions would lead to more expensive products, which could lead to a drop in demand. This is desirable from a dual animal welfare perspective: fewer and better kept animals. In addition to the demand for improved conditions for the animals, there was also a call for animal products to become more expensive.

In addition to animal welfare, expensive products were also associated with higher meat quality and better taste, which was also considered desirable and led to a higher willingness to pay.

Staging the modalities of meat consumption

On Facebook, one's own person as well as one's own diet are staged according to social acceptability depending on the habitus or socio-economic context. This representation of meat consumption can therefore provide information about which modalities of meat

³ At the time this article was released, the current position (2024) of the German Nutrition Society had not yet been published. This can be found in *Ernährungs Umschau* 7/2024 and at: DOI 10.4455/eu.2024.22

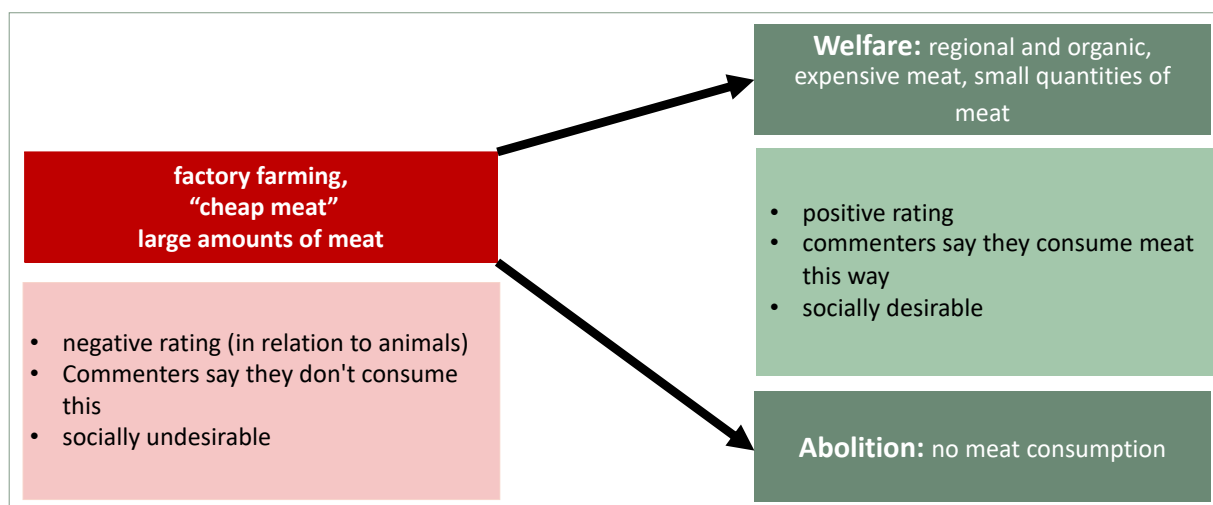


Fig. 3: Staging of meat consumption [1]

consumption and which values of animals are considered desirable and/or (not) acceptable in different milieus (♦ figure 3) [33–35].

In the examined comments, factory farming and 'cheap meat' were rated negatively due to the animals' living conditions and should therefore not be bought; at least the self-representation was that such products would not be bought. For people in economic circumstances that would not allow them to purchase other (meaning higher quality) meat products, the purchase of these meat products was accepted. The option of buying less meat or no meat at all was not discussed for people with limited financial means.

The willingness to pay for meat is related to the valuation of animals [23]. However, an intrinsic value attribution would refrain from an economic valuation of animals and thus also meat. It is primarily linked to the animal ethical abolition approach, which classifies the use of animals as not morally justifiable due to the intrinsic valuation of animals [23, 29, 36].

The amount of meat was also presented as a mode of consumption in the comments. According to their own statements, all commentators either consumed no meat or only a little meat. Buying and eating large quantities of meat was perceived negatively, which was justified in a variety of ways, including sustainability, health, and animal welfare arguments. In contrast to the negative evaluation, expensive meat was evaluated positively and associated with 'good' animal husbandry, provided that animal husbandry was generally considered morally justifiable (welfare approach).

'Good' animal husbandry was not uniformly defined. Both regional and organic animal husbandry were linked to an improvement in the conditions under which animals are kept. Commentators who were more in favour of the ethical welfare approach presented their own meat consumption as low, consisting only of expensive products from 'good' husbandry, possibly organic and/or regional products. Commentators who were more likely to subscribe to the ethical abolition approach presented their own diet without meat consumption and only regarded this as positive [29, 36]. They rejected all possibilities of meat consumption, including a small amount of meat at a high price from 'good' husbandry.

Limitation of the investigation

The data examined comes from Facebook and thus reflects the staging of nutrition as well as motivations and attitudes towards it but does not allow any conclusions to be drawn about actual nutritional behaviour [1].

The data from 2017 represents a strand of the overall discourse at the exact point in time before per capita meat consumption began to fall and the respective attitudes seemed to manifest themselves in actions. The data or the argumentation of the reasons thus provide insights into the justification for or against a reduction. It is possible that the need for negotiation within the overall discourse on the modalities of meat consumption contributed to a need for action.

However, no statement can be made about current attitudes. It would be interesting to collect data again at this point in time and compare argumentation patterns. It can be assumed that the arguments have essentially not changed, but that the number of representatives may have shifted.

The data also only includes Facebook (FB) users or people who write comments (on this topic). Views of passively participating users who do not produce content could not be recorded in the data. However, they are also not included in the discourse and only participate passively [1].

At the time of data collection, the FB user rate in Germany was 40% [37]. The data does not allow any conclusions to be drawn

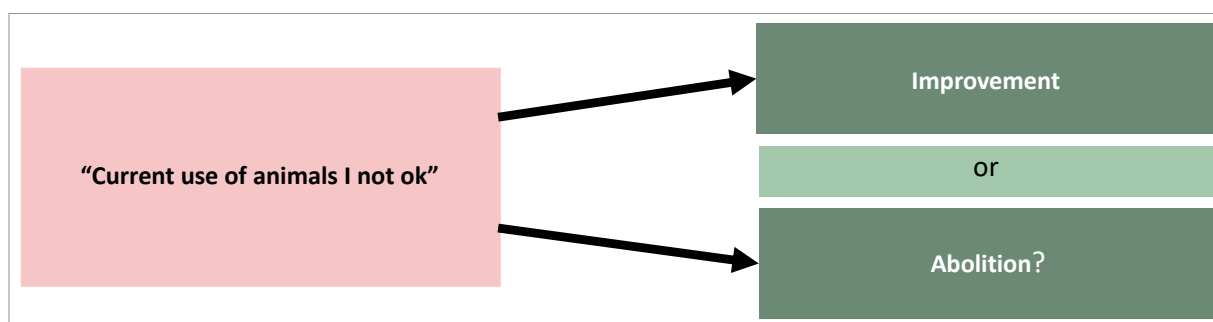


Fig. 4: The need for discussion that emerges from the evaluation [1]

about socio-demographic or milieu affiliation. The group of people who took part in the discussion went far beyond those attending the festival [1].

The discussion is based in Germany and therefore takes place in a socio-cultural environment in which meat consumption is normal and firmly anchored. However, there have already been socio-political and environmental debates in which the treatment of meat consumption and animals has been renegotiated, such as the debate on Veggie Day during the 2013 Bundestag election campaign or the discussion about the Limburg carillon "Fuchs du hast die Gans gestohlen" [1], which took place around the same time in 2017.

tion of whether it is sufficient to keep animals in 'better' conditions (e.g. in organic farming) and eat less meat from these improved forms of husbandry, or whether the use of animals should be abolished, and no meat eaten at all, remains open and needs to be negotiated (♦ figure 4) [1].

Information on conflicts of interest and the use of AI:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest. No AI was used in the preparation of this manuscript, including figures and tables or sections thereof. AI was used for the creation/review of translations.

Conclusion

The discussion examined moves between the different moral views of the animal ethics approaches of welfare and abolition as well as mixtures, such as reformism. Discussed were issues in which these moral views differ, such as the fundamental justifiability of animal use and meat consumption. Statements on which there was already a consensus, such as the need to consume less meat and to improve current husbandry conditions, often described using the example of factory farming, no longer had to be discussed.

The prevailing consumption of meat, which is often perceived as 'normal', is extremely persistent. In the examined discussion, however, not all modalities of meat consumption were classified as socially acceptable, but aspects of consumption and thus its normality were questioned. However, a distinction must be made between questioning basic consumption and questioning all options or the normality of carnism.

There was a connection between the categorization of one's own responsibility towards animals and other people in relation to one's own eating habits or food culture and ethical positioning. The staging of one's own diet was dependent on one's own moral views [29, 31].

It has become clear that there is a need for social negotiation on how to deal with meat consumption. There was agreement on the need to change the current living conditions of ('farm') animals. What was now up for discussion were the options for change with consequences for our own consumer behaviour. The ques-

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